



*We break  
the Silence*

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# 01 – INTRODUCTION

This report falls under the objective of continuing the work of TransHomosDz.  
We would like to emphasize a particularly tense socio-political context.

In order to achieve an efficient and optimal collection of violence and abuse based on sexual orientation and gender identity reports, we enabled on our website a high-quality reporting software that covers the entire national territory. For more information, you can consult it here:

<https://transhomosdz.org/declarer-un-abus/>

All the data used in this report have been digitized and registered. Organizations wishing to have access to it can contact us at this address: [contact@transhomosdz.org](mailto:contact@transhomosdz.org)



## 02 – EVERYBODY IS COMPLICIT

I grew up in a very conservative family in western Algeria. My parents are religious. They don't even understand religion well. They only take from it what is convenient to them. I have three brothers and no sisters. My father is authoritarian, he acts like a dictator. When I was 15, they forced me to put on the veil, at a time when I wasn't even wearing a bra yet. If I had refused, they would've hit me and I would still have had to wear it.

I knew I was a lesbian very early on. My family had no idea because I was "feminine". The first time my dad started having second thoughts about it was when my rather masculine ex was coming home to visit me. My dad used to ask me why she was coming to our house, knowing that if she didn't come over I couldn't see her because I couldn't go out. I was forbidden from going out, I couldn't go anywhere without being accompanied or without a valid reason (school, paperwork...), the only escape I had was when my friends came to my house. My father later told me that he did not want her at our house anymore. He said that she was not worth anything, even though he did not know her. He, literally, he said that she wanted to fuck me. He is often very vulgar. Not long after I broke up with my ex, I met a woman and we fell madly in love with each other. I was 24 years old at the time. At that time, things at home were unbearable. I did not have the right to even close the door to my room. My father was watching me, he asked my brothers to follow me, and he often came to beat me without any reason. All this, and in addition to the fact that my girlfriend lived and worked in the south of Algeria, made me think about leaving my family's house. I wanted another life. I couldn't bear to be humiliated every day. I was always missing my girlfriend terribly, we had never met face to face before, but we talked daily. My father was bothered by the fact that he saw me on the phone every day. After a while, I took the decision to join my girlfriend.



I was very stressed at first, but at the same time I knew it was the right thing to do. When I arrived there, when I saw her, I knew I had made the right decision. I made my mother believe I ran away to Turkey so they wouldn't try to find me. She tried to make me feel guilty by telling me that because of me she was going to get sick. She told me that my father was very sick and that he was going to go crazy because of what I did. I told her that I left because of him because he was violent and abusive, but she didn't listen to me. My mother was in a really bad state, crying all the time and sending me voicemails. She didn't tell me that my brother and other people were looking for me. The days went by with my girlfriend, I was living a real dream but I was constantly afraid that it would turn into a nightmare. After seven days, reality caught up with me. My father and my brothers found out where I was. That day my girlfriend was at work, I heard someone banging on the door. I didn't want to open it or go see who it was. The knocking got more persistent and my brother started asking me to open the door. He told me he wasn't going to do anything, and that he knew I had been kidnapped. He came with his best friend to get me. At no point did he speak aggressively. I was so afraid that I started feeling nauseous and dizzy. Eventually, I opened the door because he told me he was going to call the police. He just asked me to get my stuff, told me that my dad was scared to death, that he knew it wasn't my fault and that I had been manipulated by this girl, and that he was going to drive me home. I was paralyzed. Refusing would have hurt my girlfriend, I didn't want to cause her any problems and I couldn't stay with her now that my family knew where I was. I texted her before they took my phone away, and I got a ride home. My father had not come to see me for two days, I stayed in my room. There was an incredible tension at the house. My mother said she was relieved to see me safe and at home again, but I knew the storm was coming. After two days, they took me to the mental hospital.





They took me to the head of the psychiatric department, a man over 60 years old. They took me there to see if I was sick and if that was the reason that drove me to make the final decision to run away from home. Before going to the psychiatrist, my father called him to talk to him, telling him that they were colleagues and that he would not want the same thing to happen to his daughter. He told him what to tell me. He also told him that I had bad company, and that I hung out with girls who grew up in unhealthy environments and which is why they had a negative influence on me. He said that I was a pure, respectable and gullible girl. I was 25 at the time. He also told him that when I was young I didn't get out of the house, that I didn't have any girl friends and when I started having them they were bad girls who never showed me the right way. He said that they pushed me to run away from the house, and that they ruined me by encouraging me to sexual deviance. That's how my father convinced the psychiatrist of ideas.

The psychiatrist was looking at me in a weird way, telling me that I was very smart and that I had an answer for everything. It felt like I was talking to a cop. Then he told me he was going to talk to me like he would with his daughter. I asked him what he wanted to know ... he got nothing from me, not a word. He went to tell my parents that I was very smart and that he couldn't get the sentence he wanted to hear from me. He asked me why I received so many calls from my girl friends, to which I replied that the reason was simply that they were my girl friends. I asked him if his daughter had any girl friends and if they called her. He told me that she had only one and that she only called her once a week to check up on her, and that she only talks to her in front of him. It was obvious that he was already aware of what to say to me, it's not normal, even people who don't have friends, meet people and get calls from people who ask after them. He wanted me to stay home alone like a prisoner. He was trying to talk about my sexuality, but I kept acting like I didn't understand.

He concluded by saying that I had no psychiatric problems and had referred me simply to the department's psychologist. She also underestimated me because my family always presents me as gullible, naive, and impressionable. I was often told: «you're naive, that's why the first one to try to fuck you got to fuck you up. That's why you got into this environment, you're weak, and that's why we forbid you from going out and we correct you when you misbehave.” When you hear them talking, it's like I never have a say in things and I never decide who I am. They always blame others for what I do.

The psychologist was also an old woman, a year or two from retirement, and she began to ask me if I had anything I wanted to tell her, but I didn't have much to tell. She then asked me to tell her how I came to run away from home. I started talking to her about my father, telling her that he was a narcissistic pervert and that my mother had suffered a lot of violence from him. That I wasn't paranoid and that I wasn't blindly following my friends. Afterwards, she used the words I used: narcissistic pervert, paranoid ... she ended up telling my parents that I was taking sedatives because it was not normal for me to talk like this with everything I had experienced. Then they gave me a toxicology screen that came out negative. My mother concluded that my friends had bewitched me because she could not find an explanation for my attraction to girls. She told my father that he had to bring me a raki (an exorcist/imam) to make me hate my friends. She took this opportunity to try to get close to my father so that he would not be violent with her and would not cheat on her. Except he was even more violent, and he was telling her that she wasn't a good mother. He had confiscated my phone and managed to access it, he said, «If I go to the police, should I tell them my daughter is a whore?» My mother used to tell me that I was dirty and

that I didn't deserve everything they'd done for me. I finally got a raki that made me drink four liters of water, I couldn't stop throwing up. He said he was going to undo the spell I was given. Another raki told me that I was not bewitched but that I was suffering from the evil eye.

