

**Algeria: The revolution that never was  
Does 'progressive leadership' or something more complex and sinister explain why  
Algeria's 'Spring' never materialised?  
By People and Power  
17 May 2012**

The 'Arab Spring' of 2011 brought down autocratic governments across North Africa and the Middle East. But, despite widespread street protests that initially threatened to spark a Tunisian or Egyptian style revolt, an expected uprising in Algeria failed to materialize. President Abdelaziz Bouteflika's regime - often accused of being one of the most repressive in the region - promised modest political reform and managed to hold onto power. Earlier this month it claimed to have delivered on these promises when parliamentary elections were held, in which the ruling National Liberation Front (or FLN) won an overwhelming majority of the votes. Although opposition groups were quick to deride the poll as a sham and to accuse the government of manipulating the results, European and American observers called the poll a step toward democracy.

So what has been going on in Algeria for the last year? Did it genuinely, as the government would claim, avoid the upheaval that swept through the rest of North Africa last year because of the Bouteflika regime's 'progressive leadership'? Or has something darker and more complex been going on - a story that opponents and human rights activists say has more to do with a wary population traumatized by the country's violent past and living in fear of its secret police? People & Power wanted to find out, but getting into Algeria is difficult - not least because Al Jazeera has been denied official access to the country since 2004. Nevertheless, when our requests for journalist visas were ignored, our filmmakers managed to get in unofficially and were able to work discreetly.

**Source: Aljazeera**