

Algerian army opens fire, kills demonstrators

ALGIERS, Algeria (AP) — Soldiers fired into crowds of demonstrators Sunday who refused to disperse, and police and hospital sources said at least 200 people had died in rioting over rising prices and a government austerity program.

Clashes between the army and demonstrators grew more violent late Saturday and early Sunday. Soldiers were ordered to shoot at protesters who did not disperse and fired repeatedly.

The government confirmed deaths among security forces.

The worst violence was reported in the southern and eastern suburbs of Algiers and in the western port city of Oran. Fighting also was reported in a dozen provincial centers.

In the capital, Algiers, army helicopters armed with rockets flew low, apparently to discourage the formation of crowds.

The city was mostly calm. After midday prayers at the city's mosques, some people gathered and chanted, "Chadli Must Go!" a reference to President Chadli Bendjedid. They dispersed quickly when soldiers charged.

Hospital and police sources in various parts of the country providing fragmentary information said more than 200 people had been killed and several hundred injured in the past five days. The government has given no official death toll.

From the accounts of sources, as well as descriptions from citizens who witnessed clashes, it seemed likely the final death toll could be much higher than 200.

A 26-year-old government official, Aliouane Fadela, said she saw gangsters in riot gear "charging bystanders who were doing nothing, and then kick them once they were on the ground." The gangsters are police under military control.

Authorities on Thursday imposed a state of emergency with overnight curfews and arrested more than 900 people for looting.

The official APS Algerian news agency gave a list of reasons for the mounting unrest — crop failure, the collapse of oil prices, the global economic crisis and Algeria's enormous population increase — from 9.4 million in 1954 to more than 23 million.

The unrest began about 10 days ago, when industrial workers staged strikes for higher wages. The government said it would not break with its austerity plan to raise wages, and youths began rampaging in Algiers and other cities.

The austerity plan is aimed at resolving an economic crisis made worse by the fall in the price of oil, the nation's main source of revenue. The plan, announced in January, aims to line up food prices with world markets and cut surplus workers in the state-owned industries that dominate the economy.

The unemployment rate is estimated at

above 40 percent in the capital, and food prices have risen by as much as 40 percent since January.

