Paris, 26 February 2016

Opinion of the Defender of Rights no. 16-06

The Defender of Rights (DDD),

Having considered:

- article 71-1 of the Constitution of 4 October 1958;
- French Organic Law no. 2011-333 of 29 March 2011 concerning the Defender of Rights;

issues the opinion herewith concerning the monitoring of the state of emergency.

Defender of Rights

Jacques TOUBON
Record of referrals pursuant to the state of emergency and action by the Defender

Report to Parliament

I - Quantitative and qualitative record

Since 27 November 2015, the date of the first referral to the Defender of Rights, it has received nearly 70 claims.

These concern three types of situation:

- administrative searches (34): justification, circumstances, forced entry, consequences;
- house arrests (16): justification, consequences, requests for modification;
- measures and events not directly resulting from the state of emergency, but connected with it (17): prohibition from leaving the territory (4); exclusion from cinemas; use of the state of emergency for purposes other than the prevention of attacks on the security of the state; refusal to access to a police station; refusal to access to a school for a woman that had with her head covered and was belonging to a parents' association; dismissal of two private security officers for having beards; withdrawal of a private security officer's licence; difficulties in rehousing the occupants of the building in Saint-Denis destroyed during the anti-terrorist raid on 13 November; difficulties encountered in penal establishments by associations normally working there assisting detainees; after the establishment of de-radicalisation workshops (and questioning on the content of such programmes and their implementation); questioning of a travelling salesman.
1- Administrative searches:

23 referrals out of 34 concerned persons subjected to an administrative search, which resulted on no further action.

A number of persons made statements to the Defender of Rights, so that it would be informed and would pass on the information. They alleged that information referred to in the order to search, identifying these persons as belonging to the “holy war” movement, was false, vague and with no serious basis. The argument usually advanced by the claimants is that their rigorous practice of the Muslim religion does not make them holy war activists.

In this regard, it should be stressed that on many occasions there were allegations of false denunciations.

The Defender of Rights takes note of these statements and inform the claimant of his rights.

The claimants, in a number of cases, express their indignation about erroneous information concerning them and about the discovery that they have been subjected to inappropriate surveillance.

8 claimants reported that their front doors had been broken.

They considered forced entry to be totally unjustified, while not systematically complaining of misconduct by the police during the search itself.

However, according to a circular from the Minister of the Interior sent to the Prefect, setting out the conditions for application of the state of emergency, the reimbursement of expenses incurred in changing or repairing the door is limited to serious misconduct attributable to the authorities, which means that those targeted by orders to search are not, in principle, entitled to compensation.

Furthermore, some owner-landlords have difficulty in obtaining information on how to claim for reimbursement of damage to their doors. In desperation, one of them complained to the Defender of Rights. He has been informed by letter of his right to obtain compensation.

In one case, the person searched was a militant opponent of Islamic radicalisation, who was apparently the victim of an error. Having been informed of his rights, he made no request for compensation, wishing only to submit his statement.

In 6 situations out of 34, the order to search was not provided to the person concerned, who therefore had difficulty in challenging it. The Defender of Rights then contacted the prefecture, so that the order to search should be served on the person concerned, who could therefore, if he so wishes, apply to the administrative courts, to challenge the search and/or claim compensation.
16 claimants, ie., nearly half, complained about unethical conduct by the police against them: shouting, insults, inappropriate remarks on the religious observances practices of those searched, no attention paid to the lack of attention to children present, pregnant women and handicapped--disabled people persons—or those in poor health, unlawful violence, inappropriate use of weapons and handcuffs, deliberate wilful humiliation, seizure of equipment without judicial or other lawful authority (hard disks, mobile telephones), the timing of the search and a disproportionate number of officers or soldiers in attendance presents.

At this stage, investigations into about the ethics of the security forces should enable to collect evidence to be obtained concerning regarding the context, preparation and performance of searches. Given the instructions issued by the Minister of the Interior in his circular of 25 November 2015, in particular especially concerning the respect of peoples's rights for the rights of persons, property and the premises searched, the Defender of Rights will consider whether the circumstances in which a search has been prepared and performed enable these directives to be followed.