I wanted to kill myself. My father continued to humiliate me, «You dyke, you whore, you try to hide that by saying my dad hits me, my dad is violent. It's just to get attention and to satisfy your desires. It's because of the porn you watch.» all that when I did not even watch pornography.

I've been thinking about marrying a gay man for convenience so that I don't have to live with my family anymore, I've been looking for ads on social media, but every time I come across gay guys who tell me they want to live a straight life, or who want to impose Exit/Entry hours. I don't want to leave one prison and end up in another.

My parents made me see 2 rakis, 5 psychologists and 1 psychiatrist to «cure me», these shrinks didn't care that I told them that my father was violent and that he beat me, that he saw other women, they were just trying to heal me of my homosexuality. But I know I'm not sick, I know there are a lot of women like me.

Sarah's family insisted that she be followed by a psychologist or a psychiatrist. We referred her to a gay-friendly psychologist that we know who is now following up with her. We informed the psychologist briefly, with Sarah's consent, about her background, and suggested that he «plays along» with her mother if she came to ask if homosexuality was normal. We didn't want to risk her taking Sarah away from this psychologist who will not be judgmental and will do his job correctly

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## 03 – A STOLEN IMAGE



We met Nidhal, a 26 year old man, in Constantine through a contact who knew him and who told us that he had been subjected to violent homophobia. We travelled to see him and to hear his testimony. Here's what he told us:

*"I work in the field of tourism; I also do a lot of voluntary work. I never had a problem with anyone, I was told me that people laughed at me and my way of behaving behind my back but I had no choice but to be the way I am."*

Nidhal tells us that he had his life, his education and his work keeping him busy. He had a cold and absent father and a present and loving mother. Everything was going well in his life until he met a man who has been trying so hard to contact him a year ago: "we talked to each other often. Under the impression of caring for me he started to become very persistent. At one point I even thought he was stalking me. I noticed that people started avoiding me. I was even getting harassed and insulted more. Eventually someone told me what was going on. The man sent several compromising pictures of me to everyone and told everybody that I was gay, he shared them on Facebook in groups, in private and even group discussions. He showed them to everyone he met. He even managed to print them, with my full name on, and put them on the walls of popular cafés and streets, telling everyone that I am a homosexual! He destroyed all on my friendly, professional, and romantic relationships. I pushed the whole thing behind me so I am finding it hard to talk about this. I have closed myself off and distanced myself from everybody for a while. After that I got back in touch with 3 friends who supported me a lot. I have only been in touch with few people in the period of two months"

This story has reached his family. A neighbor exposed the situation to his family and told them that Nidhal's photos were circulating everywhere and that they were saying he was gay. His father's reaction was violent both physically and mentally, but his mother was more understanding. Nidhal insisted that it was hard for him to speak about all this and we respected both his silence and his speaking.



His father threw him out of the house and he found himself sleeping in the houses of some people he knew who did not know about the situation and without him telling them what has happened to him. He even found himself sleeping on the streets several times. His mother's health was getting worse because she could not cope with the situation. She wanted her son back home, but the father strongly refused. Nidhal's three friends tried to speak to him about it but he was not willing to listen. After few months, he was able to return home but he has to live with daily violence. His father made his mother pay for the fact that she had supported Nidhal, he even refused to pay for the medical care she needed. Nidhal decided to take things into his own hand, and he is looking for a house to rent because the situation at home has become unbearable. The man who has harassed him continues to talk about him, and continues to tell people that Nidhal is homosexual: "He tried to contact me, he keeps talking about me, he has rejected his own homosexuality and is attacking me. This situation has certainly screwed up a part of my life, but it also allowed me to figure out who my true friends are. I do not want to waste my time with people who do not accept me just because I am gay."

He told us that he had thought about suicide many times, but with the support of his three friends and his mother, he never acted on it.

## 04 – LEGALIZED VIOLENCE

*Assia and Karima are two women who have been in a relationship for few years now, and whom we have met several times. Karima, having gone through some very difficult experiences, preferred to let Assia tell us their story:*

I knew Karima through a friend we had in common, as soon as I saw her it was love at first sight. However, I knew on the spot that she was married, and I had very little hope of being with her. We started seeing each other regularly, we both live in Oran and we were only a few minutes' drive away from each other. She knew I was a lesbian. It is pretty easy to tell. I was very interested in her and I could see that she liked me but she did not dare do anything about it. She started telling me about her relationship with her husband, a rather aggressive man, who often belittled her. He often saw other women and when she wanted to leave him he would blackmail and create problems for her. She told me that she already tried to leave but every time he would do everything to get her back. He insulted her, he humiliated her and even hit her, but when she goes back to her parents' house he would take the role of the heartbroken lover. She has two children, and her parents, especially her father, told her that he did not want her to come back home with that man's children. Karima did not work so she had no chance to go rent her own house and she often ended up coming back to her husband.

Little by little our relationship was doing her a lot of good, but she was getting anxious because I was the first woman she fell in love with and she was married too. For me, I already knew that I was ready to do anything for her. And when she finally told me she had feelings for me, our love could finally start living. We saw each other every day. I got along very well with her 2 kids, but she was getting more worried about her husband. He had noticed that she was suddenly happy again, and that she was taking care of herself. That's why even though he has abandoned her he still did not want her going out so he forced her to get pregnant again so she was stuck at home. When we found out that she was pregnant we panicked, it meant that she was going to be stuck with him again and any hope of her leaving him was lost. She decided to have an abortion and I struggled like crazy to help her with that. She was suffering in silence at home and could not talk to anyone except me about it. Fortunately, her doctor, who had nothing to do with her abortion, was still willing to listen and follow up her condition, which is very rare coming from doctors in Algeria.



Her husband started getting violent again, he had suspicions about our relationship because as soon as I was coming over she would dress up and get beautiful and as soon as I would call her, her attitude would change. He even told her that she could sleep with me if she wanted, as a way of testing her.

