

World  
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Research

## Algeria: Full Country Dossier

January 2023



**OpenDoors**

Serving persecuted **Christians** worldwide

Open Doors International / World Watch Research

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# Introduction

## World Watch List 2023

Rank	Country	Private life	Family life	Community life	National life	Church life	Violence	Total Score WWL 2023	Total Score WWL 2022	Total Score WWL 2021	Total Score WWL 2020	Total Score WWL 2019
1	North Korea	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	14.4	98	96	94	94	94
2	Somalia	16.5	16.7	16.6	16.6	16.6	8.7	92	91	92	92	91
3	Yemen	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	5.9	89	88	87	85	86
4	Eritrea	14.6	14.9	15.5	15.9	15.7	12.2	89	88	88	87	86
5	Libya	15.6	15.5	15.9	16.1	16.3	9.1	88	91	92	90	87
6	Nigeria	13.8	13.8	14.6	14.8	14.4	16.7	88	87	85	80	80
7	Pakistan	13.4	13.8	14.8	14.8	12.9	16.7	86	87	88	88	87
8	Iran	14.5	14.6	13.8	15.8	16.5	10.7	86	85	86	85	85
9	Afghanistan	15.4	15.7	15.4	16.1	16.6	4.6	84	98	94	93	94
10	Sudan	14.1	14.2	14.9	14.9	15.5	9.4	83	79	79	85	87
11	India	12.3	13.1	13.0	14.8	13.3	15.7	82	82	83	83	83
12	Syria	13.2	14.1	13.6	14.1	14.1	11.3	80	78	81	82	82
13	Saudi Arabia	15.2	15.3	14.9	15.8	16.7	2.4	80	81	78	79	77
14	Myanmar	12.5	11.6	13.9	13.9	12.9	15.4	80	79	74	73	71
15	Maldives	15.4	15.3	13.8	16.0	16.4	0.2	77	77	77	78	78
16	China	12.9	10.0	12.7	14.5	15.6	11.1	77	76	74	70	65
17	Mali	11.1	10.1	14.7	10.3	15.1	15.0	76	70	67	66	68
18	Iraq	14.1	14.6	14.0	14.8	13.9	4.6	76	78	82	76	79
19	Algeria	14.1	14.1	11.5	13.7	15.1	4.8	73	71	70	73	70
20	Mauritania	14.5	14.2	13.3	14.1	14.2	1.3	72	70	71	68	67
21	Uzbekistan	14.9	12.7	13.9	12.7	15.6	1.5	71	71	71	73	74
22	Colombia	11.8	8.9	13.1	11.3	10.4	15.4	71	68	67	62	58
23	Burkina Faso	9.4	9.7	12.5	9.6	13.8	15.6	71	68	67	66	48
24	CAR	10.3	8.6	13.9	9.6	12.2	15.6	70	68	66	68	70
25	Vietnam	11.8	9.6	12.8	14.6	14.4	6.9	70	71	72	72	70
26	Turkmenistan	14.5	11.3	13.6	14.1	15.7	0.6	70	69	70	70	69
27	Cuba	13.1	8.3	13.1	13.2	14.9	7.0	70	66	62	52	49
28	Niger	9.4	9.5	14.5	7.7	13.1	15.4	70	68	62	60	52
29	Morocco	13.2	13.8	10.9	12.2	14.5	4.8	69	69	67	66	63
30	Bangladesh	12.6	10.7	12.8	11.3	10.6	10.7	69	68	67	63	58
31	Laos	11.7	10.2	13.3	14.2	14.0	5.0	68	69	71	72	71
32	Mozambique	9.3	8.5	13.9	8.4	12.5	15.6	68	65	63	43	43
33	Indonesia	11.3	12.0	11.6	11.1	9.2	12.8	68	68	63	60	65
34	Qatar	14.2	14.1	10.5	13.2	14.4	1.5	68	74	67	66	62
35	Egypt	12.7	13.5	11.6	12.1	10.8	7.0	68	71	75	76	76
36	Tunisia	12.0	12.8	10.4	12.0	13.5	6.5	67	66	67	64	63
37	DRC	8.0	7.9	12.6	9.7	13.0	15.6	67	66	64	56	55
38	Mexico	10.3	8.3	12.5	11.0	10.5	13.9	67	65	64	60	61
39	Ethiopia	9.9	10.3	13.1	10.4	12.1	10.6	66	66	65	63	65
40	Bhutan	13.2	12.3	11.6	13.9	14.2	1.1	66	67	64	61	64
41	Turkey	12.8	11.5	11.8	13.0	11.5	5.7	66	65	69	63	66
42	Comoros	12.7	14.0	11.2	12.4	14.2	1.5	66	63	62	57	56
43	Malaysia	12.8	14.3	11.4	12.2	11.1	3.9	66	63	63	62	60
44	Tajikistan	13.8	12.2	12.3	12.8	13.4	1.1	66	65	66	65	65
45	Cameroon	8.8	7.6	12.6	7.2	13.1	15.9	65	65	64	60	54
46	Brunei	14.8	14.6	10.1	10.9	14.4	0.4	65	64	64	63	63
47	Oman	14.0	14.1	10.3	13.3	12.9	0.6	65	66	63	62	59
48	Kazakhstan	13.2	11.6	11.9	12.7	14.2	1.1	65	64	64	64	63
49	Jordan	13.0	14.0	10.5	12.3	12.7	2.0	65	66	64	64	65
50	Nicaragua	10.8	5.9	11.9	12.8	13.6	9.4	65	56	51	41	41

Rank	Country	Private life	Family life	Community life	National life	Church life	Violence	Total Score WWL 2023	Total Score WWL 2022	Total Score WWL 2021	Total Score WWL 2020	Total Score WWL 2019
51	Kenya	10.3	9.2	11.4	8.0	11.5	13.3	64	63	62	61	61
52	Kuwait	13.5	13.7	9.8	12.3	13.1	1.1	64	64	63	62	60
53	Tanzania	9.3	10.8	10.3	8.6	8.7	15.6	63	61	58	55	52
54	UAE	13.4	13.4	9.9	11.2	12.8	1.1	62	62	62	60	58
55	Nepal	12.0	9.8	9.4	13.0	12.6	4.4	61	64	66	64	64
56	Djibouti	12.3	12.6	12.7	10.1	12.3	0.6	60	59	56	56	56
57	Palestinian Territories	13.0	13.3	9.7	10.3	12.0	2.0	60	59	58	60	57
58	Azerbaijan	13.2	10.0	9.5	12.0	13.6	0.6	59	60	56	57	57
59	Kyrgyzstan	12.9	10.2	11.0	10.4	12.0	2.0	59	58	58	57	56
60	Chad	11.6	8.2	10.2	10.2	10.3	7.6	58	55	53	56	48
61	Russian Federation	12.3	7.9	10.3	11.8	12.8	2.0	57	56	57	60	60
62	Sri Lanka	12.8	9.1	10.6	11.3	9.5	3.9	57	63	62	65	58
63	Rwanda	9.4	7.7	9.0	10.4	11.7	8.9	57	50	42	42	41
64	Venezuela	6.0	4.6	11.7	10.2	11.4	11.7	56	51	39	42	41
65	Burundi	7.6	7.8	9.4	9.8	9.7	11.1	55	52	48	48	43
66	Bahrain	12.7	13.3	8.7	10.7	8.8	0.9	55	57	56	55	55
67	Honduras	7.1	5.0	11.9	7.6	9.8	11.9	53	48	46	39	38
68	Angola	6.8	6.7	8.1	11.5	11.4	7.2	52	51	46	43	42
69	Uganda	8.1	5.0	7.4	6.7	9.2	14.8	51	48	47	48	47
70	Togo	9.2	6.7	9.3	7.1	11.0	5.4	49	44	43	41	42
71	Guinea	10.3	7.5	8.3	8.3	10.5	3.0	48	43	47	45	46
72	South Sudan	5.7	4.4	7.0	6.3	7.6	15.0	46	43	43	44	44
73	El Salvador	7.7	4.2	10.6	7.4	9.1	6.7	46	45	42	38	30
74	Ivory Coast	12.0	6.5	8.7	5.9	8.0	3.3	44	42	42	42	43
75	Gambia	8.3	8.2	8.9	8.8	8.9	1.1	44	44	43	43	43
76	Belarus	9.5	3.8	4.8	9.4	12.1	3.3	43	33	30	28	35

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## Sources and definitions

- This country report is a collation of data and analysis based around Open Doors World Watch List (WWL) and includes statistical information on world religions, Christian denominations and people groups prepared by the World Christian Database (WCD).
- Highlighted links in the text can be found written out in full at the conclusion of each main section under the heading “External links”. In order to reduce the length of these reference sections, a table containing links to regularly used sources can be found at the beginning of the “Keys to Understanding” chapter under the heading “Links for general background information”. Where one of these sources has been quoted in the dossier text, a quote reference is supplied as indicated in the second column of the table.
- The WWL 2023 reporting period was 01 October 2021 - 30 September 2022.
- The definition of persecution used in WWL analysis is: “Any hostility experienced as a result of one’s identification with Christ. This can include hostile attitudes, words and actions towards Christians”. This broad definition includes (but is not limited to) restrictions, pressure, discrimination, opposition, disinformation, injustice, intimidation, mistreatment, marginalization, oppression, intolerance, infringement, violation, ostracism, hostilities, harassment, abuse, violence, ethnic cleansing and genocide.
- The latest update of WWL Methodology including appendices can be found on the [World Watch List Documentation](#) page of the Open Doors Analytical website (password: freedom).

