



Algeria – Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 31 January 2018

Any information on the current situation in Algiers for a member of the Benmizab tribe.

Information specifically referring to the situation in Algiers for a member of the Beni Mzab clan in Algiers was not found among sources available to the Refugee Documentation Centre.

A submission by the US-based NGO Cultural Survival to the Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, in a section headed “Violence Against Indigenous People (CERD Article 4)”, refers to minority groups including the Mozabites as follows:

“Article 4(a) and 5(b) of the CERD condemn states from participation in violence or incitement based on race; it also condemns use of state forces to promote or incite racial discrimination and mandates right to security of persons. However, in contravention to these mandates, the Algerian government has persecuted Indigenous Peoples such as the Mozabites. Kamel Eddine Fekhar, the Mozabite human rights activist stated that, ‘state-sponsored racism is being perpetrated against the Mozabite because they are neither Arabs nor Sunni Muslims.’ The Algerian government has denied the state police forces’ participation in harassing the Mozabite. In fact, instead of addressing the violence perpetuated by the police, the government has proposed creating an unidentified organization for the benefit of the Mozabite as well as distributing land that is already in the possession of the Mozabite to the Mozabite. Finally, in addition to the police, the Mozabites are also facing attacks by the Chaambas, traditional pastoralists living in the M’zab region.” (Cultural Survival (November 2017) *Indigenous Rights Violations in Algeria*)

A report published by Qantara, an internet portal founded on the initiative of the German Foreign Office, states:

“Arabs and Berbers have lived together peacefully in Algeria for a long time. The two groups differ at least in part in their religion and language. The Berbers make up about 30 per cent of Algeria's population, but in the province of Ghardaia, they have been in the majority for centuries. The Berbers there are adherents of the Ibadi school of Islam, which goes back to the denominational divisions in the early days of the religion. The Arabs, by contrast, are Sunni Muslims.

Only in recent decades have many Arabs migrated to the region, which is regarded as the gateway to the Sahara. As the government pushed for the Arabisation of the population, many Berbers came to feel discriminated against for their language and culture. The first clashes between the two groups occurred in late 2013. Ever since then, there have been regular

skirmishes between Berbers and Arabs.” (Qantara (19 July 2015) *Conflict between Arabs and Berbers in Algeria: A social minefield*)

A report from the Middle East Monitor states:

“Since 1980, Algerians as well as the Kabyle across North Africa commemorate the anniversary of the Berber Spring on 20 April every year. Another memory that has spurred on the importance of the event was on 18 April 2001 when during preparations for the 21st anniversary of the Berber Spring an 18-year-old student was killed whilst in police custody in Tizi Ouzou.

The incident sparked riots and confrontations between civilians and the security forces which spread through the region and resulted in the deaths of around 123 protestors – the deadliest events in the movement’s history. It became known as the Black Spring.

The Citizens’ Movement was created as a result of the bloody events in the spring of 2001 and has since propelled other political movements to front the cause of Kabyle identity.

Though the Berber Spring was suppressed by the Algerian authorities, it helped create a lasting legacy for the Kabyle in North Africa. Many of today’s prominent Kabyle politicians and activists made their name during the Berber Spring events, and organisations such as the Rally for Culture and Democracy (RCD) and the Kabyle Cultural Movement (MCB) were created by activists who had been part of the spring movement. The Socialist Forces Front (FFS), which was once led by the revered Kabyle Hocine Aït Ahmed, is one of the main political parties that the majority of the Kabyle back in elections.

Since the dismantling of the one-party FLN system in 1989 a few of the organisation’s demands have slowly been met by the Algerian state. Constitutional amendments in 2016 recognised Tamazight as one of Algeria’s official language.” (Middle East Monitor (20 April 2017) *Algeria’s repression of the Berber uprising*)

A report from Al Jazeera states:

“Berber communities in Algeria are calling on the government to allocate state funding to promote and preserve their indigenous language, a demand that has prompted several protests in the country’s northern region this week. The protests come after an amendment to 2018 budget legislation that would have formalised the teaching of the Tamazight language in local schools was rejected by members of parliament. ‘A social upheaval is coming,’ said Lemnouar Hamamouche, a sociology student at the Abderrahmane Mira University of Bejaia, in Algeria’s northern region of Kabylie, where a majority of the protests have taken place. Students and other activists have rallied against the decision, which they say highlights the state’s wider rejection of the language and identity of its Berber citizens, also known as Amazigh.” (Al Jazeera (15 December 2017) *Algeria’s Berbers protest for Tamazight language rights*)

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research and Information Unit within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

References:

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Human Rights Watch

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