## IN WHAT FORM DID THE VIOLENCE RESUME?

He started talking to her badly again, telling her not to go out, and when she stood up to him, he got physically abusive. He strangled her until she almost fainted. When he went to hit her she had the reflex to scream, her children were at home and had gone upstairs, he went to another room and that's when she took the chance to leave the house with the children. They found themselves outside in their pajamas, hiding so that he couldn't find them. She called me and I went to pick her up directly, I took her and the children to her parents' house.

I naturally became involved in the lives of the children, who appreciated me very much. Their father started telling them that it was their mother who was bad, that she wanted to separate them from him, that she was doing serious and bad things he couldn't tell them about in their age. On the other hand Karima started doubting our relationship. She started saying that there was no future for us. How could we live our love under these conditions? She told me every day that it was over then she would come back and say she couldn't go on without me. I put up with it because I knew she was in a very difficult situation.

For me, even before I met Karima, my family has suspicions about my homosexuality, they eventually confirmed that by reading messages from my ex. I had gone through a very difficult period with insults every day, ban on going out, and pressure on a daily basis. With Karima I spent a lot of time on the phone, I was happy and in love, my parents had suspected something was going on and started pressuring me. They did not like her and made sure she knew it. Once I had gone out with her, my father called to tell me not to come home that night, that he did not want me at his house anymore. I stayed few days with Karima and seeing that we could not manage to live together because my salary was insufficient, I ended up coming home.

In the meantime, after the last confrontation with her husband, Karima decided to file for a divorce. I supported her heart and soul. Her parents also supported her at first because they knew he was abusing her, however later they started saying she could not keep her children and that it was up to him to take care of them financially because he was wealthy, but he didn't do that as a way to hurt her even more. She had told her parents that it was not questionable and that she was going to keep her children. He then contacted her parents to tell them that he had hit her because he had seen her smoking outside, which was really nonsense. He was just trying to justify his actions. Karima's in-laws were of course supportive of their son. She was in a rough spot financially, and I started taking care of some of the children's expenses, I took care of organizing their birthdays and buying them the things they needed for school.

I also contacted the best lawyer I know for her divorce, and after months of struggle where her husband kept on delaying the case as long as possible, she finally got divorced! And he finally became her ex-husband. It was a huge relief, but at the same time all this stress impacted her, and she started taking antidepressants. She could not sleep because she kept thinking about the children's future and our future. She started telling me that our relationship was doomed again. She said that a relationship between two women is not made to last under such circumstances. But I waited, I was there for her and the children and I supported her. We moved the children to a school near their grandparents' house, and Karima ended up finding a job. With our two salaries we were able to go on vacations



twice, we want to live together but I still can't completely detach myself from my family because it would hurt my parents too much and they would not understand. In addition to that we can't financially afford living together at the moment, but it is in our plans.

Her ex-husband has not paid child support even though she is entitled to it and he can afford it. She is also supposed to pay him the Khol'e settlement as written in the family code of law. Soon she will get what she's owed from a court bailiff and then she can finally move on.

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*Karima and Assia have been at the middle of a crossroad of discrimination. Being women, they have seen their mobility reduced, preventing them from fully living their relationship because their movements are controlled by their families. Karima's divorce and the child support money she has not yet received are witnesses of the violence of the family code of law, which applies certain discriminatory codes including Khol'e instead of divorce for women, and which does not follow up on whether the father paid the child support money or not. Karima lived under the fear that her husband would come after her, or that her family would kick her and her children out of the house. She also lives under fear that homosexual love in Algeria cannot survive with all this pressure. In addition to this, there was medical violence, as abortion is forbidden, and both women had to struggle so hard to be able to have a voluntary interruption of pregnancy. The doctor who did the follow up afterwards welcomed them, but we know that this was an extremely rare case. Karima's husband knew she no longer wanted to have sex with him but he did not care and subjected her to daily marital rape, Assia being aware of this made it daily suffering for both of them in different ways. Added to this is also the psychiatric reality, where the psychiatrist prescribed medication to Karima which put her in a hellish circle without any psychotherapeutic follow-up. Finally, the restricted access to work for women added another difficulty, when the position was found the salary was very insufficient for the two women to consider renting and living together. They are living their relationship in hiding, they know that if it gets out the consequences would be dramatic and they are doing everything they can to avoid suspicion.*

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## 05 – WHEN PASSION BECOMES A PRISON

My name is Aissam and I am 20 years old. I come from a conservative family from Annaba and i have always done my best to satisfy them. On the street when I live, a man must always be masculine. If man does not display that masculinity he is seen in a bad light, those who are considered homosexuals are seen in an even worse light!

When I was 13 years old, the death of my father was a huge shock to me. At first I did not react in any way, but little by little I began to not want to do anything, not going out, not talking. I started to have trouble breathing and I even fainted sometimes. I thought I was developing an illness, but when the family took me to the doctor he diagnosed me with depression, hence the difficulty in breathing. Seeing that was not moving he referred me to start sports.

I joined a gym where I did a little bit of everything: fitness, weight training, and swimming, etc. I was 14 years old, and the sports coach was 30. One day while I was changing, he came to see me and told me that he wanted to see my muscles development. I pulled down my shorts and then when he started touching my private parts. I was shocked. When he saw my reaction he apologized and said that he thought that I wanted to “do it”. When the day of training ended he offered to drive me home, when I refused he insisted and told me that he will just give me a ride. I went with him and at some point he veered off the road and went to a remote place where he allowed himself to touch me. It was my first sexual intercourse without penetration. I was stunned, I was paralyzed, I did not understand what was happening and I let him do that to me. I was afraid, but I couldn't do anything.

I stopped going to the gym for two weeks after that. When I finally returned he asked to speak to me, and then he did it again. I then stopped doing the sport altogether and fell into an even deeper state of depression. I did not go to school. I did not talk to my family or my friends. I want to understand what I had done. It was the first time I did something like that. I thought that I did something haram (forbidden) and unnatural. I was already attracted to him, I wanted a man's attention, his affection, but what the coach did – the fact that it became real and I did not want it at the time- made me very upset. I was thinking that in nature it's man and women, even for animals it's male and female. I was thinking about telling my mom, but I was afraid that my family would beat me or kill me. No one had ever of this story before today. It was until I grew up that I found out that what I am, is called being gay.

