

The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights expressed on Friday, March 5, 2021, concerns about the deteriorating human rights situation in Algeria and the continued crackdown on members of the pro-democracy Hirak movement.”

“We are very concerned about the deteriorating human rights situation in Algeria and the continued and increasing crackdown on members of the pro-democracy Hirak movement,” said the Spokesperson for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mr. Rupert Colville, in a statement.

Protests, which had been continuing online as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, have resumed on the streets in recent weeks, with the authorities responding in the same repressive manner seen in 2019 and 2020, Rupert noted.

The Spokesperson for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights highlighted “there have been numerous instances across the country where security forces have used unnecessary or excessive force and arbitrary arrests to suppress peaceful demonstrations. According to reliable information, hundreds of individuals have been arrested since the protests resumed on 13 February 2021.

These developments echo what happened in 2019 and 2020, during which a total of at least 2,500 people were arrested or detained in connection with their peaceful activism, he recalled.

Similarly, the criminal prosecution in 2019 and 2020 of activists, human rights defenders, students, journalists, bloggers and ordinary citizens expressing dissent continued during the first two months of 2021, Rupert said.

Vaguely worded provisions of the Algerian Penal Code are being used to unduly restrict freedom of expression and prosecute people expressing dissenting opinions, he added.

According to credible reports, some 1,000 individuals have been prosecuted for participating in the Hirak movement or for posting social media messages critical of the Government, the Spokesperson underlined. According to the same reports, at least 32 people are currently detained for the legitimate exercise of their human rights, and some of them face lengthy sentences while others are still in pre-trial detention.

“We have also received allegations of torture and ill-treatment in detention,

including sexual violence. We call upon the Algerian authorities to stop using violence against peaceful protestors and cease arbitrary arrests and detentions,” he said.

The High Commissioner for Human Rights also called on the authorities to conduct prompt, impartial and effective investigations into all allegations of torture and ill-treatment in detention and hold all those responsible accountable and ensure that victims have access to redress.

He urged Algerian authorities to repeal legal provisions and policies that are being used to prosecute people who exercise their rights to freedom of opinion and expression and peaceful assembly.