At the end of these investigations, if it appears that one or more officers has/have broken an ethical rule, the Defender of Rights could recommend disciplinary proceedings. If there it appears to be a systematic misconduct, the Defender of Rights may make recommendations to avoid their repetition.

Examples of misconduct alleged:

- a claimant complained about him home of a search of her home, at 10 p.m., in the presence of her 6-year old son and her 15-year old daughter. The mother She was then 5 months pregnant. She and explained that the police rang the doorbell and that she had hardly had time to open it when officers armed with guns and truncheons brutally rushed in, ordering her to show her hands. They searched the whole house, throwing clothes and papers on the ground, then asked where her husband was and whether he had any weapons. Her husband, who was not there, had been was in Algeria since August. She said that they then photographer her, with and without her head covered, and then left, asking her to come and sign a report next day at the police station. The family was has been traumatised by this occurrence, especially the 6-year old child;

- a mother complained about the circumstances of a search by gendarmes on the 2nd of December 2015, from midnight to 4 a.m., in the presence of her four children, aged 17, 16, 13 and 7. The door had not been forced. Her husband was still up. The parents had been kept apart, while the gendarmes went into the children's bedrooms and told telling them to put their hands up. During As the search was being led, the parents asked the gendarmes whether it was their outfit and look that was justifying this search", to which the police officers replied...
“yes”. “Is it our appearance (beard and headscarf) which justifies your presence?”, to which they replied “Yes”.

During the investigations of the claims by the Defender of Rights of claims concerning regarding the conduct of a search, the Minister of the Interior, via the DGPN (General Directorate of the National Police force) or of the DGNN (General Directorate of the National Gendarmerie), is asked to provide a number of documents, such as the “search report” sent to the Prefect by the person in charge of the search - a detailed report of the police operation stating the exact grounds and the instructions given for the search and its conduct (the identity of the person). In overall charge, whether it was useful to have many police officers in the operation or required and the instructions for to avoid disturbing any problem (disturbance).

So far, although the documents concerning this type of claim were requested in the beginning of early December 2015 for 5 cases, the Defender of Rights only has received only one reply (answer), in the form it was of the report from an officer in charge of a search and a copy of the operation report of the operation. It concerned a search that occurred on the 1st of December 2015, at 5 a.m., by about thirty police officers, according to the claimant. Only his wife and his 3-year old son were on the premises. The flat was searched and computer data and photos were seized. The claimant complained about the discriminatory remarks which were made by the police officers about to his family. When his wife asked the reasons for the search, a policeman replied in these terms: “Because you practice your religion more than the average”, and as “You Muslims always dress in black”.

In response to a QPC - prioritised question of constitutionality - (no. 536) on the compliance of article 11 of the French law of 3 April 1955 with the Constitution, the French Constitutional Court, on 19 February 2016, declared this article not compliant with the Constitution, since it allows the copying of any digital data accessed during the search, whereas such seizure and the use of the data collected are not authorised by a judge and may be copied from data that are not linked to unconnected with the person concerned. The Constitutional Court stresses that “Parliament has not provided legal guarantees for ensuring a balance between the objective of public safety and the right to respect for private life.”

In the report drafted by from, the chief of the police captain in charge of the operation, it seemed that 13 officers were involved and that it had been decided to “include a female officer among those effecting the entry” as far as the officers “might encounter a woman with a child in the premises”. The Defender of Rights refers to its decision no. 10-0121125 (2010-39) MDS-MDE of 13 November 2012 and the more recently the decision no. MLD-MDE/ 2016-069, relating to the protection of children during this kind of intervention type of event, including about on the need to place them in a separate room, making sure that they are supervised and that they are spoken to by officers without masks or hoods. Here, it was stated that the officers entered the flat without force and that on their arrival, a woman and child were in the premises, they gave no without giving further details. Without drawing any general conclusion, the Defender of Rights notes both that the states services
of the state take their time in replying to its requests for information and the paucity of information in this first document, when compared with the facts complained of by the claimant and the questions raised by the institution.