Later in my life I met a man on Grinder. We used to hang out a lot and drive around in his car. I saw him almost every day. He was very sweet which is why I did not suspect anything. One time he asked me to go with him on a long drive to change the air, I accepted. At night he started to talk differently. He became persistent and started to talk about sex in a very graphic way. He then tried to take my clothes off even though I told him I did not want to. I opened the car door and screamed with all my strength. The security guards from a nearby company ran over. He told them I was his little brother and that he did not do anything to hurt me. When I told them he was trying to rape me, he convinced them that he would never hurt me. In addition to that, we were in a remote place with no taxi or bus station anywhere nearby, and it was very dark so my only option was to go back

with him. He drove and when we got close to my house, he parked in an empty space and started saying sexual and aggressive words again. He forced me to have sex with him. He held my hands and did what he wanted to do. After that day I stopped seeing him and did not want to have any relation with him anymore. My life started becoming hell after that.

At that period I started having problems at home. My family started pressuring me about my friends, my way of dressing, my way walking, and basically everything. They insulted me, humiliated me and told me that I only hang out with toxic people. After each fight I would leave the house and go stay with my friends for 3 days to a week, it was a very hard period and all I wanted was to have an independent life fast. That is when I stopped going to school and started to do hairdressing for women. It was not socially acceptable for a man to be interested in beauty and hairstyling for women, so I hid the truth about what I was doing from my family. I always made an excuse when I got out. I used to say I was with friends, or that I went to the gym, or that I was shopping and a bunch of other weak excuses. I told them the truth later on and they took it very badly. Life with them was becoming unbearable, that is why I decided to run away. I only had 1200da in my pocket when I took the bus to the capital. I stayed on the streets for two weeks, it was very hard. I started looking for a job and I finally was hired at a very busy hair salon where I was the only male hairdresser. As I was doing my job very well, people started talking about me and an Algerian TV channel came to interview me. They told me they were interested in my work and wanted to help me get recognized by more people, so I accepted. But when the report came out, it was degrading. They had ridiculed me and what I do. The video went viral on Facebook and people were laughing at me. I started to get recognized on the streets. Some people were supportive to me others were insulting and making fun of me. The report reached my family and they started threatening me again, telling me I was embarrassing them.





Eventually I changed the hair salon I worked at. One day I was alone at the salon with a client getting her hair done, when a man she knows walked in. I told him he could not stay at the salon, but they both assured me that he would only stay for a little while. When I finished with the client's hair she said she will go look for something nearby and come back. I was alone with the guy. I told him to stay outside while I go change my clothes so I can leave. I went into a cabin at the back of the salon to change. He closed the salon door and came straight at me. Without saying anything he threw himself at me. I was so stunned that I let him do to me what he wanted. After that I fell into a state of depression again because my job was the only place I could live normally, but even there the violence followed me. I started feeling that I was not safe anywhere. After that I had trouble when renewing my lease because the landlords and the real estate agencies did not want to rent to me. With all these problems, I had no choice but to go back to my family's house in Annaba.

It was very hard because I had no job, no friends, and no support. I dreamed of opening my own hair salon but now I see that dreaming coming an end. I borrow money to live, and sometimes I have sex for money so I can have a living. I know these men are taking advantage of my situation, but I don't know what else to do.

## 06 – POISONOUS LOVE



Being a woman and a lesbian is a double stigma that we carry in our society. Even though I have always considered my lesbianism to be the most normal thing there is, I was soon hit with the reality of discrimination and violence against love. I am 27 year old and I live in Algiers, I grew up in a religious but not conservative family. My brother lives with my mother and me, he was never very controlling as long as I did not bring too much attention to myself in the neighborhood, as if it was up to me to stop existing, when the guys in the neighborhood were outside all the time day and night. My family wanted me to follow the social rules of what a girl should do in Algeria: not go out at night, not go out too much during the day, to clean the house, not to dress in clothes that are too tight or too short and not to have a boyfriend but to think about getting married. And that is how it all started. I did not see myself married to a man at all, because I have always been attracted only to women. And seeing that I was rather feminine, my family had no doubts about it.

When I got into university I had a bit more freedom. I was often with friends hanging around. Some of them knew I was a lesbian and thought it was normal. One afternoon when we didn't have classes, we went to a café to meet up with some friends. When we arrived there was a girl with them, Mira, who kept looking at me and smiling. She had short hair and a rather "masculine" attitude, and I found her very attractive. Our friends started leaving but I didn't want to leave until I got a way to contact her but I didn't dare ask her directly. We started to talk about we were doing at school and what we liked ...etc. the conversation was so smooth that we didn't feel the time passing, as I had to leave, we exchanged our contacting details. We started to talk on Facebook every day. We talked on the phone for ours until the day we met again. I couldn't stop thinking about her. I knew I was falling in love, I thought she was sweet, but she was a bit jealous and possessive but I let that go. We met at a friend's house few days later, and we decided to get into a relationship together. It went very well at the beginning, she was very present, came to wait for me at the university, she was starting to get to know all my friends, but I was afraid to

take her to my house because I was worried about my family's reaction since she looked a little bit masculine. I didn't tell her any of that but I think she understood. She asked me to spend the night with her but that was very complicated for me, I was going out of my way to see her and I did manage to get away with her few nights anyway. However, little by little she started to get too jealous, she got angry when she called me and found me talking to someone else, she yelled at me because my friends called me pet names, and little by little she refused to let me keep exes as friends, telling me that she did not understand why I kept in touch with them and that it bothered her. And one day when we were in the city, I ran into a friend of my brother's. I panicked because I was afraid he would tell Djamal that I was with her. My mind was all over the place because at the same time I felt guilty and told myself that I was not confident and invested in our relationship at all. That evening I came home and I was waiting for my brother to say something but he didn't. I told myself afterwards that it was all just in my head! I told myself that I was exaggerating and that it was not obvious because there are straight masculine women. I had already told my mother about my friend who I met a lot, and who was brought up different and had a special look. I ended up inviting Mira home to see where I lived. She met my mother and it all went well. She came to my house regularly afterwards, my mother got along well with her and she even took her number to reach me in case I was not reachable when I was out with her.