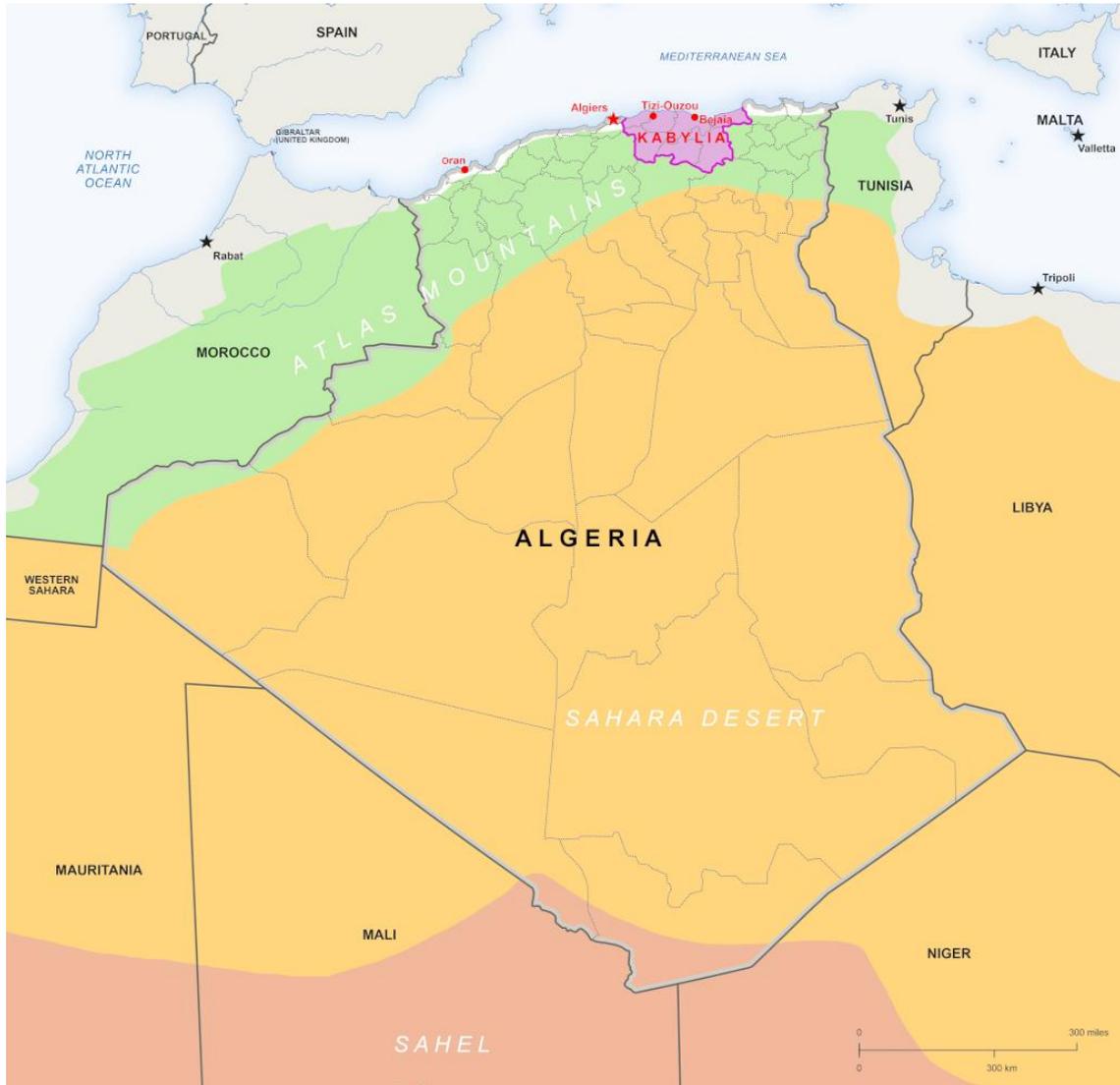
# WWL 2023 Situation in brief / Algeria

## Brief country details

Algeria: Population (UN estimate for 2022)	Christians	Chr%
45,350,000	139,000	0.3

Data source: Johnson T M and Zurlo G A, eds, *World Christian Database* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed April 2022)

## Map of country



Algeria: World Watch List	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2023	73	19
WWL 2022	71	22
WWL 2021	70	24
WWL 2020	73	17
WWL 2019	70	22

## Dominant persecution engines and drivers

Algeria: Main Persecution engines	Main drivers
Islamic oppression	One's own (extended) family, Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs, Government officials, Non-Christian religious leaders, Violent religious groups, Ethnic group leaders, Political parties
Dictatorial paranoia	Government officials
Clan oppression	Ethnic group leaders, Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs, One's own (extended) family
Ethno-religious hostility	Government officials

*Engines and Drivers are listed in order of strength. Only Very strong / Strong / Medium are shown here.*

## Brief description of the persecution situation

As is the case in most other countries in North Africa, the major drivers of freedom of religion violations in Algeria are society, radical Islamic teachers and state officials who adhere to the views of such teachers. Algerian Christians, most of whom are converts from Islam, face opposition from their family members and extended family in particular. Therefore, the family and the wider community - including local community leaders and elders - are significant drivers of persecution, causing Christians to face harassment and discrimination in their daily life. Members of extended family and neighbors try to force converts to adhere to Islamic norms and follow Islamic rites. The pressure and danger faced by Christians is particularly high in the Arab, rural and religiously more conservative parts of the country. In the 1990s, these regions acted as a stronghold for Islamist insurgents in the fight against the government.

In recent years, state officials at various levels of the administrative hierarchy are increasingly exerting pressure on Christians to renounce their faith and to restrict their freedom (limiting their possibility of expressing their views and of living out their faith in public). There are laws that regulate non-Muslim worship, including regulations which prohibit by law anything that would 'shake the faith of a Muslim' or be used as a 'means of seduction intending to convert a Muslim to another religion'. During the WWL 2023 reporting period, several Christians were prosecuted and imprisoned on charges ranging from 'proselytizing' to 'receiving funding from foreign agents'. Seventeen previously closed church buildings remained closed, while several other churches were ordered to close in 2022. Due to this action by the authorities, there was also a further number of churches which ceased meeting as a precautionary measure.

## Summary of international obligations and rights violations

Algeria has committed to respect and protect fundamental rights in the following international treaties:

1. [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#) (ICCPR)
2. [International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#) (ICESCR)

3. [Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment](#) (CAT)
4. [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women](#) (CEDAW)
5. [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) (CRC)

Algeria is not fulfilling its international obligations by regularly violating or failing to protect the following rights of Christians:

- Christian leaders are monitored and their activities actively watched (ICCPR Art. 17)
- Churches are arbitrarily closed by the Government (ICCPR Arts. 18 and 20)
- Christians cannot discuss their faith with non-Christians or proselytize (ICCPR Arts. 18 and 19)
- Christians cannot adopt children or serve as foster parents (ICCPR Art. 26)

### Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period

- **February 2022:** In accordance with Ordinance 03-06 which regulates non-Muslim worship, the provincial governor of Tizi Ouzou started proceedings against a pastor and his father for hosting an unauthorized church on their premises ([MEC, 4 February 2022](#)). Despite many attempts, no church in Algeria has been able to receive official recognition under Ordinance 03-06.
- **April 2022:** The church of Aouchiche in Bejaia was informed it had to cease gathering for worship immediately, following an administrative closure order issued by the governor on 21 March 2022 ([MEC, 8 April 2022](#)).

During the WWL 2023 reporting period, several churches were told to cease activities and several Christians were arrested, prosecuted and sentenced on different charges ranging from 'proselytism' to 'receiving funds from foreign agents'. No details can be published due to security concerns.

### Specific examples of positive developments

The [Hirak protest movement](#) had been a glimmer of hope for change. The protests against the government sought to bring about reforms and more freedom, which subsequently might also improve the position of religious minorities in the country (The New Arab, 17 September 2020). However, the Algerian regime used the COVID-19 pandemic to stop the protests. Subsequently, although outwardly praising the movement for "saving Algeria", the government has increasingly targeted Hirak leadership, effectively silencing the movement. More than 260 Algerians connected to the Hirak movement are currently imprisoned ([Amnesty International, 22 June 2022](#)).

### External Links - Situation in brief

- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights - <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/ccpr.aspx>
- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights - <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cescr.aspx>

- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment - <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cat.aspx>
- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women - <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CEDAW.aspx>
- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: Convention on the Rights of the Child - <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>
- Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period: MEC, 4 February 2022 - <https://meconcern.org/2022/02/04/algeria-another-church-closure-threatened/>
- Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period: MEC, 8 April 2022 - <https://meconcern.org/2022/04/08/algeria-another-church-ordered-to-close/>
- Specific examples of positive developments: Hirak protest movement - <https://english.alaraby.co.uk/english/indepth/2020/9/17/the-return-of-algerias-hirak-protest-movement>
- Specific examples of positive developments: Amnesty International, 22 June 2022 - <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/06/algeria-over-260-hirak-detainees-languishing-in-prison-must-be-released/>

## WWL 2023: Keys to understanding / Algeria

### Links for general background information

Name	Quote Reference	Link	Last accessed on
Amnesty International 2021/22 country report – covering 154 countries	AI country report 2021/22 (pp.69-72)	<a href="https://www.amnesty.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/POL1048702022ENGLISH.pdf">https://www.amnesty.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/POL1048702022ENGLISH.pdf</a>	8 June 2022
BBC News country profile	BBC country profile	<a href="https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-14118852">https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-14118852</a>	8 June 2022
Bertelsmann Transformation Index country report 2022 – covering 137 countries	BTI report 2022	<a href="https://bti-project.org/en/reports/country-dashboard/DZA">https://bti-project.org/en/reports/country-dashboard/DZA</a>	8 June 2022
CIA World Factbook	CIA Factbook	<a href="https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/algeria/">https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/algeria/</a>	8 June 2022
Crisis24 country report (Garda World) – covering 193 countries	Crisis24 country report	<a href="https://crisis24.garda.com/insights-intelligence/intelligence/country-reports/algeria">https://crisis24.garda.com/insights-intelligence/intelligence/country-reports/algeria</a>	8 June 2022
Economist Intelligence Unit Democracy Index 2021 – covering 167 countries	EIU 2021 (p.52)	<a href="https://pages.eiu.com/rs/753-RIQ-438/images/eiu-democracy-index-2021.pdf">https://pages.eiu.com/rs/753-RIQ-438/images/eiu-democracy-index-2021.pdf</a>	8 June 2022
FFP's Fragile States Index 2022 – covering 179 countries	FSI 2022	<a href="https://fragilestatesindex.org/country-data/">https://fragilestatesindex.org/country-data/</a>	1 August 2022
Freedom House's 2022 Democracy index – covering 29 countries, Algeria not included	Democracy Index 2022	<a href="https://freedomhouse.org/countries/nations-transit/scores">https://freedomhouse.org/countries/nations-transit/scores</a>	
Freedom House's 2022 Global Freedom index – covering 210 countries	Global Freedom Index 2022	<a href="https://freedomhouse.org/country/algeria/freedom-world/2022">https://freedomhouse.org/country/algeria/freedom-world/2022</a>	8 June 2022
Freedom House's Freedom on the Net 2021 report – covering 70 countries, Algeria not included	Freedom on the Net 2021	<a href="https://freedomhouse.org/countries/freedom-net/scores">https://freedomhouse.org/countries/freedom-net/scores</a>	
Human Rights Watch World Report 2022 (country chapter) – covering 100+ countries	HRW 2022 country chapter	<a href="https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2022/country-chapters/algeria">https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2022/country-chapters/algeria</a>	8 June 2022
Internet World Stats 2022	IWS 2022	<a href="https://www.internetworldstats.com/africa.htm#dz">https://www.internetworldstats.com/africa.htm#dz</a>	8 June 2022
Middle East Concern - covering 24 countries	MEC country profile	<a href="https://meconcern.org/countries/algeria/">https://meconcern.org/countries/algeria/</a>	1 August 2022
RSF's 2022 World Press Freedom Index – covering 180 countries	World Press Freedom 2022	<a href="https://rsf.org/en/algeria">https://rsf.org/en/algeria</a>	8 June 2022
Transparency International's 2021 Corruption Perceptions Index – covering 180 countries	CPI 2021	<a href="https://www.transparency.org/en/countries/algeria">https://www.transparency.org/en/countries/algeria</a>	8 June 2022
UNDP's Global Human Development Indicators (country profile) – covering 189 countries	HDI profile	<a href="https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/specific-country-data/#/countries/DZA">https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/specific-country-data/#/countries/DZA</a>	8 June 2022
US State Department's 2021 International Religious Freedom (country profile)	IRFR 2021	<a href="https://www.state.gov/reports/2021-report-on-international-religious-freedom/algeria/">https://www.state.gov/reports/2021-report-on-international-religious-freedom/algeria/</a>	8 June 2022
USCIRF 2022 country reports – covering 15 CPC / 12 SWL	USCIRF 2022	<a href="https://www.uscifr.gov/sites/default/files/2022-05/2022%20Algeria.pdf">https://www.uscifr.gov/sites/default/files/2022-05/2022%20Algeria.pdf</a>	8 June 2022
World Bank country overview – covering 178 countries	World Bank overview 2022	<a href="https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/algeria/overview#1">https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/algeria/overview#1</a>	8 June 2022
World Bank country profile data – covering 222 countries	World Bank profile	<a href="https://databank.worldbank.org/views/reports/reportwidget.aspx?Report_Name=CountryProfile&amp;id=b450fd57tbar=ydd=yinf=nzm=ncountry=DZA">https://databank.worldbank.org/views/reports/reportwidget.aspx?Report_Name=CountryProfile&amp;id=b450fd57tbar=ydd=yinf=nzm=ncountry=DZA</a>	8 June 2022
World Bank Macro Poverty Outlook 2022 – covering 147 countries (divided per region)	Macro Poverty Outlook 2022 (pp.2-3)	<a href="https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/65cf93926fdb3ea23b72f277fc249a72-0500042021/related/mpo-mena.pdf">https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/65cf93926fdb3ea23b72f277fc249a72-0500042021/related/mpo-mena.pdf</a>	8 June 2022

### Recent history

Like many other countries in North Africa, Algeria used to be a territory belonging to the Ottoman Turkish Empire. However, in 1830, Algeria was conquered by France. Algeria gained independence in 1962 after a violent 8 year war that was led by the National Liberation Front (FLN). Since independence, the FLN has been the dominant political party in Algeria and has been able to stay in power. For three decades the FLN outlawed other political parties and ruled as the sole legal party. However, in 1991 Algeria introduced multi-party elections. When Islamist parties won the election, the army suspended the result of the election and the country descended into a civil war that only ended in 2002 and resulted in the death of an estimated

150,000 Algerians. From 1999 until April 2019, Abdelaziz Bouteflika served as president.