The provisional administrative closure of an establishment until the end of the state of emergency, after an administrative search, pursuant to article 8 of French law no. 55-385 of 3 April 1955, has been brought to the attention of the Defender of Rights. This closure was motivated by the involvement of an employee and an associate in offences relating to drugs and a risk of disturbance to public order and public safety. This preventive measure was justified by the administrative authority both because of an increase in trafficking near a station and the possible contribution of the trafficking profits to financing radical Muslim networks.

In response to a QPC (no. 535) on the compliance of article 8 of the French law of 3 April 1955 with the Constitution, the French Constitutional Court, on 19 February 2016, declared this article to be compliant with the Constitution and stated that "if Parliament extends the state of emergency by a new law, the provisional closure measures, etc. taken beforehand may not be extended without being renewed". Therefore, as the initial closure order was to expire on 26 February 2016, the Prefect should, where appropriate, make a new order.

In more than 10% of the claims relating to administrative searches received by the Defender of Rights, the claimants allege that they have been falsely “informed on” by a neighbour, former colleague or an ill-disposed former partner. While it may be wrong to infer a tendency of ill-disposed denunciations to be in existence, one cannot exclude the possible emergence of such a phenomenon. In one case, a summons was rapidly withdrawn although the claimant claimed to have been the victim “of lies by a former colleague”.

Furthermore, many claimants assert a “change of attitude” by their neighbours, and their estrangement after an administrative search, even without any further action being taken.

Hence, in the light of what might be described as “a pernicious effect” of measures based on the state of emergency, in particular administrative searches, the services of the State should be particularly vigilant where persons are "fingered" by denunciations, in particular where these are anonymous. This pernicious effect, which has been insufficiently anticipated, might, if we are not careful, seriously compromise the social cohesion of our country and increase an unjustified long-term risk of stigmatising part of the national community.

2- House arrests:

Usually a house arrest order follows a search, sometimes accompanied by a prohibition on leaving the territory, where the targets are suspected of wishing to go to a holy war theatre of operations. The orders seem to be reasoned in detail, with certain facts and dates being specified. The order is stated to apply throughout the state of emergency.
The claims are based on the alleged falsehood of the information referred to (identifying these persons as belonging to the “holy war” movement) or the procedures for house arrest.

Where the claimants allege that the suspicions on which the house arrest is based are unfounded, the Defender of Rights restricts itself to formally noting their declarations and informing the claimants of their rights.

Furthermore, having regard to the constraints imposed by the orders for house arrest, they are accompanied, in almost all cases, by a prohibition on leaving the commune and an obligation of reporting to the police station of the sector or to the local gendarmerie brigade three times a day (morning, midday and evening). However, in a number of cases, this system imposes particularly burdensome constraints for the persons concerned, although they are not, in most cases, involved in any criminal proceedings. Generally, those under house arrest claim difficulties in working or schooling through having to stay in their communes and reporting.

The Defender of Rights has intervened with the authorities to support requests for modification on the part of the claimants:

- **Handicap:**

  A blind person had to report three times a day, which was difficult for lack of a guide. After the simultaneous interventions of the Defender of Rights and the blind person’s lawyer, the system has been changed to reporting once a day.

- **Health:**

  A person living in a remote Paris suburb suffers from neurological disturbance. He regularly goes to a Paris hospital for special examinations. He complains that his safe-conducts from the Prefect are far too short to enable him to make the return trip within the time allowed, which his journey seems to confirm. The claimant is afraid to go to the hospital, fearing prosecution for being late in returning to his commune. The Defender of Rights intervened with the Minister of the Interior, to inform him of this situation and to ask him for consideration, in the event of a check on the day of a consultation, where the person concerned could not return home soon after the time allowed, because of transport delays.

- **Schooling:**

  A young sixth-former of full age was prevented from continuing his schooling because of a midday reporting obligation. After the simultaneous interventions of the Defender of Rights and the father of the person concerned, the midday reporting was stopped.