Things were going well between us but our fights were getting more frequent. When she couldn't reach me she would call my mother to talk to me. I was only allowed to see her, and she made me believe none of my friends were good for me. I started feeling trapped in a bubble while she was living her life normally. She didn't have any restrictions to go out so she spent her evenings with her friends. She was in contact with exes who she said were just friends. I was suffocating, and when I told her I was fed up she would start to talk to me softly and try to make me feel guilty for speaking like that. One day one of her friends called me to tell me that Mira was cheating on me. She told me so many details about her adventures and it all made sense because I already had my suspicions I just didn't want to accuse Mira out of nowhere with no proof. I was shocked, I felt betrayed. It was like I was going crazy. She was the person I trusted the most, I told her everything, and she meant everything to me. I confronted her and cut her off. She kept calling me, sometimes she would show up at my house, but I was aware that I was never going to go back to her because our entire relationship was built on a lie. After that I was able to get back in touch with few of my friends. After two or three months I started dating one of my friends who



has supported me through everything. The relationship was very light and it felt refreshing after all the control Mira forced on me. When she found out about my relationship, I don't know how, she went crazy. She threatened to tell my mother that I was a lesbian. She said I was a liar, and that I had manipulated her. I did not recognize her anymore, but at the same time I felt like I was finally seeing how caught up I was in that bubble she trapped me in. And then one afternoon I came home and I felt great tension from my mother. I felt that there was something there but I did not dare ask. Then my mother came to me and started insulting me with all kinds of names, telling that I was hanging out with sluts who were taking me down the wrong path. She said that Mira told her what path I was taking, that I was abusing her [my mother's] trust. "3ib" (it's shameful). I kept telling my mother that I had done nothing, but she was so enraged. She told me that my brother warned her that the girls I was hanging with mechi mla7 (bad girls), but she didn't believe it. She kept telling me: your brother would kill you if he finds out, my daughter is in debauchery.

I did not get out of the house for 15 days, I stayed locked in my room, I was ashamed and I couldn't look my mother in the face. I kept a low profile but I was stressed all the time. I didn't eat anymore, I tried to sleep as much as possible to forget, so that this nightmare would finally pass. I couldn't talk on the phone because my mother was watching my every move. As Mira saw that she couldn't get me back, she made sure I couldn't be with anyone else. I had to tell my mother that I wasn't thing "kind of girl" that Mira was talking nonsense about and that I had to withdraw from her because she is a toxic person. I didn't dare tell her that I withdrew from her because she was a lesbian and that it was bad company. It was a completely twisted situation. I couldn't tell my mother that being a lesbian is normal because she would never understand and it would hurt her too much. I pretended that I had a boyfriend (it had to be platonic of course), that I wasn't that kind of girl, luckily she didn't tell my brother. I couldn't receive my friends at home anymore, my outings were very limited, and the relationship I had could not survive this pressure. Mira was still trying to reach me but I didn't want to talk to her at all because it was her fault that I had to live the worst abuse. I am still pretending to be in a relationship with a man. I have a friend who is helping me with that. The only escape I have left is to leave the country because it will be the only way for me to live as I am without pressure, and without hurting my family.

## 07 – LIVING LIKE A HOSTAGE BECAUSE OF MY HOMOSEXUALITY

Nabil is a young man of 20 years old, living in a small town located in the region of The Oranie. For a little over two years, he has been facing an unbearable situation because of his sexual orientation. He contacted TransHomosDz to ask for help and we met him last January after several online exchanges. Here is the content of the interview with him:

### **THDZ:**

First of all, we thank you for trusting us and for coming to Oran to tell us your story. Can you please tell us who you are and what happened to you?

### **Nabil :**

I am Nabil, I am 20 years old and I am homosexual. I am an only child, motherless for 3 years and I work in the farm of my father who is an Imam.

### **THDZ:**

Why did you contact us?

### **Nabil:**

When I was about 15 years old, I started to understand that I was different. My schoolmates were talking about their desires for girls, while I wanted them. I tried several methods to fix myself (prayers, sports, pornographic movies ...) but it worked only for a short time. One day, I was at my mother's aunt in a nearby village, and I spent the night in the bed of my 17-year-old cousin who is also gay. We had sex and it was so good that I started going to his house every weekend to have that intimate time. Three years ago, my cousin's neighbor found out he was gay and told his parents. My cousin ran away from the village and we haven't heard from him since.

### **THDZ:**

What happened next?

### **Nabil:**

For almost a year, I found myself alone again in front of my orientation...I used to go on the internet a lot to have some virtual moments of freedom. One evening, I came across a site that talked about gay dating applications that existed all over the world and curiosity pushed me to install one on my mobile. I was surprised to see that not far from my home, and even in my own village, there were homosexuals like me. For weeks, I was just chatting on the application, without giving my name, phone number or pictures. There was a 30 years old man with whom I often chatted and who convinced me to send him naked pictures of myself. We then decided to meet at his house one night when his family was not present. We had sex and the meetings happened several times. Everything was fine until one day he became violent. He threatened to tell my father everything and to send him compromising pictures of me if I didn't give him money. Since then, I have been living a terrible nightmare...

**THDZ:**

But wouldn't he also be in danger if he revealed the photos? Wasn't he also concerned by these forbidden relationships?

**Nabil:**

That's exactly what I told him at the beginning, but he answered that the photos prove that he was the one who penetrated me and that his virility would not be disturbed by a scandal because he remains «a man» and not me. And in reality, he was absolutely right.

**THDZ:**

What do you mean he was right?

**Nabil:**

In my village, I often heard some men bragging about having «fucked a fag». They were proud of it and said that they trained to be ready for girls. This did not make them homosexuals because it is only the one who is penetrated that is on whom all the hatred and consequences fall. It's not fair, but it is a reality and that's why I say he was right.

**THDZ:**

What did you do after this blackmail?

**Nabil:**

I first started by giving him money. My father used to give me some money every month to buy clothes or other personal needs. I gave him everything and I had nothing left. I thought that after a few months it would stop, but it didn't. He kept asking me for more and more money. I would tell him that I had given him everything I had but he didn't care. He wanted more money and I had to make do. I found myself, for the first time in my life, having to steal money from my father's closet where he kept the farm income.

**THDZ:**

Did you ever think of defying him and not accepting his blackmail ?

**Nabil:**

Several times, but knowing my father and having attended his preaching at the mosque every Friday, I was convinced that if he learned my secret, he would execute me without any hesitation in application of the Islamic sharia law.

**THDZ:**

So, you continue to give him money?

**Nabil:**

Unfortunately, it's not just a money problem anymore, but the situation has become even more complicated.

**THDZ:**

What do you mean?



**Nabil:**

When I went to his house to give him the money (once or twice a month), he demanded that I have sex with him. When I tried to refuse, he started talking about my father and showed me that he had his number on his phone. After some resistance, I finally gave in because the price to pay would be too high if not...