In February 2019, President Bouteflika announced his candidacy for a fifth mandate. With the help of Islamist parties, he was able to amend the Constitution back in 2008 to make this possible. Since January 2011 political tensions had been rising and many demonstrations were held, mainly caused by a general dissatisfaction with the high food prices and high levels of unemployment. Since he suffered a stroke in 2013, President Bouteflika was rarely seen in public and he did not even campaign for the presidential elections in 2014. In 2016 a number of constitutional amendments were made to give more power to parliament. However, many opponents of the regime dismissed this reform as superficial and this dissent developed into demonstrations which finally led to Bouteflika's resignation in April 2019.

The following presidential elections in December 2019 were won by former prime-minister and career politician Abdelmadjid Tebboune, a close ally of the powerful army. He won 58% of the votes, but the official turnout was only 40%, with some observers even saying that it was as low as 10%. Unconvinced that he would bring any real change, the protests, now known as the 'Hirak movement', continued ([BBC News, 21 February 2020](#)).

The COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 was used by the regime to end all the protests for health reasons. This initial step was followed by legislation against 'fake news', which subsequently has been used to target prominent activists and journalists. In the meantime, in a bid to quell further unrest, several former high-ranking politicians and businessmen have been sentenced to lengthy prison sentences on corruption charges. President Tebboune announced a referendum to be held on 1 November 2020 on a newly drafted Constitution ([World Politics Review, August 2020](#)). The referendum went ahead but had such a low turnout (23.7%) that it is clear that "it was seen by many as merely a manoeuvre to extend the life of an authoritarian and corrupt system" ([Chatham House, 9 November 2020](#)). The parliamentary elections on 12 June 2021 were also boycotted by the opposition and resulted in a low turnout of 30.2%, even lower than in the 2017 parliamentary elections (35.7%) ([Al-Jazeera, 12 June 2021](#)). One of the reasons for the boycott was the rejection of no less than 1,200 candidates by the Electoral Commission because of "suspicious activities and transactions", in addition to the arrest and imprisonment of dozens of protesters ([BBC News, 12 June 2021](#)). Neither the prison sentences, the new Constitution nor the elections are bringing any real political change. The mostly unelected group of high-ranking generals, businessmen and politicians, collectively known as Le Pouvoir (the Power), are still the ones pulling the strings in Algeria.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine caused a major increase in gas prices. As a result, Algeria's hydrocarbon revenues increased rapidly, being projected to reach USD 50 billion by the end of 2022. However, as so often, the increased income does not seem to be being used to support necessary reforms, but rather to temporarily ease economic difficulties and protect Le Pouvoir privileges ([Atlantic Council, 7 October 2022](#)).

The protests and even the COVID-19 pandemic did not stop the Algerian regime from oppressing the small Christian minority of mostly Algerian converts to Christianity. In 2006, the Algerian government passed "Ordinance 03-06 to Regulate the Worship of non-Muslim Creeds". From November 2017 onwards, the ordinance has been used to close at least seventeen churches affiliated with the EPA (Église Protestante d'Algérie), the umbrella organization for Protestant

churches in Algeria ([MEC, 8 April 2022](#)). Pressure further increased in 2021 and 2022, with several Christians being prosecuted on charges of proselytizing and receiving funds from foreign agents. During the same period, several groups were forbidden from meeting in non-designated venues.

## Political and legal landscape

Algeria is a constitutional semi-presidential republic in which the president is the head of state and the prime minister the head of government. As mentioned above, however, de facto Algeria is being led by its powerful army and a select group of businessmen and politicians, known as 'Le Pouvoir' (the Power). This is why Algeria has been called a 'controlled democracy' ([New York Times, May 2015](#)).

The political situation in Algeria appears to be relatively stable. Even the unrest caused by the Hirak movement was unlikely to result in civil war, as happened in neighboring Libya. The memories of the Algerian Civil War (1991-2002) are still fresh and Algerian citizens are generally wary of provoking any repetition of such bloodshed. Admittedly, the Algerian youth are less likely to accept the current status quo with all political power resting in military hands and those connected to the National Liberation Front, the nationalist party that has ruled Algeria since independence in 1962. Hence, tensions have grown over the years and culminated in the emergence of the Hirak Movement, which was able to force President Bouteflika to resign in April 2019 after months of fairly peaceful popular protest. Nevertheless, no real political change has happened since then and the regime used the COVID-19 pandemic as a golden opportunity for bringing the Hirak protests to a halt.

In the meantime, President Tebboune has replaced a number of influential generals, especially those connected to former Chief of Staff Ahmed Gaïd Salah. Salah, who died in December 2019, had carefully built his network inside the Algerian government and it is likely that former President Bouteflika was more or less his puppet. Tebboune seems to be dismantling some of the military influence inside the government ([The Africa Report, August 2020](#)), but it is questionable whether this will be enough to quell the protests, since the old system is effectively still in place. Even the parliamentary elections of June 2021 did not bring any change in that regard.

Currently, the Hirak movement has ceased to play a major role. Firstly, because the regime has cracked down on the Hirak's leadership, independent journalism and other opposition groups, imprisoning hundreds and dissolving civil society organizations which played a role in the protests. However, secondly - and probably even more importantly - division within the Hirak movement, including a strong faction trying to turn it into an Islamist rebellion, led to the silent majority disconnecting from the movement and withdrawing from the street protests, resulting in a loss of momentum for the whole protest movement ([Middle East Institute, 22 February 2022](#)).

Algeria's indigenous Christian community had hoped that the Hirak Movement would not only bring more political freedom, but also more religious freedom. However, given the regime's firm stance, it is unlikely that Ordinance 06-03, which regulates non-Muslim worship, will be replaced and that their hopes will materialize in the near future. Ordinance 06-03 was passed in March

2006 and severely limits non-Muslim worship. In 2011 the EPA (Algerian Protestant Church) obtained official recognition after many years of trying, but local churches were still required to obtain their own individual registration. Although hopes were high, the government has not registered any individual new churches since enforcing Ordinance 06-03. During 2013, the EPA then had to apply for official recognition again after a new NGO law was introduced. However, the government has still not responded to this application, leaving the EPA in legal limbo. Hence, many Christian citizens continue to meet in unofficial house churches, often using private homes or business properties. From the legal perspective, Ordinance 06-03 sets regulations for church buildings, so a meeting at home is forbidden. The legal sentence can be up to three years in prison and a fine of 300,000 DA (3,000 Euros) and there have been several court cases in the past. Hence, the pressure remains in place and at least seventeen churches affiliated to the EPA remained closed or were additionally closed during the WWL 2023 reporting period ([MEC, 8 April 2022](#)).

### **Gender perspective**

Algeria's legal system is discriminatory towards women and girls in several areas, particularly in relation to marriage. Whilst it ratified CEDAW in 1996, it maintained a reservation to Article 16, which provides for the elimination of discrimination against women as they enter or exit a marriage ([OCHRC, 2012](#)). Neither levirate marriages nor marital rape are outlawed, and Article 326 of the Penal code permits exoneration by marriage for perpetrators who abduct girls ([OECD, 2019](#)). Whilst Algeria introduced a 2015 law on domestic violence, it contained loopholes that allowed convictions to be dropped and sentences to be reduced ([HRW 2021](#)). Escaping abusive relationships is also challenging, as whilst a man can divorce his wife unilaterally, a woman must go through the courts; many fear doing so for fear they will end up homeless and cut off from their children ([OECD, 2019](#)). More positively, child marriage rates are relatively low compared to the regional average (approximately 3% are married before they turn 18, according to [Girls Not Brides](#), accessed 15 August 2022).

Men face conscription into the army from the age of 19, where they are bound to serve 18 months. In more recent years, national service recruits have served in administrative, civil and social projects in addition to military roles.

On an individual level, Algerian Christians (from a Muslim background) face legal discrimination from the state in personal status issues. For example, female converts to Christianity cannot marry non-Muslim men, while marriages between Algerian Christians can only take place according to Islamic rites. In addition, converts are very likely lose the custody over their children in divorce cases as well as their inheritance rights.

### **Additional reports**

- The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU 2021) classifies the country of Algeria again as 'authoritarian' (p.52), after being listed as a 'hybrid regime' in the 2019 index. With an overall score of 3.77 out of 10, decreasing from 4.01 in 2019, the reports states: "[the] protest movements in Algeria [and other countries in the region] have failed to bring about meaningful democratic change".

- FFP's Fragile State Index (FSI 2022) indicates that after initial improvement several indicators, including 'human rights', 'state legitimacy' and 'demographic pressures' are worsening. Although improving, the indicators 'Group grievances' and 'Factionalized elites' remain quite high; which might be indicative for the gap between those in power and the average Algerian citizen.
- Freedom House's Global Freedom Index 2022 rates Algeria as 'not free' and reports: "Political affairs in Algeria have long been dominated by a closed elite based in the military and the ruling party, the National Liberation Front (FLN). While there are multiple opposition parties in the parliament, elections are distorted by fraud, and electoral processes are not transparent. Other concerns include the suppression of street protests, legal restrictions on media freedom, and rampant corruption. The rise of the Hirak protest movement in 2019 has put pressure on the regime, leading it to crack down on dissent in the following years."

## Religious landscape

Algeria: Religious context	Number of adherents	%
Christians	139,000	0.3
Muslim	44,571,000	98.3
Hindu	0	0.0
Buddhist	7,100	0.0
Ethno-religionist	0	0.0
Jewish	54	0.0
Bahai	4,100	0.0
Atheist	8,400	0.0
Agnostic	606,000	1.3
Other	14,400	0.0
<i>OTHER includes Chinese folk, New religionist, Sikh, Spiritist, Taoist, Confucianist, Jain, Shintoist, Zoroastrian.</i>		

Data source: Johnson T M and Zurlo G A, eds, *World Christian Database* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed April 2022)

According to WCD 2022 data, an estimated 98.3% of Algerians are Muslim. Almost all are Sunni Muslims but there is a small community of Algerians who belong to the Ibadi sect of Islam. The presence of Shiite Islam is probably less than 0.02% of the population ([Shafaqna, 6 November 2021](#)). The Constitution bans non-Muslims from holding high-level government positions. Non-Muslim and non-religious groups have to keep a low profile in order to avoid discrimination, intolerance and persecution. The [Freedom of Thought report \(September 2019\)](#) states that Algeria's Constitution and government forbid activities "that are contrary to the country's 'values or public morals'".