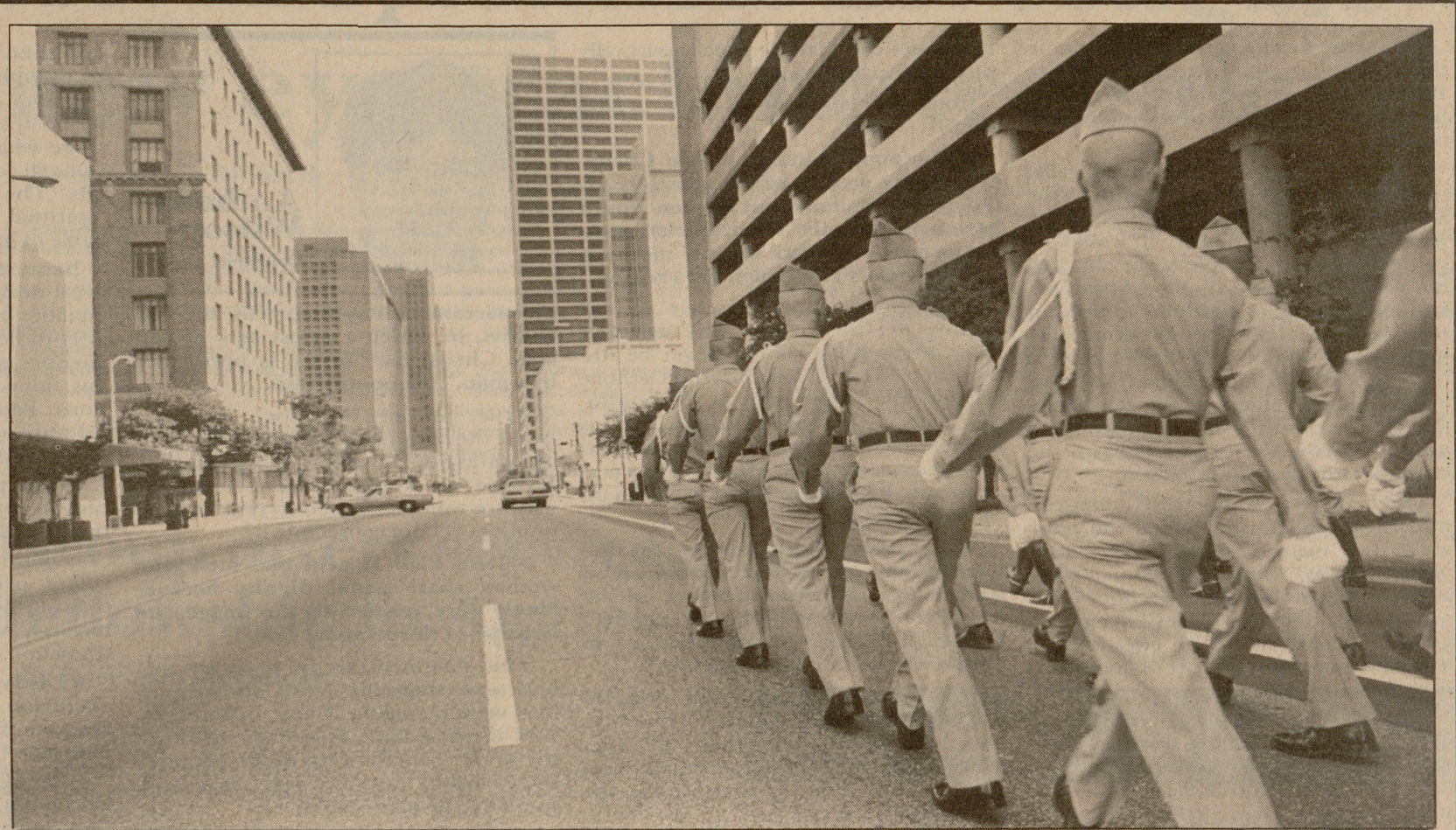
Algerian radio reported Sunday that crowds of young people confronted tanks in violent outbreaks in the Kabyle mountain region east of Algiers — where about 2 million Berbers claim they are discriminated against for their non-Arabic language — as well as in towns in the southern desert. The radio did not report casualties.

The largest number of casualties were reported in the town of Kouba, on southern fringes of Algiers, where the army fired into a crowd that ignored calls to disperse. Hospital sources, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said more than 60 people were killed.

Witnesses who also demanded anonymity said soldiers fired with machine guns mounted on tanks and jeeps.

In Bachdjarah, in the eastern suburbs of Algiers, 30 people were reported killed, and in the western district of Bab-el-Oued, nine protesters reportedly died.

Hundreds of other demonstrators were injured in the Algiers area, hospital officials said.



On the road again!

Company K-2 marches down Main Street in downtown Houston Saturday before the Texas A&M - Houston football game. The Corps of Cadets makes

two trips out of town every year. The second trip this year will be to Austin for the University of Texas vs. A&M game.

Photo by Mike C. Mulvey

Symposium sheds light on Sunshine laws

By Alan Sembera
Senior Staff Writer

Experts on Texas's Freedom of Information laws attempted to clear up some of the confusion surrounding the laws during a symposium conducted Saturday morning at Texas A&M.

Attorneys from the State Bar of Texas and the Texas Attorney General's Office focused on the public's right to gain access to government information under Texas's Open Records Act and Open Meetings Act.

They reviewed the types of information covered by the laws, how the courts are interpreting them, and what journalists and other members of the public can do to enforce them.

The symposium first covered the Texas Open Meetings Act, which requires that all actions at government meetings must take place in view of the public unless the action falls under an exception listed in the law.

Houston attorney Kelly Frels said some of these exceptions include the discussion of real estate purchases, the discussion of an individual employee and meetings with an attorney to discuss pending litigation.

These actions can take place in a private executive session, he said. How-

ever, he added, no final vote can be taken in these closed sessions.