But that's not all. Five months ago, I went to his house to give him the money and also to satisfy his sexual desires but I was surprised to find another man at home. I was about to turn back but he locked the door and put it in his pocket. Then he asked me to undress in front of this man. The man in question was about fifty years old and remained silent while the other ordered me to strip. When I refused, he started to hit me hard. I couldn't help it, so I took off my clothes and the other man began to rape me in silence. I don't remember much about how it happened, I only remember that he gave a condom to my rapist saying «protect yourself, you never know what is waiting for you from those germs» knowing that he had never used a condom with me...

When he had finished, the man pulled up his pants, gave him a wad of money and waited for him to open the door to leave. I got dressed to leave in my turn but my torturer told me, no don't get dressed, you still have to finish the job with me. He takes off his clothes and penetrates me too then ask me to leave the place.

This happened several times with the same men and two different men.

**THDZ:**

It's terrible what's happening to you! Are you thinking of leaving your village and going somewhere else like your cousin did?

**Nabil:**

Yes, I often think about it, but apart from working on the farm, I don't know how to do anything else, and I don't have any qualifications. Not to mention the fact that my father, being an imam, has a large network at the national level and will surely do everything to find me. So, I can't disappear like my cousin did.

**THDZ:**

Do you know that what he is doing to you and what the other men are doing to you is a crime that could lead them to jail? Are you thinking of reporting them to the police to get it over with?

**Nabil:**

Yes, I know, but that would mean that my father would know the truth and even if they risk prison, I risk death. That's why there's no way out for me.

**THDZ:**

What are you going to do then? Are you going to continue in this situation?

**Nabil:**

No. Certainly not! Sometimes, when he is in a good mood, he is nice to me and talks to me like in the beginning. He also confides in me. Not long ago, he told me that he was saving money to go and live abroad next year and would not come back to Algeria.

**THDZ:**

What do you expect from us? How can we help you?

**Nabil:**

You know my story and this makes me feel less alone. I would just like you to be there when I need to talk and to warn others to be careful when they send pictures or meet other people so they don't end up in the same situation.

**THDZ:**

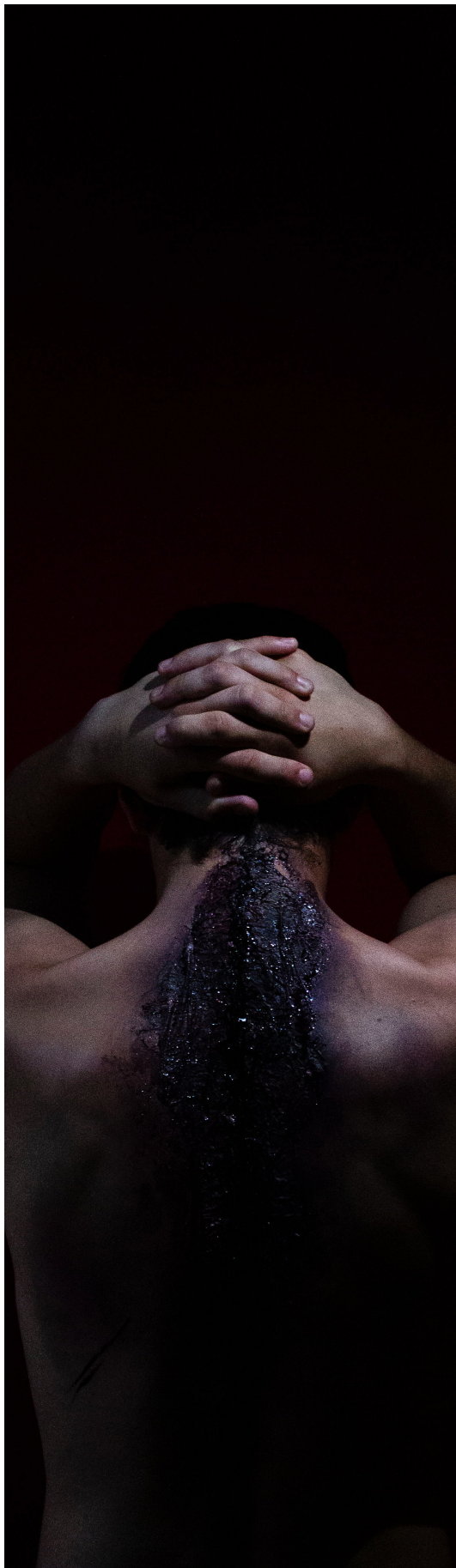
Is there anything you would like to add?

**Nabil:**

I want to thank you for always answering my messages and for coming to Oran to listen to me. I feel really relieved to have said everything...



## 08 – WHEN REPRESSION TURNS INTO VIOLENCE



*We contacted Kamel, a 28-year-old man, through a mutual friend. Kamel lived in Blida, a town about 50 kilometers from the capital. Here is what he told us:*

I am a quiet person, very appreciated by my parents whom I help as much as I can. I have never had any problems with the neighbors and I have tried to remain discreet about who I am. By that I mean that I am gay, and I have known that since I was a kid. Of course, at the time I didn't know it had a name. When I first realized my attraction to boys, I was very confused at first and I knew I had to hide it. My mother has always been gentle with me, my father is nice, but the one I have had trouble with is my brother. We are only a year apart, so we spent a lot of time together when we were young. We are very different, I am introverted and he is extroverted, I am quiet and he is hot-headed, I am tolerant and he is not so much so. I covered for him sometimes when he did something stupid, like when my parents found a pack of cigarettes, I told them that it wasn't his, that it belonged to a friend of his who forgot them there. When he had bad grades, I explained the lessons to him so that he could improve. When I had part-time jobs he asked me for money and I gave it to him... in short, a normal sibling. He stayed in the neighborhood a lot, unlike me. One day he came to tell me that there was a «nokch» (derogatory term for a gay man) who passed through the neighborhood, and that he and his friends threw stones at him, he told me this while laughing. He was 14 and I was 15, and I got cold feet. I told him that it was horrible what he had done, he answered «ghadouk nkoucha?» (Do you feel bad for the gays?) with a look of distrust. I told him that no one deserved such treatment, that he didn't have to show his redjla (his virility) in this way at the expense of others. One day he commented on a pair of jeans I was wearing, saying that they were too tight and that nben mra (I looked like a woman), I immediately put him in his place and told him that he should mind his own business, I knew that I had to confront him as soon as possible or else he would get the better of me.



