



**Algeria – Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 6 April 2016**

**Information relating to clashes between Arabs and Amazigh/Mozabite Berbers in July 2015 in Ghardaia**

A July 2015 BBC News report on clashes between Arabs and Berbers in Ghardaia states:

“At least 22 people have died in clashes between Arab and Berber communities around the Algerian oasis city of Ghardaia, the state news agency says. The city has seen clashes for the last two years, with rivalry among communities for jobs, housing and land. But the two days of clashes in Ghardaia and two nearby cities - Guerrara and Berianne - are the most violent yet.” (BBC News (8 July 2015) *Ghardaia clashes: At least 22 dead in Algerian oasis city*)

A Reuters report on these clashes states:

“At least 22 people have been killed in ethnic clashes between Arab and Amazigh communities around the Algerian desert town of Ghardaia, with several businesses and homes burned down, medical sources and state media said on Wednesday. The violence that erupted over the weekend was some of the worst in years in the flashpoint region where tensions often run high between Arabs and Mozabite Berbers - one of the Amazigh people of North Africa - competing for jobs, houses and land.” (Reuters (8 July 2015) *At least 22 killed in Algerian ethnic clashes: medical sources*)

A report from the German Foreign Office funded project Qantara states:

“Plundered and burnt-out shops, houses and public offices as well as 22 dead and dozens injured – this was the preliminary toll after two days of unrest in the Algerian province of Ghardaia in early July. A conflict that had long been simmering between Arabs and Berbers in the region 600 kilometres south of the capital, Algiers, has exploded in a rash of violence and bloodletting. A Berber representative complained that armed gangs took control of the entrances to the town of Guerara: ‘The situation is very bad. These are not clashes anymore, this is terrorism.’ In Algiers, Berbers protested in rage at the escalation of the conflict. President Abdelaziz Bouteflika quickly convened ministers along with army and police commanders for a crisis meeting. Soldiers are now tasked with restoring order.” (Qantara (20 July 2015) *Conflict between Arabs and Berbers in Algeria: A social minefield*)

In a paragraph headed “Reports of masked attackers” this report states:

“What exactly happened late in the evening of 7 July and early the following morning in Guerara was initially unclear. The Algerian newspaper ‘Al Chabar’ wrote that masked men armed with hunting rifles had opened fire on

residents. According to the newspaper 'Al Watan', hooded men on motorcycles apparently ordered inhabitants to leave their homes, which were then set on fire. There is no official confirmation of these accounts. In Guerara alone, 16 Berbers and three Arabs were killed, according to a Berber representative. The violence also spread to other towns, where at least three people allegedly lost their lives." (ibid)

An Agence France Presse report states:

"Algerian authorities have arrested 38 people in connection with deadly ethnic unrest between Berbers and Arabs in the south of the country, police and the gendarmerie said Friday. Police also said a hunting rifle, dozens of knives and Molotov cocktails were seized during a probe into unrest in the southern province of Ghardaia that left 22 people dead on Tuesday. Police said 27 people had been detained Thursday 'for harming public order, citizen's security and property.' State television, citing the gendarmerie, said 11 more people were rounded up, bringing the total to 38. Algerian media reported that masked gunmen went on a killing and arson spree in the town of Guerara Tuesday night and into the early hours of Wednesday." (Agence France Presse (10 July 2015) *Algeria says 38 arrested over deadly ethnic violence*)

A report from Al Jazeera states:

"The country's prime minister on Thursday said that at least 27 people were arrested over what he said was their involvement in the violence in the Guerara district of the city of Ghardaia. Some media sources put the figure of those rounded up by security forces at 35. The arrested included activist Kamal Fakhar al-Din, who has been campaigning for the rights of Berber people. He was in a mosque Ghardaia before security forces stormed it and arrested him and several other people. Makeshift barricades of tyres and wheelbarrows were erected between the rival neighbourhoods and burned out homes, shops and cars, the AFP news agency reported on Thursday. It also said that 16 of the dead were from the Berber community and three were Arabs. Ghardaia is situated in the M'zab valley, a UNESCO world heritage site on the edge of the Sahara that has seen mounting tensions between the two communities. There have been on-and-off confrontations between the two communities since December 2013 over property and land ownership after a Berber shrine was vandalised. But this week's violence was the worst so far, prompting President Abdelaziz Bouteflika to order the regional commander general to 'supervise the actions of the security services and local authorities to re-establish public order'." (Al Jazeera (10 July 2015) *Dozens arrested in Algeria over ethnic violence*)