- **High-level athlete:**

  A high-level sportsman under house arrest asked the Defender of Rights, via his trainer, to intervene, in order to obtain the issue of safe-conducts to enable him to participate in various
championships. The Prefect for his place of residence has been asked what he intends to do. The Defender of Rights is awaiting his response.

- Rural areas:

A couple objecting to house arrest in a rural environment have simultaneously applied to the Defender of Rights and the administrative court. They challenge the truth of the information stated in the house arrest orders. They also complained of the difficulties caused by their associated constraints, including responsibilities under a protective judicial guardianship measure exercised by one of them for a sick mother and the impossibility for the father and his children to engage in sports because of the house arrest, the children's interests being paramount. The Prefect initially granted a safe-conduct, which failed to satisfy the claimants. The administrative court quashed the house arrest orders, which the Ministry of the Interior is not appealing.

- Hardship:

A person suffering hardship whose lease had been terminated and was unemployed, asked the Defender of Rights to intervene to enable him to observe his house arrest at his parents' home, in another town. The Defender of Rights has not done so, as the person concerned has not provided the information requested to deal with his claim.

3- Measures and events not coming within the state of emergency, but connected with it

Examples of typical difficulties encountered:

- Matters directly associated with the state of emergency - access to nursery school:

The Defender of Rights has been approached by parents unsatisfied with the procedures for access to an elementary school when they went to collect their young children from nursery school. The parents had been told that the doors of the school would be closed at 4.40 p.m., then opened for 5 minutes, at fixed half-hourly intervals, to enable the parents to collect their children, but that they could not go back into the establishment, under pain of exclusion from the nursery school. The Defender of Rights told the claimants that in the light of the provisions both of the Vigipirate [Translator's note: state of emergency security] Plan and of the French General Territorial Authorities Code, the mayor concerned was entitled, in relation to extracurricular activities, to take such measures as seemed appropriate to ensure the security of areas in the vicinity of schools.

- Matters indirectly associated with the state of emergency - impact on employment – withdrawal of approval:

The Defender of Rights has been approached by an airport safety coordinator about the Prefect's withdrawal of approval of access to the regulated airport security area, on the
grounds of concern for possession of an undeclared category C weapon. As the conduct of the person concerned was incompatible with working in regulated airport security areas, the Prefect had used his powers under the regulations in force. After challenging the decision of the Prefect before the administrative court, he has been invited to reapply to the Defender of Rights, should the decision of the Prefect be quashed by the administrative court, in the event of his claiming compensation for the prejudice sustained.

The intervention of the Defender of Rights with a transport infrastructure management company, which dismissed one of its assistants after receiving information from the Prefecture after a search at her home, enabled negotiation with a view to a financial compromise, to avoid Employment Tribunal proceedings. The negotiation is continuing under the auspices of the Defender of Rights.

- **Abuse associated with the state of emergency**

  - access to a police station:

    A woman complained to the Defender of Rights of being refused access to a police station for making a complaint, because she had her head covered. She said that she had covered her hair, but not her face. She had been requested to remove her headscarf for entering and making a complaint. When she refused, she was told that “that had been the rule”, since January, because of the Sentinelle [Translator’s note: state of emergency security] plan. She received the same reply subsequently by telephone and via other officers from this police station. The Prefect was asked to explain, in late December 2015. The Defender of Rights is is still waiting for his response, after a reminder.

    - dismissal for having a beard:

    Two private security officers have been dismissed because of their beards. However, it has been impossible to investigate, because of the claimants’ failure to respond to the Defender’s requests.