Most of Algeria's Christians are converts from Islam to Christianity, the majority of whom are living in the Kabyle region in the north of Algeria. The Kabyle people are a Berber ethnic group and speak their own Berber language. Many of them try to differentiate themselves from the Arab majority and emphasize their own Berber identity. This environment has given some leeway for Christians from a Muslim background to develop their own Christian identity, although family and societal pressure remains problematic.

## Economic landscape

According to the CIA Factbook and World Bank country profile:

- **GPD per capita (PPP):** \$10,700 (2020 est.), decreasing from \$11,500 in 2019.
- **Unemployment:** 12.7%, with youth unemployment being twice as high at 31.9% (2021)
- **Percentage of population below national poverty line:** 5.5% (2011 est.). However, other sources indicate percentages as high as 35% ([The Borgen Project, 20 August 2020](#)).

According to the [World Bank's Algeria Economic Update - April 2022](#):

- **General overview:** "Increasing oil and gas demand and prices led to a strong rebound in hydrocarbon production and exports in 2021, sharply reducing fiscal and external financing needs. The recovery in the non-hydrocarbon segments of the economy remains incomplete, however, while inflation is rising. Looking beyond the current hydrocarbon windfall, accelerating the implementation of the Government's structural reform agenda will be essential to accelerate the recovery, reduce Algeria's reliance on hydrocarbon exports and sustainably reduce macroeconomic imbalances, diversify the economy, and create private sector jobs."
- **Economic growth:** "Led by the oil and gas sector, the Algerian economy expanded by 3.9% year-on-year during the first nine months of 2021, after contracting by 5.5% in 2020. The recovery in hydrocarbon output was driven by surging European gas demand and easing OPEC production quotas."
- **Economic outlook:** "GDP is expected to continue to rebound and return to its 2019 level in 2022, despite low rainfall and therefore weak agricultural production. ... Hydrocarbon production will increase as OPEC quotas are eased and demand for Algerian gas benefits from European diversification away from Russian supply, before resuming a gradual decline, offset by modest non-hydrocarbon economic growth."

The World Bank's [World Development Indicators \(Fiscal Year 2021\)](#) rank Algeria in the "Lower middle income" category. Nevertheless, with a Gross National Income per capita of 10.700 dollar PPP, Algerians enjoy better economic conditions than most other countries in Africa. However, youth unemployment is still a problem. The current high energy prices caused by the Russian invasion of Ukraine offer opportunities to recover from the economic damage caused by the COVID-19 crisis, since natural gas is a key export commodity. The FSI 2022 economic indicators show improvement on average.

According to the World Health Organization, as of July 2022 a total of 6,876 had died due to COVID-related causes ([WHO, accessed 30 July 2022](#)). The country went into lockdown for five months from February 2020, when the first cases of infection were discovered. The country also

closed its land, sea and air borders in March 2020, only opening them again in June 2021 ([Africa News, 3 June 2021](#)).

### Gender perspective

Economic pressure restricts the freedom of Christians, especially converts from a Muslim background. They experience discrimination while looking for employment in both the private and public sectors. Women are particularly vulnerable, as are more economically dependent within Algerian society due to restricted employment opportunities as well as Sharia rules of inheritance, whereby daughters receive half the share received by sons ([OECD, 2019](#)). Reports indicate that Christian men have experienced harassment within their workplace or have even lost their jobs where their faith has become known.

### Social and cultural landscape

According to the CIA Factbook:

- **Main ethnic groups:** The majority of the Algerian population (99%) are from Arab or Berber descent. Other ethnicities are mainly European
- **Main languages:** The official language is Arabic, with French being used as the lingua franca (rather than English). Several Berber languages are also being spoken, with Standard Algerian Berber or Tamazight being an official language as well. Dialects include Kabyle Berber (Taqbaylit), Shawiya Berber (Tacawit), Mzab Berber and Tuareg Berber (Tamahaq)
- **Urban population:** In 2022, 74.8% of the population lived in urban areas, while the annual urbanization rate stands at 2.0%
- **Literacy rate:** 81.4% of the population can read and write; with a significant difference between men (87.4%) and women (75.3%)
- **Population/youth:** The younger generation - up to 24 years of age - makes up almost 44% of the population, making it another African country with a young population in need of (economic) opportunities
- **IDPs/Refugees:** More than 100,000 Western Saharan Sahrawi are living in mostly Algerian-sponsored camps in the south-western Algerian town of Tindouf. Around 6750 Syrians have also sought refuge in Algeria.
- **Life expectancy:** 78.0 years on average; women (79.6 years), men (76.6 years)
- **Education:** Algerians enjoy 14 years of schooling on average (14.8 for girls, 14.4 for boys).

According to the UNDP's HDI profile:

- **HDI score and ranking:** Algeria ranks #91 out 191 countries in the Human Development Index (HDI). Despite the ongoing difficulties, the combined ratio of life expectancy, education and per capita income gives a high score of 0.745. Algeria scores highest among the countries on the African continent and scores better than its neighboring countries
- **Gender inequality:** With a Gender Development Index (GDI) score of 0.880, women are still clearly disadvantaged in comparison to men. The GDI measures the differences in life expectancy, years of education and GNI per capita per gender. The mean years of schooling is 7.7 for girls, compared to 8.4 for boys.

Historically, Algeria is an ethnic mix of peoples of both Arab and Berber descent, with the dominant ethnic identity in the country being Arabic. Ethnicity and language is a sensitive issue after many years of government marginalization of Berber culture. For example, the housing problem is most serious in the Berber-dominated Kabyle region since the government would seem to be deliberately refusing to invest in housing projects there. Other regions are being helped with housing projects, set up and financed by the government. This discrimination affects Christians, since many are of Berber origin. The ethnic tension thus affects the religious situation and contributes to religious freedom violations against Christians in the Kabyle region.

Most Algerians are socially conservative and there is a strong and growing Salafist current in the country at the grassroots level, although this (for various reasons) does not translate into support for Islamist political parties ([Carnegie, 3 May 2019](#)). Despite the conservative Islamic context, Algeria has one of the biggest communities of converts from Islam to Christianity in the wider Middle East. As already indicated, most of these converts belong to the already marginalized Berber community in the Kabyle region. In-country sources show that converts outside the Kabyle region experience higher levels of pressure from society and family.

### Gender perspective

In light of Algeria's patriarchal, Islamic norms, both male and female converts face significant pressure from their family and community if their faith is discovered. Men are more likely to be driven out of their homes, whereas women are more likely to be trapped behind closed doors. Various media reports have highlighted a rise in femicides and domestic violence in Algeria, exacerbated in part by COVID-19 lockdowns ([Middle East Institute, 8 February 2021](#); [The Africa Report, 19 March 2021](#)). Victims are hesitant to come forward due to social stigma, economic dependence and a lack of legislative justice.

## Technological landscape

According to Internet World Stats (IWS 2022):

- **Internet usage:** 83.8% penetration - survey date: June 2021 (Most recent survey at time of writing.)
- **Facebook usage:** 63.3% penetration - survey date: January 2022

According to World Bank country profile:

- **Mobile phone subscriptions:** 103.9 per 100 people

According to the Mobile Gender Gap 2020 report ([GSMA, March 2020](#)), there has been a small gender gap in relation to mobile phone ownership; As of 2020, 86% of women owned a phone (55% had a smart phone), compared to 92% of men (68% had a smart phone). Lack of family approval was observed to be the biggest barrier to women acquiring a phone. Data also reveals that more men access social media sites such as [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) (Statista, 2022; 2021). It is therefore harder for women to access digital Christian resources or online Christian communities. Besides Facebook and Instagram, Twitter and YouTube are also popular. The Internet usage has increased rapidly, from 58.0% in 2019 to 84.8% in 2021, although other sources - such as [Digital 21](#) (11 February 2021) - indicate lower percentages. This strong growth

is probably related to the COVID-19 pandemic and the 5-month lockdown Algerians had to deal with. Further statistics can be found in the latest available [Arab Social Media Report](#) (ASMR, 5 February 2017).

According to World Press Freedom 2022:

- Algeria ranked 134th out of 180 countries with the government strictly controlling the media: "The journalistic landscape in Algeria has never before deteriorated to this extent. Independent media are under pressure, journalists are regularly imprisoned or prosecuted, and many online sites are blocked."

Christians are not free to exercise their Freedom of Religion and Belief online. Although some Algerian Christian broadcasts are still accessible on social media (see for example: [YouTube, accessed 30 July 2022](#)), Algeria's largest Protestant church, the Full Gospel Church in Tizi Ouzou, was officially closed by the Algerian government in October 2019. On an individual level, writing an online post about one's Christian faith can lead to pressure, especially from a convert's (extended) family.

## Security situation

The Algerian police and armed forces are well organized and are specialized in fighting Islamic militancy which is necessary due to the country's location bordering Mauritania, Mali, Niger and Libya. However, it is a great challenge to control all borders since they stretch into the Sahara desert and Sahel region. Thus it remains possible for radical Islamic groups, including al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), to conduct border crossings to find shelter and establish storage locations in Algeria ([Live Universal Awareness Map, July 2022](#)) and avoid being captured by international anti-terrorist operations such as the UN-mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and the US-led operation against terrorism in Niger and the wider region, known as Operation Juniper Shield ([Code Book Africa, accessed 22 December 2022](#)).

Apart from the threat from Islamic militants, there is ongoing rivalry with Morocco over regional influence. Algeria hosts more than 100,000 refugees belonging to the Sahrawi people; they are originally from Western Sahara, which is mostly under Moroccan control at present. In addition, Morocco is trying to gain influence among the Sahara population, including the Tuareg, while Algeria views the Sahara as its region of influence. Tensions between the countries intensified following Morocco's normalization of ties with Israel in exchange for the USA's recognition of Morocco's claims regarding Western Sahara. Further, the expulsion of a number of each other's citizens in the 1970's is still unresolved ([Algeria - Morocco relations, 2018, p.11](#)). In August 2021, the situation further escalated following several diplomatic incidents and Algeria severed all ties with Morocco ([Al-Monitor, 25 August 2021](#)). Consequences remain at the moment limited due to a closure of Algerian airspace for Moroccan planes and the discontinuation of the Maghreb-Europe Gas Pipeline, which transferred Algerian gas to Morocco ([Carnegie, 3 May 2022](#)) It is unlikely that the tensions will lead to military conflict, but the frustration, especially on Algeria's side, runs so deep that - unlike all other countries in the wider region - the Algerian government refused to officially congratulate Morocco on its success in the World Cup in Qatar in 2022 ([Reuters, 11 December 2022](#)).

Another issue regarding the security situation in Algeria is the organized-crime scene. There are several illegal traffic routes operational in Algeria, connecting its Mediterranean coast with hubs in the Sahara and Sahel. This facilitates all kinds of global trade (especially illegal trade). These trade routes are used by smugglers bringing drugs from South America to Europe and also by human traffickers transporting refugees seeking asylum in Europe or beyond ([Organized Crime Index, accessed 22 December 2022](#)).

## Trends analysis

### 1) Despite the end of the Hirak movement, political dissatisfaction remains

Although the Algerian government successfully used COVID-19 pandemic measures and political oppression to halt the Hirak demonstrations, it is unlikely that the government will be able to contain such political dissatisfaction in the long-term. Algeria's young population wants economic opportunities and political renewal. Current high energy prices has led to increased government revenue, thus making it possible to provide more economic opportunities, but it is unlikely that the Algerian government will be able to buy off the call for reforms in the long-term.

