



Algeria – Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 25 January 2018

Country of Origin information pertaining to indiscriminate violence in a situation of international or internal armed conflict as well as corruption of the government and police in Algeria.

The Introduction to a report from the International Crisis Group states:

“The Algerian south, the vast area beyond the Atlas Mountains and the High Plateaux that border the Mediterranean, comprising 85 per cent of the national territory and virtually all its oil and gas reserves but less than 9 per cent of its population, was long sheltered from the mass protests and armed insurrections that have flared up sporadically in the north since the 1980s. But spurred by the Arab uprisings and local grievances, politics in the south has grown increasingly contentious since 2013, and the region has overtaken the north as the epicentre of protest.

Three sites, each with local specificities, have demonstrated over the past few years the potential for seeding wider unrest. Since 2013, intercommunal clashes between Ibadi Mozabites and Sunni Maliki Arabs in the Mزاب Valley have led to dozens of deaths, the burning and looting of thousands of businesses and homes and the destruction of cultural heritage sites, including a UNESCO-classified Ibadite shrine. The remote Saharan town of In Salah became the site of a large mobilisation against shale gas exploitation after the government announced successful test drills nearby in December 2014. Peaceful unemployment protests in the towns of Laghouat and Ouargla were met with arrests and intimidation in 2013.

The state so far has managed to contain tensions through familiar carrots – including *dhamanat* (literally ‘guarantees, in this case of various reforms), patronage and largesse – and sticks, such as intimidation and harassment of protest leaders. However effective in the short term, these measures, by failing to address the underlying political causes of unrest, risk exacerbating them in the long run. Conflict and violence are already expanding, overlapping and deepening. New forms of contestation are emerging as the state’s welfare role shrinks.” (International Crisis Group (21 November 2016) *Algeria’s South: Trouble’s Bellwether*, p.1)

In a section titled “Overview” the 2017 Freedom House report for Algeria states:

“Political affairs in Algeria are dominated by a closed elite based in the military and the ruling party, the National Liberation Front (FLN). President Abdelaziz Bouteflika has been in office since 1999, and while there are multiple opposition parties in the parliament, elections are distorted by fraud and other forms of manipulation. Authorities use restrictive laws to curb criticism in the media and suppress street protests. Other concerns include

rampant corruption, the threat of terrorist attacks, and occasional violence between Arabs and Berbers as well as between Algerians and migrants from sub-Saharan Africa.” (Freedom House (12 July 2017) *Freedom in the World 2017 – Algeria*)

In a section titled “Overview” the 2017 US Department of State report on terrorism in Algeria states:

“Algeria continued an aggressive campaign to eliminate all terrorist activity within its borders, and sustained its policing efforts to thwart terrorist activity in urban centers. Al-Qa’ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), AQIM-allied groups, and ISIS elements including the Algerian branch known as Jund al-Khilafah in Algeria (JAK-A, Soldiers of the Caliphate in Algeria), were active terrorist organizations within Algeria and along its borders. These groups aspired to establish their interpretations of Islamic law in the region and to attack Algerian security services, local government targets, and Western interests.

Regional political and security instability contributed to Algeria’s terrorist threat. Terrorist groups and criminal networks in the Sahel attempted to operate around Algeria’s nearly 4,000 miles of borders. Continuing instability in Libya, terrorist groups operating in Tunisia, fragile peace accord implementation in Mali, as well as human and narcotics trafficking, were significant external threats.” (US Department of State (19 July 2017) *Country Reports on Terrorism 2016 – Algeria*)

A report from IRIN states:

“As so-called Islamic State recruits members from across the world, one Muslim country has set itself apart. Despite its geographic proximity to extremist-prone regions and a chequered past of militancy, Algeria, on the southern shores of the Mediterranean, has fewer recruits than many others, including next-door neighbours Morocco and Tunisia.

At first, it seems surprising. Algeria, the largest country in Africa and home to 40 million people, knows extremism well. When the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in 1979, Algerians were among the first to join the newly formed mujahideen. Then, during Algeria’s civil war in the 1990s – known locally as the ‘black decade’ – Islamist groups established a presence across the country.

Attacks and bombings, followed by counter-offensives from the government, led to the deaths of more than 150,000 people and the disappearances of another 7,000. Only in 2001 was the conflict finally brought to an end.

Fifteen years later, radicalism appears to hold relatively little appeal in Algeria. There could, of course, be a spectacular attack tomorrow and statistics don’t tell the whole story, but in terms of IS’s recent recruitment of foreign fighters, Algeria lags far behind other countries in North Africa.” (IRIN (28 September 2016) *Has Algeria taken an anti-IS vaccine?*)

In a paragraph headed “Challenges And Threats To Stability” a Business Monitor International report states:

“The most direct threat to the government comes from al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). Its frequent attacks on the symbols of government - public buildings, police stations and military installations - as well as on oil infrastructure (most notably the attack at the In Amenas gas plant in January 2013) undermine the government and its claims to have brought security to Algeria. Beyond internal threats, the security services and military are now also confronted with a vastly more challenging regional security environment since 2011.” (Business Monitor International (BMI) (1 January 2018) *Algeria - Q1 2018 - Political Outlook*)

In a section headed “Algeria: AQIM’s Dissidents” an International Crisis Group report states:

“Jihadists who pledged allegiance to ISIS and operate within Algeria were drawn chiefly from pre-existing groups previously affiliated with al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). They are remnants of the 1990s “black decade” who for the most part survived in the mountainous parts of Kabylia and eastern Algeria.⁸⁴ To date, only two such groups have declared their loyalty to ISIS and, overall, only a relatively small number of Algerians are ISIS members; while some have encouraged attacks in their home country from Syria,⁸⁵ very few individuals in Algeria itself – most probably less than 100 –⁸⁶ have heeded the call to pledge allegiance to ISIS. All in all, security officials worry more about ISIS’ presence in their neighbours than at home.