Frels said problems occur in these executive sessions when officials stray away from what they are supposed to be talking about and discuss other issues.

The Open Meetings Law also requires governmental bodies to post an agenda of what actions will take place at a meeting, Frels said.

The agenda must be posted in a public place 72 hours in advance of the meeting. Even actions to occur in closed executive sessions must be listed on the agenda, Frels said.

Frels said it's hard for a member of the public to stop a government body from breaking the Open Meetings Act if it insists on ignoring it.

Bad publicity for the officials who violate the act is the only practical means of prevention, he said, because the local district attorney is unlikely to file criminal charges against local officials.

He said the main enforcement tool used against offending government bodies is to have their actions voided by a court if they weren't in compliance with the law.

Jennifer S. Riggs, chief of the open government section of the Texas Attorney General's Office, also was at the

symposium to explain how the Texas Open Records Act works.

She said when someone wants a copy of a government document and the official who is in charge of the record will not comply, the person seeking the document should submit a written request. The request should be as specific as possible, she said.

When the government agency receives that request, Riggs said, they have to either release the information or ask for an opinion from the attorney general on whether the document is an open record.

One of these two things must be done in a reasonable amount of time, which cannot exceed 10 days, she said. If no attorney general's opinion is requested within this time, the record is automatically assumed to be public, she added.

All records are public she said, unless they fall under an exception listed in the Open Records Act.

Protecting the privacy of government employees and students and concealing investigations by law enforcement agencies are some of the reasons a document would be considered non-public.

When an agency requests an attorney general's opinion, Riggs said, they must include a copy of the request for the records and should give the reason they do not want to disclose them.

If an agency does release copies of records to someone, the requester has to pay the costs of producing the information, she said.

Howard Swindle, a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist from the *Dallas Morning News*, also spoke at the event. He called for a tougher Open Records Act, saying the attorney general should have the power to penalize agencies that rou-

tinely subvert the act's purpose by stalling and charging excessive fees.

The symposium attracted about 125 people from the Central Texas area, including a large number of government officials and journalists.

Tension between these government officials and the media was one of the primary reasons for organizing the symposium, said James B. Sales, president of the Texas Bar, which cosponsored the symposium along with the Texas Freedom of Information Foundation.

Sales said there is too much misunderstanding in the local area about what government bodies are required to tell the public.

This was the fourth of six symposiums to be presented around the state, he said.

A&M, Texas Medical Center will benefit from biotechnical institute

By Sharon Maberry
Staff Writer

Texas A&M will be at the forefront of biotechnology with the Institute of Biosciences and Technology (IBT), to be constructed in Houston in conjunction with the Texas Medical Center.

"The purpose (of the IBT) is to interface Texas A&M and the Texas Medical Center in ways that will complement both units so we can each do more," John Shaddock, dean of the A&M College of Veterinary Medicine, said.

"We hope to be funded primarily by federal funds, private gifts and University support," he said.

The IBT's first project will be the study of comparative animal genetics in hope of gaining a detailed understanding of the human genetic composition, he said.

"Genetic information (in living organisms) is provided in four building blocks," he said. "All of our inherited information is determined by the sequence of those four blocks."

"There are about three billion different ways they can be arranged. Sequencing human genes is to know which block is in which place."

"Imagine being in space looking at the earth and wanting to know where every single person is, physically. There are about five billion people in the world."

"That is the same as looking at a cell and wanting to know the order (of the arrangement of genetic information). It is very expensive and time consuming."

Shaddock said the IBT researchers will study mice for the key to genetics because much already is known about their genetic maps.

This genetic research will be useful for the Texas Medical Center in learning about humans and for Texas A&M in learning about animals of agricultural importance, like cattle and sheep, he said.

"Our overall goal for animals of economic importance is to produce foodstuffs of greater nutritional composition for people," Shaddock said. "We would

also like to determine the genetic basis of resistance to disease and genetically engineered disease-resistant animals."