  - refusal of access to a middle school:

    The Defender of Rights has been approached by a member of a parents' committee, who was refused access to a middle school while wearing a headscarf, because of the school's rule prohibiting religious emblems. This person, who had been admitted to the establishment without difficulty in the morning, to prepare an event organised by the committee, was refused entry after lunch, because she was wearing a headscarf. As the principle of religious neutrality under article L.141-5-1 of the French Education Code does not apply to the parents of pupils, the Defender of Rights contacted the principal of the middle school, since the decision to refuse entry to the claimant was likely to be discriminatory, because of her religion. The local education authority told the Defender of Rights that this person, who was not a parent of a pupil in this middle school, could not rely on this status for entering the school
premises. As this response makes no reference to the admission of this person to the middle school in the morning, the Defender of Rights is seeking further information.

- questioning of Travellers:

Another claimant, from the Travellers’ community, with a travelling salesman’s permit, was going from door to door, selling calendars. On denunciation by a private individual, he was questioned by the gendarmes, detained for two hours and put on file. His stock of calendars was confiscated, initially on the grounds that they did not contain the words “do not throw onto the public highway”, and then on the grounds that they did not contain “the name of the printer”. The gendarmes told him that, because of the state of emergency, the police and gendarmes “could do as they please”. The Defender of Rights requested an explanation from the DGGN, which replied that a legal action was in progress for infringement of an ordinary law. It did not explain the reference to the state of emergency.

A special case relating to a prohibition from leaving the territory came to our attention:

A father and his 15-year old son were both prohibited from leaving the territory, after a search and the house arrest of the father - accused of belonging to the Salafist movement - while the son had refused to participate in a minute’s silence over the events of January 2015 and had expressed his wish to “go off to the holy war”. In the reasons for the orders, it states that the eldest son of the family died in Syria, while fighting on behalf of the holy war cause, and that the family, having learnt of his death, did not inform the authorities. The father contacted the Defender of Rights to challenge the measures affecting him and his son, considering that the allegations against them were unfounded, but expressly stated that he did not intend to appeal against the order prohibiting his son from leaving the territory.

It is easy to understand that the father intended to protect his son from joining the ranks of holy war fighters in the Iraqi-Syrian war zone. Some parents, therefore, even though objecting to the state of emergency, may, in effect, admit that the prohibition on their children leaving the territory might indeed protect them.

II – Findings and Recommendations

Findings

Almost all claimants consider that the information contained in the grounds for administrative decisions made against them in relation to the state of emergency are unfounded, including the supposed linkage between their religious and political convictions and their dangerous potential. Whereas the factual information contained in the grounds is rarely challenged, it is
the linkage with a supposed dangerousness which concerns them, the claimants arguing for their good faith, by stressing, in many cases, the fact that they have no criminal convictions.

In these circumstances, the intervention of the Defender of Rights is sensitive, without the means to assess a claimant’s true dangerousness. However, informing the claimant, within the critical period, of the possibility of appeal, in addition to that referred to in the decisions, facilitates their challenge before the administrative courts, in the context of an inter partes discussion with the Ministry of the Interior, under the control of the court, which may sanction any manifest error in assessment.

In this regard, the close cooperation between the Defender of Rights and the French Council of State, which wishes to be kept informed in real time of the decisions rendered by the administrative courts, should be stressed.

Lastly, the Defender of Rights, which necessarily intervenes a posteriori, has a dual role, in accordance with its mission:

- with regard to access to rights, it informs and directs the claimant on the available methods of appeal; this is necessary in circumstances where the law is particularly opaque;
- with regard to protection of rights, it acts under ordinary law in investigating observance of the rules of security ethics and defending the rights of users of public services.

**Recommendations**

In the light of its findings, the Defender of Rights makes the following recommendations:

1. **Searches:**

   A. Adapt the terms of the search procedures to the actual dangerousness of the people concerned; targets: as to the need for the use of force in entering a house/entering and/or in the middle of the night and/or masked; adapt the number of officers involved;

   B. Take the maximum precautions necessary precautions when children are present in the event of children being present, both before and during the operation is led (pursuant to the decision of the Defender of Rights of 13 November 2012 no. 10-012125 (2010-39) MDS-MDE, decision MDE-MDS/ 2012-61 and more recently the decision no. MLD-MDE/2016-069);
C. As per Instruct the security forces via circulars issued by the Minister of the Interior, to instruct the police, systematically deliver, after an administrative search, to provide the person concerned with:

- the order to search so that he may appeal, where appropriate; if needed, a document that gives information about the informing him of the applicable law regarding the as to compensation for damage resulting from caused by a forced entry.