To an extent, this reflects steps Algeria took after a January 2013 wake-up call, when al-Murabitoun, an Algerian-led jihadist group led by former members of AQIM, attacked the In Amenas natural gas complex in Tiguentourine, near the Libyan border. In the wake of the attack, the country’s security approach was overhauled. This eventually led to a restructuring of the intelligence agency chiefly responsible for counterterrorism.” (International Crisis Group (24 July 2017) *How the Islamic State Rose, Fell and Could Rise Again in the Maghreb*, pp.21-22)

This section of the report also states:

“Since then, Algeria’s security services have taken no chances. When, in September 2014, Jund al-Khalifa, a group operating in the Jurjura mountains, announced its allegiance to ISIS and claimed responsibility for kidnapping and killing Hervé Gourdel, a French tourist, the response was swift. The group’s leader, Abdelmalek Gouri, appeared principally motivated by a desire to emancipate himself from the AQIM hierarchy, echoing previous disputes among leaders of the al-Qaeda franchise that resulted in splinter movements in the last two decades.⁹⁰ Gourdel’s murder provoked a fierce response from the security services; by January 2015, Gouri had been killed and by the end of the same year most of Jund al-Khilafa’s 50 members reportedly had been either killed or arrested.” (ibid, p.22)

A report from the Jamestown Foundation, in a paragraph headed “Prospects for the Years to Come” states:

“Ten years on, AQIM is a very different organization from what it was in early 2007. Although its leadership remains Algerian, Algeria no longer represents AQIM’s main focus. While this does not mean that the organization will not mount attacks in Algeria, it is no longer the systemic threat that the GIA

represented in the 1990s and AQIM itself posed in the first months after its rebranding. The group is now more of a regional franchise. It is the center of gravity for a number of local groups, and itself part of the wider al-Qaeda global project. Moreover, it represents a regional counterbalance to IS, and the rivalry between the two organizations has been a significant feature of the regional geostrategic environment.” (Jamestown Foundation (5 May 2017) *Ten Years of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb: Evolution and Prospects*)

A Voice of America news report states:

“A number of videos on social media urging voters to boycott the election appeared to resonate with some younger voters, amid anger over high youth unemployment rates and accusations of corruption against the FLN party.

Older voters appeared to be more enthusiastic about voting, amid concerns for stability. Algerians worry about civil war and chaos in neighboring countries, and hope to avoid a similar fate. The country suffered its own bloody civil war during the 1990s, in which thousands of people died. President Abdel Aziz Bouteflika is widely credited for having brought an end to that civil war, and many worry about the fate of the country when he dies.” (Voice of America (5 May 2017) *Lighter Turnout Seen for Algerian Parliamentary Election; Ruling Party Reigns*)

A travel advice document issued by the UK Foreign & Commonwealth Office, in a section headed “Terrorism”, states:

“Terrorists are very likely to try to carry out attacks in Algeria, including kidnappings. Terrorist attacks have focussed on the Algerian state, but attacks could be indiscriminate and include foreigners. There’s also a risk that lone actors target foreigners. You should be vigilant at all times and take additional security precautions.

The main terrorist threat is from Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQ-M) and other regional Islamist groups including Al Murabitun and Daesh-affiliates. There’s also a threat from individuals inspired by Daesh. These groups have been active across the country and pose a threat throughout Algeria, including in Algiers and other major cities.

The Algerian authorities continue to conduct effective counter terrorism operations to disrupt terrorist activity but there’s a continuing threat of further terrorist attacks.” (UK Foreign & Commonwealth Office (21 December 2017) *Foreign Travel Advice – Algeria*)

An article from The National, a newspaper based in the United Arab Emirates, states:

“Transparency International, the anti-corruption NGO, is a household name in Algeria, where its annual reports are feverishly monitored by citizens. The most recent corruption index ranked the country 88 out of 168 nations, a result which is in line with previous years. Many Algerians believe that corruption has plagued their economy for decades.” (The National (7 March 2016) *In Algeria, corruption bedevils the economy*)

The 2016 US Department of State country report on Algeria, in a section titled "Corruption and Lack of Transparency in Government", states:

"The law provides for criminal penalties of two to 10 years in prison for official corruption, but the government generally did not implement the law effectively. Corruption remained a problem as reflected in the Transparency International corruption index." (US Department of State (3 March 2017) *2016 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices – Algeria*, p.27)

See also sub-section headed "Corruption" which states:

"The criminal code stipulates that charges related to theft, embezzlement, or loss of public and private funds may be initiated against senior, public sector 'economic managers' only by the board of directors of the institution. Critics of the law asserted that by permitting only senior officials of state businesses to initiate investigations, the law protects high-level government corruption and promotes impunity." (ibid, pp.27-28)

This section also states:

"Corruption throughout the government stemmed largely from the bloated nature of the bureaucracy and a lack of transparent oversight. The CNCPPDH stated in its 2014 annual report that public corruption remained a problem and hindered development. The National Association for the Fight Against Corruption noted the existence of an effective anticorruption law but stated that the government lacked the 'political will' to apply the law." (ibid, p.28)

A report published by the GAN Integrity - Business Anti-Corruption Portal, in a paragraph headed "Police", states:

"Companies face a moderate corruption risk when dealing with police. Impunity among police officers is believed to be a problem in Algeria, and authorities rarely disclose information on actions taken against police abuse (HRR 2014). Businesses consider the police to be moderately reliable in enforcing the law and in protecting business from crime (GCR 2015-2016). Most surveyed households believe corruption is widespread among the police." (GAN Integrity - Business Anti-Corruption Portal (March 2016) *Algeria Corruption Report*)

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.

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