"This is nothing that hasn't been done before," Shaddock said of the genetic research to be conducted at the IBT. "Crops and animals have been improved (by man). The difference is that previous genetic engineering has been by selective breeding (which takes several generations). Now it's being done by gene insertion (which can bring about the desired change in one generation)."

A difficulty of gene manipulation for desired traits in animals is that many traits probably are controlled by multiple genes and scientists do not know the location of most of these genes, Shaddock said.

The IBT, which will be constructed in two or three years, will involve people on the A&M campus directly, he said.

Shaddock said he hopes the IBT will provide opportunities for student involvement, such as bringing guests to campus to give seminars.

Official: Rumor of problems with new garage unfounded

By Richard Tijerina
Staff Writer

Rumors about spacing problems in the Northside Parking Garage are untrue, said Wesley Peel, Texas A&M Vice Chancellor For Facilities Planning and Construction.

Rumors had been spreading on campus that trucks would not be able to use the ramps in the parking garage without severe problems making the turns.

Peel said the worries about the situation are unjustified.

"Isn't it funny how that (rumor) works out?" Peel said. "We're not having any problems whatsoever getting trucks up and down those ramps. I myself have a big Chevy truck and I

drive up and down there every day."

He said that even vehicles the size of small campers would be able to maneuver within the ramps.

The Battalion was allowed to photograph Peel's truck using the ramps. The truck appeared to have no problems making the required turns.

Tom Williams, A&M director of parking, traffic and transit, said trucks would be able to use the garage with no problems.

Peel and Williams said that considerations are underway to widen the parking spaces to make parking in the garage more convenient.

Peel said that the state standard for parking space width is eight feet six inches. Widening the spaces to eight

feet nine inches is being discussed.

"Considerations are still under way," Peel said. "We thought if we increased that (width), it would give people more room to get in and out of their cars."

In addition to making the parking spaces wider, plans are being discussed to change the angle of the spaces to make it easier to park. Such changes would reduce the number of spaces available by about 100. The garage was planned to hold 2000 cars.

Letters were sent to students over the summer informing them that they could reserve spaces in the new parking garage by mailing back the card enclosed with the letter.

Williams said that allocation of spaces is beginning now from reservations made during the summer. Spaces are being reserved on a first-come, first-served basis, he said.

The garage is scheduled to open Jan. 1, 1989. Williams said that construction and planning is on schedule and that everything should be ready by the opening date.

"That date is pretty much set in stone right now, so we've been shooting for it and we'll make it," Williams said. "We're starting to allocate all the parking spaces now so we can be ready by then."

Security for the new garage will be extremely tight, both Williams and Peel said.

"It'll be safer than Fort Knox," Williams said. "There'll be security guards there 24 hours a day, plus there'll be video cameras on hand to record everything."

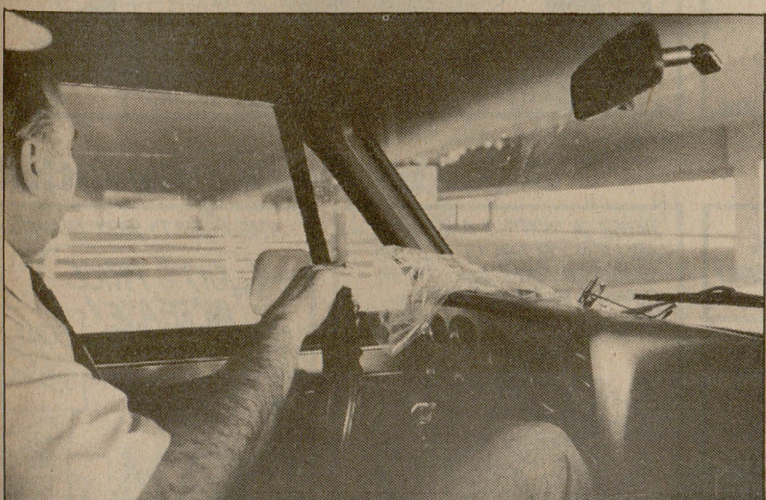


Photo by Mike C. Mulvey

General Peel drives his full size truck through the new parking garage. He did this to prove trucks could park in the garage.