### 2) The situation for Christians has been deteriorating

The protests have not changed the government's use of Ordinance 06-03 to oppress Algerian's Christians and it is unlikely that the situation for religious minorities will improve. It is more likely, at present, that the government will maintain pressure on the Christian community to appease the Islamists in the country. The sentencing of several Christians charged with proselytizing during the WWL 2023 reporting period indicates a clear deterioration compared to previous years and seems to be a further step in putting pressure on the Christian community after closing and sealing off numerous churches.

## External Links - Keys to understanding

- Recent history: BBC News, 21 February 2020 - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-51588420>
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- Recent history: MEC, 8 April 2022 - <https://meconcern.org/2022/04/08/algeria-another-church-ordered-to-close/>
- Political and legal landscape: New York Times, May 2015 - [https://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/30/opinion/the-algerian-exception.html?\\_r=0](https://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/30/opinion/the-algerian-exception.html?_r=0)
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- Political and legal landscape: OECD, 2019 - <https://www.genderindex.org/wp-content/uploads/files/datasheets/2019/DZ.pdf>
- Political and legal landscape: HRW 2021 - <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2021/country-chapters/algeria#8410c4>
- Political and legal landscape: OECD, 2019 - <https://www.genderindex.org/wp-content/uploads/files/datasheets/2019/DZ.pdf>
- Political and legal landscape: Girls Not Brides - <https://atlas.girlsnotbrides.org/map/algeria>
- Religious landscape description: Shafaqna, 6 November 2021 - <https://en.shafaqna.com/237114/shia-religious-practices-are-not-open-to-the-public-in-algeria/>
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- Economic landscape: The Borgen Project, 20 August 2020 - <https://borgenproject.org/tag/poverty-in-algeria/>
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- Economic landscape: World Development Indicators (Fiscal Year 2021) - <http://datatopics.worldbank.org/world-development-indicators/the-world-by-income-and-region.html>
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- Security situation: Organized Crime Index, accessed 22 December 2022 - <https://ocindex.enactafrica.org/country/algeria>

## WWL 2023: Church information / Algeria

### Christian origins

Christianity came to Algeria in the 2nd century. The church grew rapidly and many Romans and Imazighen ('Berbers') became Christians, in spite of periods of severe persecution. Church Father Augustine was born in what is today Algeria, and exerted great influence over the Church in his own time and even today.

The strong Christian presence slowly gave way to Islam after the Arab invasion (670-711 AD), but there are reports that the Christian faith persisted in the region for several centuries after the completion of the Arab conquest. A Christian community is, for instance, recorded in 1114 in Qal'a in central Algeria.

Most of the time between 1509 and 1792, Spain ruled over Oran and some coastal areas of Algeria; this allowed Christians to be active there. France conquered Algeria in 1830 and made it a province of France in 1848. This led to a renewed Christian influence in Algeria, as 100,000s of French citizens settled in the country. Roman Catholic missionaries - and to a lesser extent Protestants - established churches, mostly for expatriates from France but also from Great Britain and elsewhere. All this was reversed when the colonists were forced to leave after the War of Independence (1962). Missionary activity among the Muslim population was largely unfruitful.

In the 1980s, a movement began which was mostly driven by indigenous leaders and resulted in many conversions to Christianity. Today there is a growing Protestant community, especially among the Kabyle Imazighen. This community is organized under the umbrella of the Association of the Protestant Church of Algeria (EPA). After a temporary period of relative freedom, the authorities are currently making it increasingly difficult for these congregations to meet and have even forced some to cease all church activities.

Since the 1990s, Sub-Saharan African migrants have also started their own churches, which some local Algerians have also joined.

### Church spectrum today

The Protestant Church in Algeria (EPA) consists of 46 member churches, of which currently 17 have been closed down by the government, including the two biggest churches in Tizi Ouzou and Makouda. All other churches, consisting of both independent and EPA member churches, were also closed due to the COVID-19 crisis and did not receive official permission to re-open in the WWL 2023 reporting period.

The Roman Catholic Church has four dioceses in the country (in Algiers, Oran, Constantine and Hippone and Laghouat-Ghardaïa).

Algeria: Church networks	Christians	%
Orthodox	1,300	0.9
Catholic	6,700	4.8
Protestant	11,500	8.3
Independent	120,000	86.3
Unaffiliated	170	0.1
Doubly-affiliated Christians	0	0.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>139,670</b>	<b>100.5</b>
<i>(Any deviation from the total number of Christians stated above is due to the rounding of decimals)</i>		
Evangelical movement	58,800	42.3
Renewalist movement	41,900	30.1

Data source: Johnson T M and Zurlo G A, eds, *World Christian Database* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed April 2022)

**Orthodox:** Eastern (Chalcedonian), Oriental (Pre-Chalcedonian, Non-Chalcedonian, Monophysite), Nestorian (Assyrian), and non-historical Orthodox. **Roman Catholics:** All Christians in communion with the Church of Rome. **Protestants:** Christians in churches originating in or in communion with the Western world's 16th-century Protestant Reformation. Includes Anglicans, Lutherans and Baptists (any of whom may be Charismatic) and denominational Pentecostals, but not Independent traditions such as Independent Baptists nor independent Charismatics. **Independents:** Christians who do not identify with the major Christian traditions (Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Protestant). **Unaffiliated Christians:** Persons professing publicly to be Christians but who are not affiliated to churches. **Doubly-affiliated Christians:** Persons affiliated to or claimed by 2 denominations at once. **Evangelical movement:** Churches, denominations, and individuals who identify themselves as evangelicals by membership in denominations linked to evangelical alliances (e.g., World Evangelical Alliance) or by self-identification in polls. **Renewalist movement:** Church members involved in Pentecostal/Charismatic renewal.

## Areas where Christians face most difficulties

The majority of Christians live in the Kabyle region in the north of Algeria. The Kabyle people are a Berber ethnic group and speak their own Berber language, in contrast to other Algerians with an Arab background. The Kabyles were [discriminated](#) against and neglected by the Algerian government for many years (UNPO, 20 September 2017), which created an environment in which the Christian community could develop, although pressure from both government and society remains strong.

In the Arab part of the country, especially the south, circumstances are difficult for Christians and the number of churches is very low. Violent Islamic militants do not have a wide support base among the general population, but Islam holds a firm grip over the country, also due to the growth of the Salafist movement.

## Christian communities and how they are affected

**Communities of expatriate Christians:** This category consists mainly of Sub-Saharan migrant Christians, complemented by some (Western) expatriate Christians. They belong to a number of churches including Anglicans, Lutherans, the Reformed Church and the Coptic Orthodox Church. The small number of Sub-Saharan African Christian students in the country sometimes face discrimination at universities and in day-to-day life in the cities.

**Historical Christian communities:** The Roman Catholic Church is the only remaining church in this category, as the Protestant churches nowadays are almost completely made up of converts (see next category). The Catholic community faces restrictions outside their places of worship but are allowed to exist, where registered. Catholic churches (including the cathedral in Algiers - the seat of the Archbishop), conduct services without government interference.

**Converts to Christianity:** The vast majority of Christians in Algeria are converts with a Muslim background and face on-going pressure. The law prohibits public assembly for the purpose of practicing a faith other than Islam - with the exception of registered churches. However, individual churches have all been denied registration. There is a large number of unofficial groups meeting regularly in the Berber regions; non-Muslims usually congregate in private homes for religious services. The very young Algerian church (mostly consisting of first generation Christians) faces many forms of discrimination by the state and by family members. While some Protestant churches under the EPA (Algerian Protestant Church) go back to colonial times, they nowadays consist almost entirely of communities of converts to Christianity.

**Non-traditional Christian communities:** This category does not exist in Algeria as defined by WWL Methodology.

## External Links - Church information

- Areas where Christians face most difficulties: discriminated - <https://unpo.org/article/20340>

# WWL 2023: Persecution Dynamics / Algeria

## Reporting period

1 October 2021 - 30 September 2022

## Position on the World Watch List

Algeria: World Watch List	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2023	73	19
WWL 2022	71	22
WWL 2021	70	24
WWL 2020	73	17
WWL 2019	70	22

The increased score in WWL 2023 was due to rises in both pressure and violence scores, reflecting growing government restrictions. Pressure remained at a very high level (or above) in all spheres of life. Four new churches received orders to close and ceased activities during the WWL 2023 reporting period, in addition to the 17 churches closed earlier. Furthermore, more than ten Christians were prosecuted and sentenced on charges ranging from 'practicing worship without prior approval', 'shaking the faith of a Muslim' to 'poisoning the minds of youths'. In addition to these prosecutions, the government has been trying to introduce various forms of

financial and organizational pressure to weaken churches. Pressure remained at a very high level (or above) in all spheres of life.

## Persecution engines

Algeria: Persecution engines	Abbreviation	Level of influence
Islamic oppression	IO	Very strong
Religious nationalism	RN	Not at all
Ethno-religious hostility	ERH	Medium
Clan oppression	CO	Medium
Christian denominational protectionism	CDP	Not at all
Communist and post-Communist oppression	CPCO	Not at all
Secular intolerance	SI	Not at all
Dictatorial paranoia	DPA	Strong
Organized corruption and crime	OCC	Not at all

*The scale for the level of influence of Persecution engines in society is: Not at all / Very weak / Weak / Medium / Strong / Very strong. For more information see WWL Methodology.*

### Islamic oppression (Very strong)

Islam has a significant influence on Algeria's government, which translates into restrictions on the freedom of Christians. Islamist pressure on government and society, in combination with pressure from family members on Christian converts from a Muslim background, has led to persistent difficulties for Christians. Islamist groups are exerting pressure on a government that cannot risk losing popularity by deviating from Islamic convictions held by its citizens. Although the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) is still banned, Islamists are becoming more visible and they monitor the activities of Christians and other non-Muslim minorities (such as the small Jewish and Bahai communities).

### Dictatorial paranoia (Strong)

This engine is evident in the autocratic nature of Algeria's government, which imposes restrictions on Christians. With a further number of church closures and increased blasphemy and other sentences, it seems that the government is deliberately increasing pressure on the church. The motives for this new wave of violence are unknown, but some of the measures of the government could be seen as attempts to appease the Islamist segment of society. Furthermore, the anti-colonial and revolutionary roots of the ruling party which has been in power since independence, provides it with an ideological perspective that makes it suspicious of Christian missionary activities, especially when they are allied to churches and Christian groups in the West.

### Clan oppression (Medium)

*Islamic oppression* forms the root cause of family and community pressure on converts to Christianity, but especially in the Arab part of the country notions like 'protection of family honor' play an important role as well. With the support of local (village) elders, pressure is exerted by both direct family members and (in time) the whole community to force the convert to renounce Christian faith and adhere to the traditional values of both the family and community. In urban areas, the influence of the elders is waning and there is often no wider community to exert pressure. However, family pressure often remains high.

### Ethno-religious hostility (Medium)

Most Algerian Christians are found in the Kabyle region which is located in the northern part of the country. Since independence, there has been political tensions between this region and the central government in Algeria. Among other matters, issues of ethnic identity, culture and language figure prominently in the difficult relationship between the government and residents of the Kabyle region, most of whom are ethnic Berbers while the dominant ethnic identity in the country is Arab. The ethnic tension and antagonism also spills into religious life and contributes to freedom of religion violations against Christians in the Kabyle region.

## Drivers of persecution

Algeria: Drivers of Persecution									
	IO	RN	ERH	CO	CDP	CPCO	SI	DPA	OCC
	VERY STRONG		MEDIUM	MEDIUM				STRONG	
Government officials	Strong		Medium					Strong	
Ethnic group leaders	Medium			Medium					
Non-Christian religious leaders	Strong								
Violent religious groups	Medium								
Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs	Strong			Medium					
One's own (extended) family	Very strong			Medium					
Political parties	Medium								

*The scale for the level of influence of Drivers of persecution in society is: Not at all / Very weak / Weak / Medium / Strong / Very strong. For more information see WWL Methodology.*

### Drivers of Islamic oppression

- **Extended family (Very strong):** Family members are the driving force behind most of the violations against converts to Christianity. Violations include, but are not limited to, (physical) abuse, banishment, house arrest (mostly in the case of women), forced divorce,

inheritance loss and loss over custody of the children.