An Associated Press report states:

"The violence in the poor desert region of Ghardaia, more than 600 kilometers (375 miles) south of Algiers, was the latest episode of sporadic but sometimes deadly unrest between rival gangs of Berbers and Arabs. Riot police moved in to quell the clashes that included fires and vandalism targeting shops, cars and public buildings in the towns of Guerrara, Ghardaia and Berianne, the official APS news agency reported. It was not immediately clear how many security forces were in the region. At one point last year, thousands of troops were sent in to quell a spike in violence. The prefecture put the number of dead in the latest clashes over two days at 22, most of

them on Wednesday. APS said most of the deaths were from 'projectiles' and occurred in Guerrara, 120 kilometers (75 miles) northeast of Ghardaia. One person was fatally wounded in Ghardaia when hit by a rock to the head. Dozens of others were injured, some seriously, APS said. The daily El Watan reported gunfire during the unrest, and wrote that 'masked hordes on big motorbikes were combing neighborhoods of Guerrara and seeding terror among the population.'" (Associated Press (8 July 2015) *22 die in clashes in Algeria, president orders crackdown*)

An article published by the American Arab newspaper The Arab Daily News states:

"The recent dispute is more about lands and strategic business domination than sectarian or ethnic concerns. The violence, which has become almost chronic between the two communities, arises from the real issue which is, who will dominate the trans-Saharan business and local economic imperatives. This is the driving factor in the dispute rather than the human rights issues and demands as reported in some Algerian militant papers and the French media. Clearly there are elements of social injustice and ethnic-related economic disadvantages. But the majority of the Arab population of the Cha'amba tribes benefit from Algiers and its local political influence in the hands of the ruling FLN party." (The Arab Daily News (July 2015) *M'zab Valley: Neither Sectarian nor Ethnic*)

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:

Agence France Presse (10 July 2015) *Algeria says 38 arrested over deadly ethnic violence*

<http://www.lexisnexis.com>

(Accessed 6 April 2016)

This is a subscription database

Al Jazeera (10 July 2015) *Dozens arrested in Algeria over ethnic violence*

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/07/algeria-berber-arab-ethnic-violence-150710104217967.html>

(Accessed 6 April 2016)

The Arab Daily News (July 2015) *M'zab Valley: Neither Sectarian nor Ethnic*

<http://thearabdailynews.com/2015/07/25/mzab-valley-neither-sectarian-nor-ethnic/>

(Accessed 6 April 2016)

Associated Press (8 July 2015) *22 die in clashes in Algeria, president orders crackdown*

<http://www.lexisnexis.com>

(Accessed 6 April 2016)

This is a subscription database

BBC News (8 July 2015) *Ghardaia clashes: At least 22 dead in Algerian oasis city*

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-33455563>

(Accessed 6 April 2016)

Qantara (20 July 2015) *Conflict between Arabs and Berbers in Algeria: A social minefield*

<https://en.qantara.de/content/conflict-between-arabs-and-berbers-in-algeria-a-social-minefield>

(Accessed 6 April 2016)

Reuters (8 July 2015) *At least 22 killed in Algerian ethnic clashes: medical sources*

<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-algeria-security-idUSKCN0PI1IB20150708>

(Accessed 6 April 2016)

### **Sources Consulted**

BBC News

Electronic Immigration Network

European Country of Origin Information Network

Google

Lexis Nexis

Refugee Documentation Centre Query Database

UNHCR Refworld