



26 June 2014 – As most of us know, Algeria faces Russia tonight in the ongoing World Cup taking place in Brazil, and still has chances of advancement. But what else do you know about the biggest country in Africa?

At the end of 2010, the Arab spring was ignited when Mohamed Bouazizi set himself on fire, died from his injuries and his name remained on everybody's lips throughout the months that followed as a symbol of prevailing social injustice. The Jasmin revolution and president Zine El Abidine Ben Alis resignation were directly linked to Bouazizis act. The protests sent shock waves through the Arab world and the demonstrations quickly spread from Tunisia to other countries including Egypt, Libya and Syria, where the protests resulted in one of the bloodiest conflicts of our times.

Despite the protests also hitting Algeria, they never reached the same level as in many other Arab countries.

From independence to elections

Algeria was a French colony for 132 years. After a gruesome war against the colonizer, the country won independence in 1962. Due to protests in the late 1980s, it became legal to form political parties, and when it looked like the Islamic party was going to win the elections, the military intervened and it ended in a civil war which cost close to 150000 lives.

Algeria has since then been characterized by high unemployment, poor transparency of the political system, corruption and low living standards - just like in many other Arab countries. So why didn't the country protest and demand transparency and social rights like its neighboring countries?

According to Rasmus Alenius Boserup, who is a senior researcher of politics in the Arabian world at the Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS), the reason is that Algeria already tried protesting: "In 1988 they succeeded, they got several new reforms, a change of the constitution and the right to have an Islamic opposition." The Islamists won the elections, like they have in Egypt now. In Algeria it ended in a bloody civil war and the country has still not completely recovered and therefore; "...even though people are very discontented, the dream of quick political change is not very widespread," Boserup states.

Elections were recently held in Algeria and UN experts were there to oversee the process. Abdelaziz Bouteflika, who has been president of the country since 1999, won for the fourth time and is now the president who has been in power the longest. He was hit by a heart attack in 2013 and since then is rarely seen in public. It was still however, unsurprising that he won "an emphatic win" as his supporters called it, since he has on several occasions been accused of fraud and of making laws to make it legal for him to stay in power.

Chances are that in the future, Algeria will not see change happen quite so suddenly, however, according to Rasmus Alenius Boserup, people in Algeria are still hopeful about the future: "... there is a very powerful dream of change, "changement", the new generation needs to get in. But it has to be in a soft manner, it has to be done carefully. There is a lot of hope of change."