2. House arrests:

To prepare a procedure enabling persons/people under house arrest to be able to request a justified modification of the conditions that are justified by and, compatible with the object of the measure.

3. In the event case of a tip-off:

- particularly if anonymous mostly when it is anonymous, before any search, make a proceed to a quick rapid administrative investigation, enabling a false denunciation to be suspected, where appropriate, in the absence of any corroboration;

- in the event case of a manifestly false denunciation, the police should be instructed systematically to inform the Public Prosecutor which is territorially competent, pursuant to article 40 of the French Criminal Procedure Code. Public prosecutors should make enquiries to punish the commission of the act of offence of giving false information. It should be useful to remind the kind of procedure that might usefully be included in a circular setting out the procedures terms for administrative searches.

4. Compensation:

Facilitate the access to the right to compensation, by providing exceptional means for to compensate damage caused by administrative measures taken by the police, pursuant to the state of emergency.

The ordinary-traditional rules for compensation of prejudices occasioned done by administrative action do not seem appropriate to these circumstances.

Furthermore, where there is no prior judicial guarantee and where the administrative court can only act a posteriori by limited supervision, a specific method of compensation should nonetheless be established. It should be done by the legislator, the rules for which should be settled by Parliament.
State of emergency: quantitative record of claims received by the DDD up to 26 February 2016

Between 26 November 2015 and 23 February 2016, the Defender of Rights received 73 claims in all, of which:

- **53 referrals concerning measures expressly taken under the state of emergency:**
  - 32 searches;
  - 18 house arrests (of which 2 resulted in a dismissal and loss of licence for an airport security coordinator);
  - 2 searches followed by house arrest and prohibition from leaving the territory;
  - 1 search followed by a house arrest and a request for removal of a subsidiary protection.

- **20 referrals concerning situations indirectly connected with the state of emergency and having:**
  - Professional consequences: consequences affecting employment:
    - 1 claim relating to two dismissals for having beards;
    - 1 dismissal after the home search a search of the employee;
    - 1 disciplinary suspension after the employer informed the employer because the employee had written the nickname of a terrorist on his CASIER (Kalkal being the name of a terrorist);
    - 1 suspension of a trading professional licence;
    - 1 disciplinary sanction of a detainee (downgrading of employment job in a penitentiary establishment).
  - Consequences affecting the liberty of movement:
    - 4 refusals of access to public premises (including the exclusion from a cinema, the refusal of access to a middle school, the mother wearing a headscarf and refusal of access to a police station for wearing a headscarf);
    - 2 questionings (one in relation to COP21 - Paris environmental conference in 2016);
    - 2 prohibitions from leaving the territory;
    - 1 airport investigation;
    - 1 vehicle search in breach of the passengers’ rights to private life;
    - 1 refusal to issue a passport.
  - Others:
    - 1 claim relating to the difficulties of intervening in penal establishments;
    - 1 claim relating to the rehousing of persons after the attack in police action in Saint-Denis;
    - 1 refusal of compensation for material loss occasioned by a search;
    - 1 claim relating to the solitary confinement of a detainee because of his religious practices (he was prohibited from using his prayer mat and prayer books).
The majority of the claims received (23) came from the Ile-de-France region and more particularly from the counties of Seine-Saint-Denis and the Val-de-Marne. Referrals also came from the Provence-Alpes-Côte-d’Azur (10), Nord-Pas-de-Calais (10), Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes (8), Languedoc-Roussillon-Midi-Pyrénées (7), Aquitaine-Limousin (4), Alsace-Champagne-Ardenne-Lorraine (3), Centre-Val de Loire (3), Picardie (1), Normandy (1), Brittany (1), Pays de Loire (1) regions, and from overseas counties (Outre-mer) (1 claim from Guyana).