- **Government officials (Strong):** The Algerian government acts firmly against the Christian community in the country. In addition to having closed down 17 churches since 2019, the government's rhetoric towards Christians is often hostile, basically stating that Christians do not belong in Algeria. During a speech on National Martyr Day (Independence Day) on 18 February 2020, President Tebboune stated that Algeria will keep defending the national identity against "conspiracies of Christianization and conversion". (Source: Unpublished transcript by Middle East Concern - MEC)
- **Non-Christian religious leaders (Strong):** Radical interpretations of Islam are ever present in Algeria; Salafist leaders are known to preach intolerance towards non-Muslims.
- **Citizens - including mobs (Strong):** Social hostility towards Christians is deeply rooted in Arab society and is only slightly less severe in the Kabyle and other Berber regions.
- **Ethnic group leaders (Medium):** Elders of villages and towns often actively oppose the visible presence of churches. They can also put families under pressure to act against any converts in their homes.
- **Political parties (Medium):** Although the power of the non-ruling political parties is limited, Islamist parties can still put pressure on the government to act against non-Sunni religious groups.
- **Violent religious groups (Medium):** The threat of violence coming from radical Islamic groups is always present, although no major incidents have taken place in recent years.

#### Drivers of Dictatorial paranoia

- **Government officials (Strong):** Algeria is one of the few countries in northern Africa that has managed to ensure regime continuity and avoid sweeping democratic reforms, although the country is now looking for a new balance. Since independence, the National Liberation Front has maintained its grip on power despite several changes of president. The National Liberation Front has often been challenged by Islamist political movements and in order to win over the supporters of the Islamist movements and shore up its legitimacy, the government restricts the freedom of Christians.

#### Drivers of Clan oppression

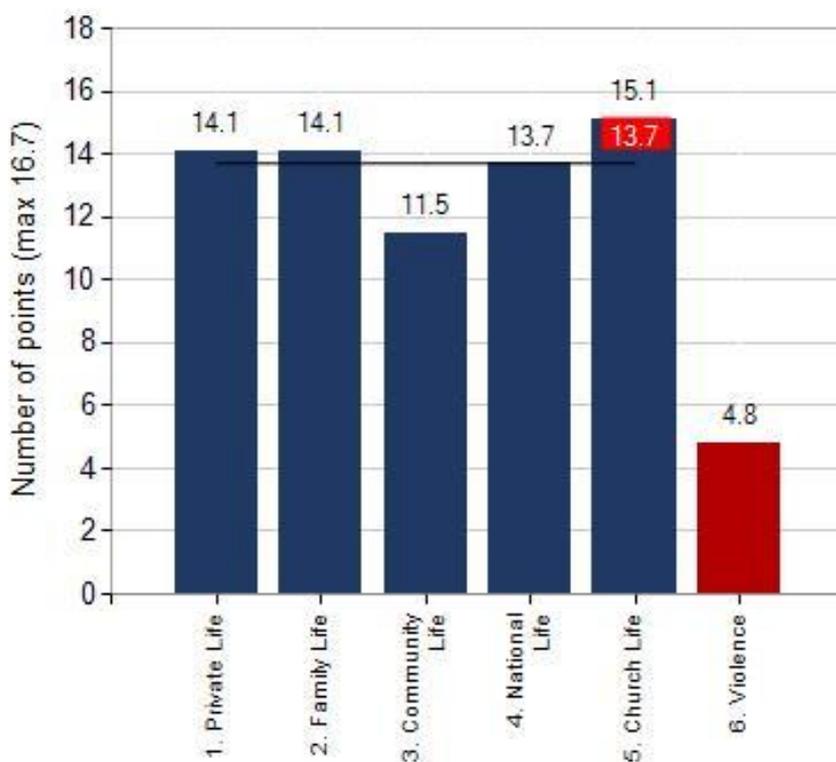
- **Extended family (Medium):** Tribal concepts like 'family honor' are actively protected. Converts, especially women, have to face harsh consequences for 'bringing shame upon the family' and other tribal rules.
- **Ethnic group leaders (Medium):** Tribal relationships play an important role in daily life. By changing their religion, converts defy tribal tradition and face violations of their basic rights as a consequence. Ethnic group leaders, like village elders, put pressure on family members and society to take action against converts.
- **Citizens, including mobs (Medium):** Tribalism and values and norms coming from ancient traditions are kept alive in Islamic society. The convert breaks with this and can be pressurized by wider society as a result (for example, by losing employment).

### Drivers of Ethno-religious hostility

- Government officials (Medium):** Government officials play an important role as drivers of violations. The hostility of these actors towards the cultural, linguistic and political claims of non-Arab ethnic groups means that, in their efforts to suppress such demands, local churches in the Kabyle region are also made to face restrictions. The growth of the church particularly in this region is perceived as a threat to the predominantly Arab and Islamic identity of the country.

### The Persecution pattern

WWL 2023 Persecution Pattern for Algeria



The WWL 2023 Persecution pattern for Algeria shows:

- The average pressure on Christians rose from 13.3 points in WWL 2022 to 13.7 points in WWL 2023.
- Pressure is highest (and at an extreme level) in the *Church* (15.1), *Private* (14.1) and *Family* (14.1) *spheres of life*. This reflects the levels of pressure converts face due to the risk of discovery and following ostracization by their families, as well as the opposition they face from society and government.
- The score for violence went up from 4.1 points in WWL 2022 to 4.8 in WWL 2023. This increase was caused mainly by more Christians being forced to relocate inside or outside the country.

## Pressure in the 5 spheres of life

*In each of the five spheres of life discussed below, four questions have been selected from the WWL 2023 questionnaire for brief commentary and explanation. The selection usually (but not always) reflects the highest scoring elements. In some cases, an additional paragraph per sphere is included to give further information deemed important. (To see how individual questions are scored on a scale of 0-4 points, please see the “WWL Scoring example” in the WWL Methodology, available at: <https://opendoorsanalytical.org/world-watch-list-documentation/>, password: freedom).*

### Pressure in Block 1 / Private sphere

**Block 1.8: It has been risky for Christians to speak about their faith with those other than immediate family (extended family, others). (3.75 points)**

Algeria's anti-proselytism and blasphemy laws affect the freedom of Christians to privately share their beliefs even with immediate family members. Under Ordinance 06-03, which regulates non-Muslim worship and is strictly enforced by the Algerian government, proselytizing is a criminal act. It carries a prison sentence of 3-5 years for religious leaders and 1-3 years for non-leaders. In addition, Algeria's society often views Christianity negatively, so even just discussions about the Christian faith can lead to harassment or worse.

**Block 1.4: It has been risky for Christians to reveal their faith in written forms of personal expression (including expressions in blogs and Facebook etc.). (3.50 points)**

Some of Algeria's Christians have been openly sharing their Christian faith on social media, but in the past this has led to prosecution on charges of blasphemy and to (physical) violence in several cases, carried out by radical Muslims in particular. This has made Algerian Christians very careful. For new convert Christians, it is especially risky, as the wider family might expel them from their home or force them to divorce (losing custody rights over their children).

**Block 1.5: It has been risky for Christians to display Christian images or symbols. (3.50 points)**

All Christians in the country are careful not to display Christian symbols like crosses openly, as hostility towards Christians is common. For converts, the display of symbols can lead to discovery of their conversion by their families and lead to questioning and harassment by others.

**Block 1.9: It has been risky for Christians to meet with other Christians. (3.50 points)**

In the Arab part of the country, and in particular in the south, it is difficult for converts to Christianity to meet with other Christians. Family and social control is high, but even more important are the travel restrictions applied by the government, including the increased use of internal checkpoints. These circumstances make it difficult to support converts and other Christians in the Arab part of the country.

#### **Block 1 - Additional information**

*Algeria has a law that criminalizes any attempt to proselytize and make someone leave Islam for another religion. However, converting from Islam in itself is not criminalized (i.e., there is no crime of apostasy). Hence, technically, it is those who cause the conversion or attempt to convince someone to convert (and not the convert himself) who will be criminally liable. The main*

*problem for converts is family persecution and this can be very severe. Church leaders report that especially women converts are sometimes placed under house-arrest by their Muslim families. They are not allowed to meet other Christians or to have any contact with them. They are not allowed to watch TV or listen to the radio as Christian channels are broadcast into Algeria. In the Arab part of the country, persecution is even more severe and converts risk being killed. For many Christians, sharing about their faith in written form, with family members or with guests, is simply not possible and would expose them to domestic violence.*

## Pressure in Block 2 / Family sphere

### **Block 2.6: Christian couples have been hindered in adopting children or serving as foster parents because of their faith. (4.00 points)**

Adoption is possible in Algeria, but only for Muslims. Converts from Islam to Christianity will be denied the possibility to adopt if their conversion is known.

### **Block 2.8: Christian children have been pressured into attending anti-Christian or majority religion teaching at any level of education. (3.75 points)**

Religious education, based on Islamic principles, is mandatory in all primary and secondary schools. Private schools, if parents are able to afford them, can show more flexibility and exempt a Christian child from these lessons, but the problem remains that the whole curriculum is permeated by Islam.

### **Block 2.9: Children of Christians have been harassed or discriminated against because of their parents' faith. (3.50 points)**

Christian children are regularly bullied and discriminated against by both their peers and teachers. Some teachers tell their classmates to isolate them, while others go as far as physically beating Christian children. It is another reason why many Christian parents seek to enroll their children for education at (international) private schools.

### **Block 2.12: Christian spouses of non-Christians have been excluded from the right or opportunity to claim custody of the children in divorce cases. (3.25 points)**

In many cases, the Muslim husband or wife of a convert will want to be divorced or will be forced by family members to divorce the convert. The children will be kept away from the convert; a practice often supported by the courts and government officials.

### **Block 2 - Additional information**

*For the Algerian government, every citizen is a Muslim and is to be treated as such. There is no recognition of religious diversity. There have also been cases where the Muslim population in villages has refused to allow Christians to bury their deceased family members. Christian marriages are only valid within a church community but are not accepted by the government, which registers them as a Muslim marriage.*

## Pressure in Block 3 / Community sphere

### **Block 3.13: Christians have been interrogated or compelled to report to the local vigilante/police for faith-related reasons. (4.00 points)**

Individual Christians, especially church leaders, are actively monitored and regularly questioned by the police and intelligence agencies regarding their activities. These practices have further increased during the WWL 2023 reporting period.

### **Block 3.2: Christians have been monitored by their local communities or by private groups (this includes reporting to police, being shadowed, telephone lines listened to, emails read/censored, etc.). (3.75 points)**

Monitoring of individuals occurs regularly. The police and other intelligence officials strictly enforce Ordinance 06/03, which regulates non-Muslim worship and other activities. Those engaged in Christian activities are actively watched. Christians with positions of responsibility know that they have to be careful when communicating since their telephones are likely to be tapped and e-mails read. Christians have to be discreet when gathering outside of church buildings, as obvious Christian activities will be reported by members of society to the police. This pressure is less intense in the Kabyle region, although Christianity faces opposition in all parts of the country.

### **Block 3.1: Christians have been harassed, threatened or obstructed in their daily lives for faith-related reasons (e.g. for not meeting majority religion or traditional dress codes, beard codes etc.). (3.50 points)**

Christians, especially converts to Christianity, are subject to harassment, discrimination, ostracism and more. Conversion to another religion is seen as apostasy (this is also the case in the Kabyle region, where most Christians live). This is especially the case during religious feasts, including the month of Ramadan. At times, community hostility has led to mob violence.