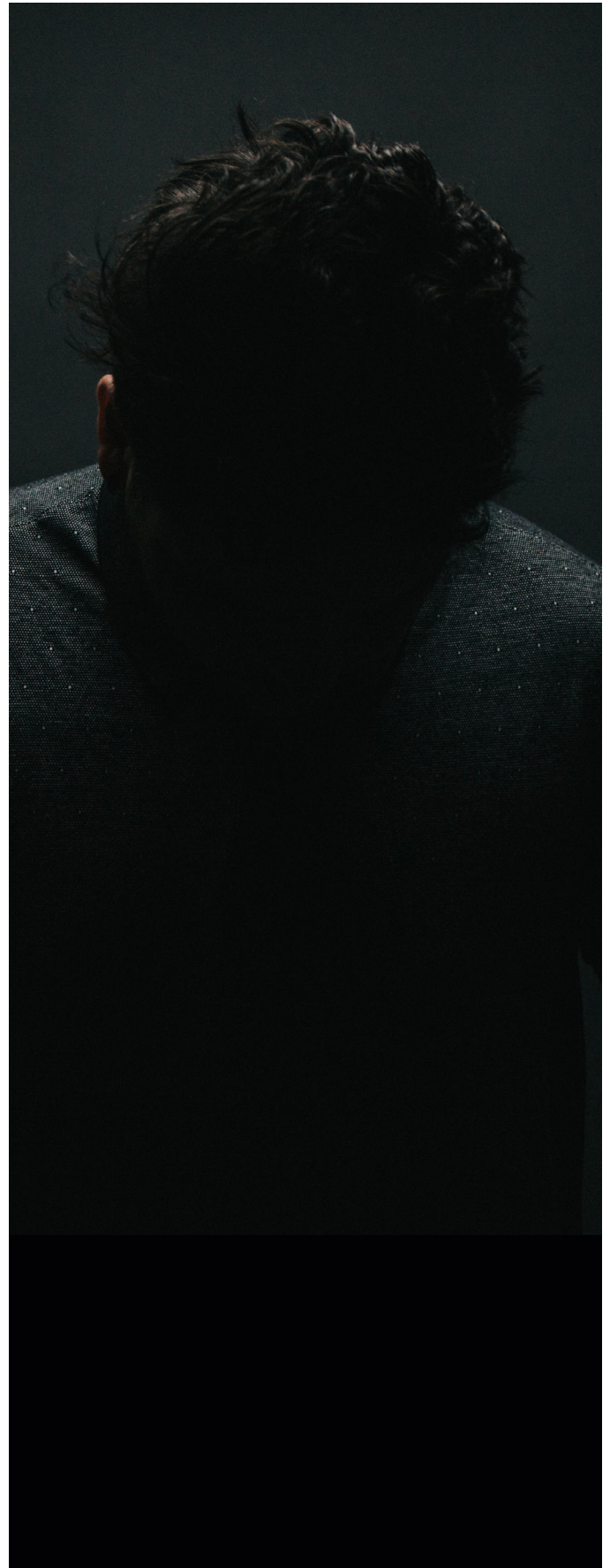
I remained discreet about my sexuality, I had few dates and when I discovered gay groups and pages on the internet it changed my life, in a good and bad way. I started to talk with men like me, who were not only interested in sex with the top/bottom binarity, I took a long time to meet the first one, because I was afraid that it was a trap. The first guy I met became a very good friend, and the second one my boyfriend. My boyfriend and I had been writing to each other for a month, then we called each other, and finally we saw each other. It was love at first sight, he was 5 years older than me, he was intelligent, funny...it was going perfectly, but after 8 months he left to France, I tried to go to see him but I had visa refusals, I was ready to make steps to settle in France to study, we had the project to live together but our relationship did not hold with the distance. The break-up hurt me a lot, I could not stand it, fortunately I had two friends who were there for me. At home, they could see that I was in a bad place mentally but it was impossible for them to know why, I was using false pretexts, it was a great sorrow, especially since we, my ex and I, didn't talk to each other anymore to avoid sending mixed signals. To move on, I started talking to strangers again, I was talking to a guy who was quite nice, he annoyed me a bit but it was better than the rest and we decided to meet. I was a little apprehensive because he talked a lot about sex, but I told myself that I wasn't going to dwell on the story with my ex all the time. We decided to meet in the evening at a café downtown. We were talking, he was seducing me, but I felt a bit embarrassed, when I asked him how he was he told me that he was not very comfortable when there were a lot of people, that he liked to be quiet... he proposed that we go for a ride in the car, I accepted. I wanted to do something with him, we talked a little about our experiences, he drove and then stopped in a place a little deserted. I felt a mixture of excitement and fear, I wanted

to have sex with him and didn't want to at the same time, and without having time to know what to do, he jumped on me. I let myself go at first, then I told him not tonight. He insisted, telling me that he wanted too much, he asked me to touch him only. When I touched him, he insisted on more, I told him to get out the condoms and he told me that he didn't have any and that we could do it without. Luckily, I had some on me and we ended up having sex. As soon as he came he threw the condom out the window, closed his pants and completely changed his attitude, he started to ask me if I wanted him to pay me, I said no, then he said esma3 ana mechi nokch (listen I'm not a faggot), I was hallucinating that he would say that at that moment. I asked him about what we had just done, he got angry and told me that he was the one who fucked me anyway, that we gays only think about that, that as soon as someone shows us his dick we jump on it and we don't let go. His tone was getting really aggressive and he was starting to scare me, but at the same time I was pissed off by so much hypocrisy. I told him he was lying to himself, he kept talking and insulting me, I told him he was a hypocrite and then I got punched in the face. He hit me and called me a faggot, I protected myself as best I could with my hands, he was out of his mind, I told him to stop and angrily, he asked me to get out of the car. I got out of the car and he drove straight away. Luckily, he hadn't taken my phone, I was able to call a cab driver I trusted who came to pick me up. My nose was bleeding, my eye was starting to swell, I said that someone tried to rob me, the driver said he would drop me off at the police station if I wanted, but I absolutely did not want to talk to police officers at that moment, I was afraid that it would turn against me, I did not want to face their interrogation. I went home, washed up and couldn't sleep at night. I couldn't imagine that there could be so much hate in a man who was attracted to men. I deleted all my gay accounts and I didn't want to hear any

more of this stuff, I pretended at home that I had been in a fight because someone had tried to rob me. I didn't go out much anymore, it took me a few weeks to get over that and get back to a normal life.