### **Block 3.10: Christians have been discriminated against in public or private employment for faith-related reasons. (3.50 points)**

Conversion from Islam to Christianity brings many negative consequences for the convert and losing employment is one of them. Many converts have to hide their new faith or face discrimination when applying for a job. Christians, whether convert or not, do not have access to positions in government and are most likely to be fired if their new faith becomes known.

### **Block 3 - Additional information**

*Algerian Christians tend to speak of "villagers who don't talk to them," while Christian human rights organizations speak routinely of verbal and physical abuse being used. The US State Department (IRFR 2021) states: "Some Christian converts said they and others in their communities continued to keep a low profile due to concern for their personal safety and the potential for legal, familial, career, and social problems. Other converts practiced their new religion openly, according to members of the Christian community." The latter depends on the*

*region where the convert lives. The Berber regions tend to be more open for Christian activity than the Arab regions.*

## Pressure in Block 4 / National sphere

### **Block 4.1: The Constitution (or comparable national or state law) limits freedom of religion as formulated in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. (4.00 points)**

The Constitution declares Islam to be the state religion and government institutions have to act in accordance with Islamic values. Conversion from Islam to Christianity is not forbidden, but proselytizing is a criminal offence. Ordinance 06-03 ("Regarding the Conditions and Rules of Practice of Faiths other than Islam") severely restricts the Freedom of Religion and Belief for churches and individual Christians.

### **Block 4.5: Christians have been discriminated against when engaging with the authorities (local administration, government, army, etc.) for faith-related reasons. (3.75 points)**

There is a clear risk of discrimination when a convert or Sub-Saharan African Christian engages with the authorities. Reportedly, this attitude had improved slightly in some places in the Kabyle region, where, for example, some children were registered with a Christian name. However, this practice has recently become difficult again.

### **Block 4.9: Christian civil society organizations or political parties have been hindered in their functioning or forbidden because of their Christian convictions. (3.75 points)**

Openly Christian NGOs are forbidden under Ordinance 06-03, which particularly prohibits any educational, social, health or cultural institution which could be used to 'seduce a Muslim to convert to another religion'. Any (foreign) organization active in the country is highly regulated by law and continuously monitored by the authorities. The EPA, the umbrella organization of Protestant churches, is trying to function as best as possible, but receives high levels of (government) harassment.

### **Block 4.15: Christians accused in court have been deprived of equal treatment. (3.75 points)**

A clear example is the case of Hamid Soudad ([USCIRF, accessed 22 December 2022](#)). He was arrested and sentenced to five years in prison in January 2021 because of a social media post he had shared in 2018. He was charged with blasphemy because the post was deemed offensive to Islam. However, the elapse of two years between the sharing of the post and the actual arrest clearly suggests that the prosecutor had been looking for a reason to punish him for his conversion. In addition, the maximum sentence of five years is clearly disproportionate, also compared to sentences given in other blasphemy cases.

### **Block 4 - Additional information**

*Algeria is a highly controlled state in which churches and NGO's alike are heavily monitored and strictly regulated. It is difficult to obtain visas to visit the country and stringent financial regulations make it difficult to establish civil society organizations. Christians are increasingly being accused of blasphemy, proselytizing, money laundering and other offences, with numerous*

*Christians being sentenced under these charges. Because of Ordinance 06-03, Churches and Christian organization cannot display Christian symbols in public and even crosses on historical church buildings have been removed. There has been an increasing number of hate-speech incidents against Christians; these have included accusations of causing the widespread wildfires in August 2021, as well as accusing Christians of supporting the MAK, the Kabyle region's autonomy movement, which the government has designated as a 'terrorist group'.*

*Like all Algerians, Christians are limited in their freedom of speech but their faith makes them additionally vulnerable, since they cannot openly discuss their faith or conversion. While religious affiliation is not registered, government officials in general refuse to register Christian names for newborn babies, although some exceptions have been made in the Kabyle region.*

## Pressure in Block 5 / Church sphere

### **Block 5.13: Churches have been hindered in importing Christian materials from abroad. (4.00 points)**

Due to the government's strict monitoring of all church activities, it has become impossible to import Christian materials from abroad. Because printing materials inside the country is similarly restricted, it is becoming more and more difficult to provide Christians with Christian materials, including Bibles and Christian literature.

### **Block 5.18: Churches have been hindered in establishing, managing, maintaining and conducting schools, or charitable, humanitarian, medical, social or cultural organizations, institutions and associations. (4.00 points)**

Both local Algerian and foreign expatriate Christian communities are hindered in such ways that it is practically impossible to establish or operate church-connected organizations, including schools, charities or other humanitarian institutions.

### **Block 5.6: Work among youth in particular has been restricted. (3.75 points)**

Churches are not allowed to organize any activity among Muslim youth. Consequences for those involved would be severe if they did. Minors are not allowed to attend a church alone; an adult always has to be present.

### **Block 5.19: Churches have been hindered in their interaction with the global church (both foreigners visiting and nationals being able to visit Christians in other countries to attend conferences etc.). (3.75 points)**

It is difficult for foreign Christians to obtain a visa and visit Algerian churches due to the constant monitoring of churches. Algerian Christians know that they are likely to be questioned when planning to travel abroad.

### **Block 5 - Additional information**

*Church life in Algeria is severely monitored, regulated and restricted. Churches are left in legal limbo: In theory they should be able to register themselves as legitimate churches, but in practice no individual church application has ever been accepted by the government. This leaves the*

church with great uncertainties, always at risk of intervention during their church gatherings and prevents them from constructing recognizable church buildings. Because of government pressure, churches have to operate discreetly and out of the public eye, while outside church activities are actively hindered. There are no seminaries in the country and training new church leaders is difficult. At the same time, printing, importing and distributing Christian materials is actively made difficult, if not impossible.

## Violence

Violence is defined in WWL Methodology as the deprivation of physical freedom or as bodily harm to Christians or damage to their property. It includes severe threats (mental abuse). The table is based on reported cases as much as possible, but since many incidents go unreported, the numbers must be understood as being minimum figures. The following 5 points should be considered when using the data provided in the Block 6 table:

**1. Some incidents go unreported because the Christians involved choose not to speak about the hostility being faced.** Possible reasons for this may be:

- Doing so would expose them to more attacks. For example, if a family member is killed because of his/her faith, the survivors might decide to keep silent about the circumstances of the killing to avoid provoking any further attacks.
- In some circumstances, the reticence to pass on information may be due to the danger of exposure caused by converts returning to their previous faith.
- If persecution is related to sexual violence - due to stigma, survivors often do not tell even their closest relatives.
- In some cultural settings, if your loved one is killed, you might be under the obligation to take revenge. Christians not wishing to do that, may decide to keep quiet about it.

**2. Other incidents go unreported for the following possible reasons:**

- Some incidents never reach the public consciousness, because no one really knows about it; or the incident is simply not considered worth reporting; or media coverage is deliberately blocked or distorted; or media coverage is not deliberately blocked, but the information somehow gets lost; or the incidents are deliberately not reported widely for security reasons (e.g. for the protection of local church leaders).
- In situations where Christians have been discriminated against for many years, armed conflict can make them additionally vulnerable. Christians killed in areas where fighting regularly takes place are unlikely to be reported separately. Examples in recent years have been Sudan, Syria and Myanmar.
- Christians who die through the deprivation of basic necessities such as clean water and medical care (due to long-term discrimination) are unlikely to be reported separately. Christians are not always killed directly; they can be so squeezed by regulations and other oppressive factors that they die – not at once, but in the course of years. This often includes the deprivation of basic necessities such as clean water and medical care, or exclusion from government assisted socio-economic development projects. These numbers could be immense.

**3. For further discussion** (with a focus on the complexity of assessing the numbers of Christians killed for their faith) please see World Watch Monitor's article dated 13 November 2013 available at:

<https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2013/11/number-of-christian-martyrs-continues-to-cause-debate/>.

**4. The use of symbolic numbers:** In cases where it has been impossible to count exactly, a symbolic round figure (10\*, 100\* etc.) is given and indicated with an asterisk. A symbolic number of 10\* could in reality even be 100 or more but the real number is uncertain. A symbolic number of 100\* could go well over 1000 but the real number is uncertain. A symbolic number of 1,000\* could go well over 10,000 but, again, the real number is uncertain. The same applies for symbolic numbers 10,000\*, 100,000\* and 1,000,000\*: Each could indicate much higher numbers, but WWR chooses to be cautious because the real number is uncertain.

**5. The symbol "x" in the table:** This denotes a known number which cannot be published due to security concerns.

Algeria: Violence Block question	WWL 2023	WWL 2022
6.1 How many Christians have been killed for faith-related reasons (including state sanctioned executions)?	0	0
6.2 How many churches or Christian buildings (schools, hospitals, cemeteries, etc.) have been attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down, closed or confiscated for faith-related reasons?	4	4
6.3 How many Christians have been detained for faith-related reasons?	0	2
6.4 How many Christians have been sentenced to jail, labor camp, sent to psychiatric hospital as punishment, or similar things for faith-related reasons?	19	4
6.5 How many Christians have been abducted for faith-related reasons (including Christians missing in a persecution context)?	1	0
6.6 How many Christians have been raped or otherwise sexually harassed for faith-related reasons?	10 *	10 *
6.7 How many cases have there been of forced marriages of Christians to non-Christians?	0	0
6.8 How many Christians have been otherwise physically or mentally abused for faith-related reasons (including beatings and death threats)?	10 *	11
6.9 How many houses of Christians or other property (excluding shops) have been attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down or confiscated for faith-related reasons?	0	0
6.10 How many shops or businesses of Christians have been attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down, closed or confiscated for faith-related reasons?	0	0
6.11 How many Christians have been forced to leave their homes or go into hiding in-country for faith-related reasons?	3	0
6.12 How many Christians have been forced to leave the country for faith-related reasons?	4	0

## 5 Year trends

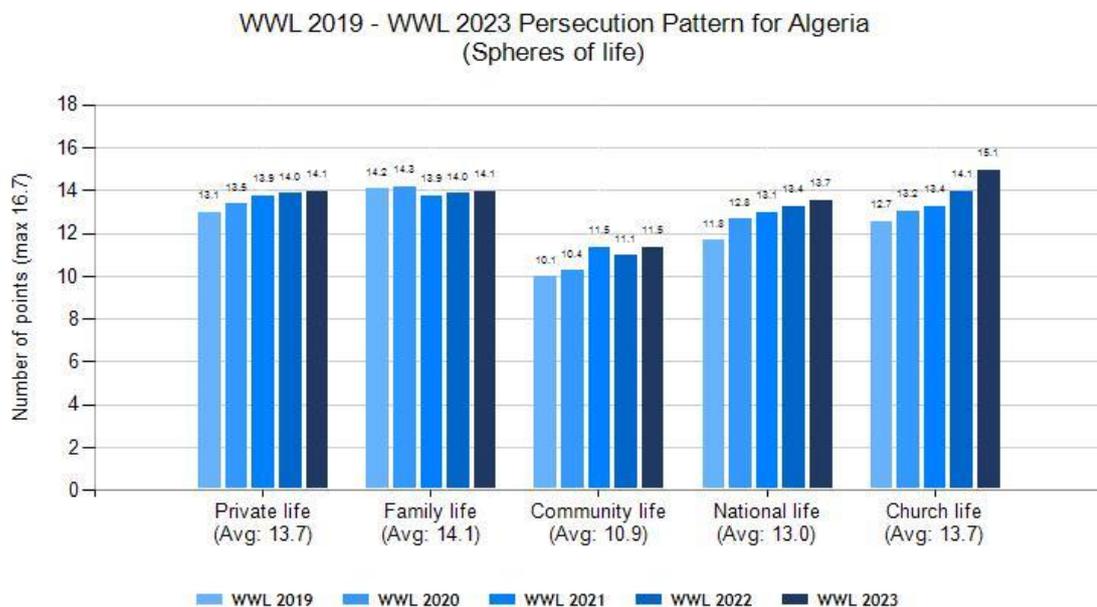
The following three charts show the levels of pressure and violence faced by Christians in the country over the last five WWL reporting periods.