One day, while I was sitting quietly in my room, my brother came in furious and told me «ida 3andek khmadj ta3ek dirou, dirou b3id w balek nesma3 bik» (if you have some dirt to do, do it far away and you better not let me hear about you), I got up and adopted his language, asking him what was wrong with him, he answered that he had been «told about me», I answered that he had to show his virility in front of these people, that I had nothing to reproach myself with and that he had to educate himself. Standing up to him required an incredible effort, but I knew that I absolutely had to not give in because it was a power game. I had to dominate him so that he would not crush me; I told him to mind his own business, I grabbed him by his shirt and told him that if he ever dares to address me like that again he would regret it. Was I scared? Of course, I was scared, I was distraught, anxious, I was playing a character whom I simply was not, it was a question of survival. When he went out, I kept replaying it over and over again in my head, I kept asking myself what he had been told, who had told him, I kept spinning stories in my mind, and above all I was afraid that it would go further. I was even afraid of running into him, but I pretended that I was the one who was angry. There was no follow-up to this incident and I never knew why he came to talk to me that. A few months after this incident and after having worked like crazy, I was able to save up a sum of money to rent and live quietly in Algiers. I told my parents that going back and forth between Algiers and Blida for work was tiring me a lot and that's why I needed to move up there. Since I've been in Algiers I'm more relaxed, I'm always careful about everything, I know that if I make the slightest slip I'll have to

pay a high price. I am aware that what I do wouldn't even be a mistake, it would just be considered as such by the others. I have learned that it takes a lot of time to trust, and that the only choice for now is to live hidden until the hatred fades away.



## 09 – BEING AN ASSIGNED FEMALE AT BIRTH AND A TRANSGENDER MAN: THE DOUBLE PUNISHMENT

**TransHomosDz:**

Hello Malik,

When you contacted us a few months ago, you said you were in a life-threatening situation. Can you explain why?

**Malik:**

Yes, indeed. A few months ago, I took pills to end my life. I didn't succeed in my attempt and I think my family would want me to do it again because they are doing everything to push me to relapse.

**TransHomosDz:**

Can you tell us about the reasons that led you to commit this act and why do you think your family wants to see you succeed in this action?

**Malik:**

I can tell you because you told me that my feelings are not madness.

In fact, I was born a woman but, in my head, I am a man. I don't know how to explain it but I really tried to be a woman to live happily but it is not possible. Wallah, I can't do it...

**TransHomosDz:**

Do you consider yourself a transgender man?

**Malik:**

I don't know if I am a transgender man. I heard this word for the first time last year on a Lebanese channel and it is after this program that I contacted you. In this television program, there were women who said they were born «men» but they considered themselves as women. I cried a lot during this program because I identified with them even though we don't have the same experience. In reality, I am not very educated. I left school early and I only know Arabic. That's why I don't know much about these names...

**TransHomosDz:**

Can you tell us a little bit about your life so we can understand a little bit about what drove you to try to end your life?

**Malik:**

I'm Malik but people know me with a female name. I am 21 years old and I am the oldest child of my parents. I have two brothers and a sister. I live in a very small town 100 kilometers from Oran. When I was a child, I was considered a tomboy and was often called «Aicha Rajel». When I was a child, I liked being called that because I thought it was an acknowledgement of my masculinity, but as I got older, I realized that it was to insult and belittle me. Until I was 8 years old, things were going well for me because I could play with the boys, I was even the best soccer player in the neighborhood. When my two brothers started to grow up, things became more complicated for me. At first, they would ask my parents not to let me go out and play with the boys. At first my parents defended



me, but then my brothers would physically attack me and forbid me to go out and my parents ended up taking their side. At that time, my life went from a happy childhood to hell on earth. Simple things were changing little by little. I was no longer allowed to wear pants, cut my hair, and the list goes on... I had many questions about myself and the only answer I could come up with was that I was not normal, that I was crazy and that my family was right to react like that to my craziness. Sadness and suffering then became my daily feeling. I hated wearing a dress and having long hair, so I didn't want to leave the house and decided at the age of 15 to quit school. The whole family was happy with this decision and my mother was happy to have someone at home to help her make the baskets... I thought I was used to this life but when I saw this Lebanese program, I started to have hysterical fits and couldn't stand my body anymore. One day I decided to cut my hair into a ball. When my brother saw me like that, he beat me and my father did the same when he came home. Since that day, I have been beaten violently on a regular basis and I can't find a way out. As I told you, I really tried to be a woman to get out of this pain but the more I increase the degree of my femininity the more my anxiety and distress attacks increase... In the summer of 2019, a man came with his family to ask for my hand in marriage and my father agreed without even asking my opinion. The thought of being married to a man was so unbearable to me that I took a box of my mother's pills and consumed them all. I started having pain and then I passed out. They took me to the hospital. My parents told the doctor that the stress of the wedding had made me panic and take the drugs. The family of the man who proposed to me heard the news cancelled the engagement. This made my family very angry. Since then, they keep telling me that I should have finished the job, that I was «useless» and that I wasn't even capable of killing myself.

**TransHomosDz:**

How do you manage to deal with things today? Do you still think about suicide?

**Malik:**

Yes, I think about it all the time but I don't want to die anymore. It was a stupid act that I don't want to repeat but I can't find a way out of my ordeal. Today, I seem to be a woman like the others in order to avoid being beaten but it is very difficult now that you have told me that I am not sick and that my identity is legitimate and that it is the society and my family that were wrong.

**TransHomosDz:**

How can we help make things less painful for you?

**Malik:**

You have already done a lot for me. The testimonies in Arabic that you have sent me about people like me have given me a lot of hope and I have felt less and less alone. I hope that one day I will be able to run away from home and go to another city, but my fear of being alone is still stronger than the suffering of my daily life. I just ask you to continue to talk to me and reassure me as you do and also to allow me to express myself in masculine terms. The first time you told me that I had to express myself with you as I saw my identity and when I started to express myself as a man, that was the most beautiful day of my life.

**TransHomosDz:**

Do you want to add a few things?

**Malik:**

I'm glad you decided to publish my story in Arabic because I want a lot of people to know my story and for others like me to be relieved that we exist. I know that what I am about to say is impossible but I hope that one day we can all live in the same place and support each other. Thanks again for your support!

**TransHomosDz:**

We thank you for your courage and your perseverance to keep on living in spite of all these sufferings. We will publish your story and will always be there if you need to express yourself.

## 10 – ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

TransHomosDz would like to thank all the people who contributed to the realization of this project.

We especially thank members of the Algerian LGBTQI+ community, who trusted us to share with their sufferings, daily life and stories through their testimonies.

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TransHomosDz Team

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