### 5 Year trends: Average pressure

The table below lists the average pressure on Christians over the last 5 reporting periods. It shows that the overall level of pressure on Christians has continually been very high and gradually increasing since WWL 2019. Average pressure reached its highest level in the WWL 2023 reporting period.

Algeria: WWL 2019 - WWL 2023 Persecution Pattern history	Average pressure over 5 Spheres of life
2023	13.7
2022	13.3
2021	13.1
2020	12.8
2019	12.4

### 5 Year trends: Pressure in each sphere of life

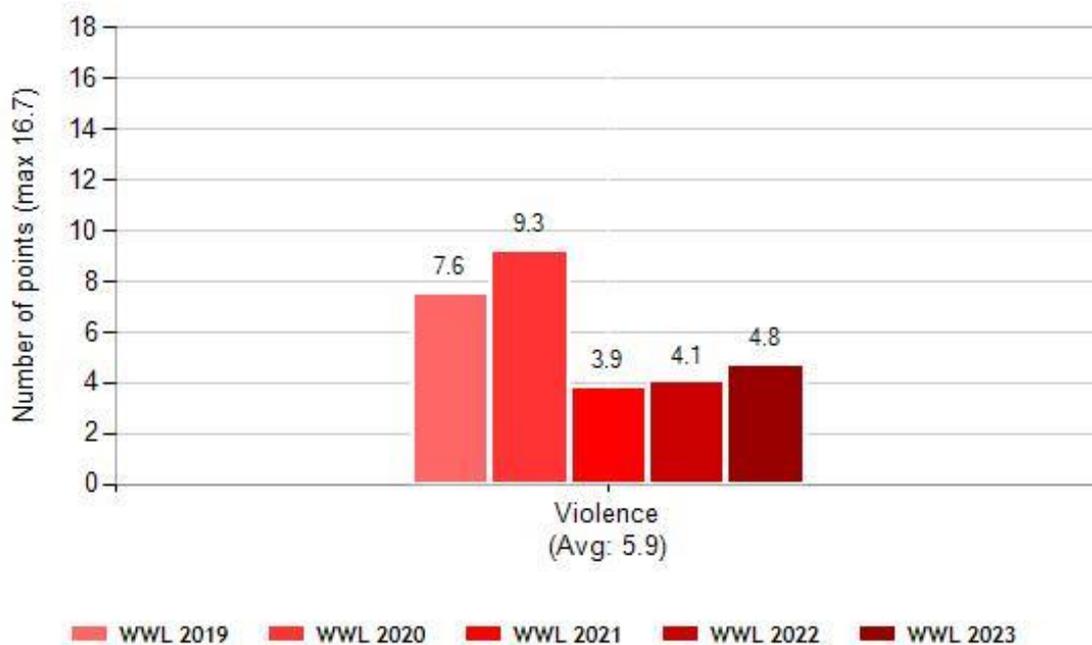


The chart above shows that there has been a steady upward trend of pressure in the *National* and *Church sphere of life*, matching the rise in government action against churches in the last five reporting periods in particular. The consistent very high/extreme levels of pressure in the *Private* and *Family spheres*, reflect the difficulties experienced by converts.

### 5 Year trends: Violence against Christians

In the chart below: The score for violence was especially high in the WWL 2019 and 2020 reporting periods due to the number of church closures and arrests. The violence score dropped sharply in WWL 2021, probably because all churches had to cease activities due to the COVID-19 lockdown measures. The score rose again in WWL 2022 and WWL 2023 due to numerous incidents, including Christians receiving prison sentences, as well as churches being ordered to close.

WWL 2019 - WWL 2023 Persecution Pattern for Algeria (Violence)



## Gender-specific religious persecution / Female

Group	Female Pressure Points
Economic	-
Political and Legal	Denied access to Christian religious materials, teachings and rites; Forced marriage
Security	Incarceration by family (house arrest); Violence – physical; Violence – sexual
Social and Cultural	Denied access to social community/networks; Enforced religious dress code; Violence – psychological; Violence – Verbal
Technological	-

Despite gaining [legal protection](#) against targeted violence in 2016 (CBS, 2 February 2016), Algerian women continue to be [disadvantaged](#) in law and society, compounding the pressure Christian women experience due to their faith (OECD, “Social Institutions and Gender Index: Algeria”, 2019). Christian women experience pressure in several public spheres, including within workplaces and educational settings. This includes harassment (particularly if they are unveiled), the possibility of sexual assault and death threats.

In the private sphere, too, female converts face severe violations of their religious freedom from family members. Conversion is forbidden and dangerous. Church leaders report that Christian converts (especially women) are often beaten, harassed, threatened and/or placed under house-arrest for their faith by their Muslim families. In addition to restricting women’s access to

meaningful community, families also prevent converts from accessing Christian radio or television channels.

In the light of this pressure and violence, many female converts opt to hide their faith and live as secret believers. A country expert comments: “Christian women are much more concerned with the danger of meeting other believers because of the supervision of families (which makes them eternal minors).” Should their family discover their Christian faith, it is likely that unmarried converts would be threatened with forced marriage to a non-Christian as a corrective measure, and to restore them to the Islamic faith. This can also be used as an effective threat against Christian women. If already married at the point of becoming a Christian, her husband can divorce her, use her faith to exploit her, or restrict her access to Christian religious materials.

## Gender-specific religious persecution / Male

Group	Male Pressure Points
Economic	-
Political and Legal	Imprisonment by government
Security	Forced out of home – expulsion; Violence – physical
Social and Cultural	Denied access to social community/networks; Violence – psychological
Technological	-

Christian men in Algeria regularly experience community and economic pressure, facing harassment in workplaces and communal spaces. As men are the main providers in Algerian families, the loss of work can have a crippling effect on the whole family, creating fear and a sense of helplessness. Given the prevalence of male church leaders in Algeria, this makes men more likely to be interrogated or detained, which also affects their ability to work. A country expert comments, “The majority of church leaders have regularly received a summons from the police and/or gendarmerie to answer certain questions about the functioning of local churches.” If imprisoned, they can leave behind children and families who may struggle without a financial provider.

Families are often the source of additional violations, such as physical beatings, being forced out of the home, verbal insults and threats. In comparison to other Christian men, male converts face the most severe violations of religious freedom. They suffer ostracism and rejection not just from their families, but from the wider community too. Upon discovery of their faith, they may also be beaten and taken to the local mosque by force. Under such pressure, converts are forced to live out their faith in secret.

## Persecution of other religious minorities

Apart from Christians, Algerian Jews, Ahmadiyya and Shia Muslims also face varying levels of pressure and violence. Algerian Jews fear for their security due to the threat of violence from Islamists and there have been instances of desecration of Jewish cemeteries. The Ahmadiyya face more severe violations, including criminal charges for “denigrating the dogma or precepts

of Islam". They face hostility from public officials and are denied their right to form associations ([USCIRF statement](#), 25 January 2021).

According to the US State Department (IRFR 2021, p. 8 ):

- "In February [2021], Ahmadiyya Muslim community leaders said there were 50 Ahmadi Muslims who were defendants in cases in the court system, a decline from their October 2020 estimate of 220. According to Ahmadiyya Muslim leaders, the authorities failed to pursue many of the cases predating 2018, and the cases were dismissed."
- "In February [2021], a court in Algiers convicted Said Djabelkhir of blasphemy for "offending the precepts of Islam" and sentenced him to three years in prison and a fine of 50,000 dinars (\$360). Djabelkhir is an expert on Sufism and founded the "Circle of Enlightenment for Free Thought," an association for thinkers and academics who advocate a progressive Islam."
- "During a May 5 [2021] speech to the Algerian Muslim Ulemas (scholars) Association, Bouabdellah Ghlamallah, former Minister of Religious Affairs and head of the High Islamic Council, stated, 'Algerians can only be Muslim'. Ghlamallah said: 'The seeds sown by France are still germinating', and he told Muslim scholars to 'eradicate these residues'."

In addition, atheists and those who openly question Sunni Islamic doctrine are likely to face hostilities in Algeria. Although probably more related to his activities during the anti-governmental demonstrations, in October 2020 Yacine Mebarki was sentenced to ten years in prison on charges of "inciting atheism" ([Al-Arabiya, 8 October 2020](#)). Similarly, in January 2021, Walid Kechida received a three years prison sentence for "undermining the precepts of religion" (and "contempt and offense to the president") for running a satirical Facebook page.

## Future outlook

The outlook for Christians as viewed through the lens of:

### Islamic oppression

Political Islam, especially in the form of (Madkhali) Salafism, has a strong and growing influence at the grassroots level in Algeria. It is not likely that the Islamist influence will decrease, nor that society will change its approach towards converts and conversion. In addition, it is likely that at least a number of government officials adhere to such views as well. Hence, it is likely that the government will keep putting pressure on the church in Algeria, be it out of conviction or to appease the Islamists and wider society.

### Dictatorial paranoia

The government will likely continue discriminating against Christians, especially converts. The motive for this might partly be to appease Muslim society and radical Islamic movements. The growing presence of Christians, in particular of Protestant Christians, is creating unrest in society and hence is considered a threat to the power and stability of the regime. Thus the government is unlikely to become more open towards allowing Christians more freedom.

## Clan oppression

Although the influence of (village) elders is decreasing and traditional values are losing importance in an increasingly urbanized society, pressure from family and community on converts to adhere to these values and protect the honor of the family will probably remain strong for the foreseeable future. Especially since Christianity is viewed very negatively and converting to Christianity is considered to be a betrayal of the family and of being Algerian.

## Ethno-religious hostility

The majority of Algerian Christians are Berbers from the Kabyle region which is located in the northern part of the country. The political tensions between this region and the central government in Algeria is not likely to cease; this ethnic tension will continue to make any relationship with the government complicated.

## External Links - Persecution Dynamics

- Block 4.15: Christians accused in court have been deprived of equal treatment. (3.75 points): USCIRF, accessed 22 December 2022 - <https://www.uscirf.gov/religious-prisoners-conscience/forb-victims-database/hamid-soudad>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: legal protection - <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/new-law-in-algeria-punishes-violence-against-women/>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: disadvantaged - <https://www.genderindex.org/wp-content/uploads/files/datasheets/2019/DZ.pdf>
- Persecution of other religious minorities: USCIRF statement - <https://www.uscirf.gov/news-room/releases-statements/uscirf-troubled-escalating-persecution-ahmadi-muslims-algeria>
- Persecution of other religious minorities: Al-Arabiya, 8 October 2020 - <https://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/north-africa/2020/10/08/Algeria-hands-activist-Yacine-Mebarki-10-years-jail-for-inciting-atheism-NGO>

## Further useful reports

A selection of in-depth reports and smaller articles are available on the new Research & Reports page of the website od.org. As in earlier years, they are also available on the Open Doors Analytical website (password: freedom) using the following links:

- <https://opendoorsanalytical.org/reports/>
- <https://opendoorsanalytical.org/?s=Algeria>