World
Watch
Research

Algeria: Full Country Dossier

Revised version: March 2021



OpenDoors
Serving persecuted Christians worldwide

Open Doors International / World Watch Research

March 2021

research@od.org

Contents

Introduction 3
World Watch List 2021 3
Copyright notice 4
Sources and definitions 4
Effect on data-gathering during COVID-19 pandemic 4
External Links - Introduction 5
WWL 2021 Short country profile / Algeria 5
Brief country details 5
Dominant persecution engines and drivers 5
Brief description of the persecution situation 6
Summary of international obligations and rights violations 6
Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period 6
Specific examples of positive developments 7
External Links - Short country profile 7
WWL 2021: Keys to understanding / Algeria 7
Link for general background information 7
Recent history 7
Political and legal landscape 8
Religious landscape 10
Economic landscape 11
Social and cultural landscape 12
Technological landscape 13
Security situation 13
Trends analysis 14
External Links - Keys to understanding 15
WWL 2021: Church information / Algeria 16
Christian origins 16
Church spectrum today 17
WWL 2021: Persecution Dynamics / Algeria 18
Reporting period 18
Position on the World Watch List 18
Persecution engines 18
Drivers of persecution 20

Areas where Christians face most difficulties 21
Christian communities and how they are affected 22
The Persecution pattern 22
Pressure in the 5 spheres of life 23
Violence 27
5 Year trends 29
5 Year trends: Pressure in each sphere of life 29
Gender-specific religious persecution / Female 31
Gender-specific religious persecution / Male 32
Persecution of other religious minorities 33
Future outlook 33
External Links - Persecution Dynamics 33
Further useful reports 34

Introduction

World Watch List 2021

Rank	Country	Private life	Family life	Community life	National life	Church life	Violence	Total Score WWL 2021	Total Score WWL 2020	Total Score WWL 2019	Total Score WWL 2018	Total Score WWL 2017
1	North Korea	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	11.1	94	94	94	94	92
2	Afghanistan	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	10.2	94	93	94	93	89
3	Somalia	16.5	16.7	16.6	16.6	16.3	9.8	92	92	91	91	91
4	Libya	15.6	15.4	15.9	16.3	16.3	12.4	92	90	87	86	78
5	Pakistan	13.9	14.2	15.1	14.9	13.5	16.7	88	88	87	86	88
6	Eritrea	14.6	14.9	15.9	15.9	15.4	11.1	88	87	86	86	82
7	Yemen	16.6	16.6	16.5	16.7	16.7	3.9	87	85	86	85	85
8	Iran	14.5	14.5	13.9	15.7	16.5	10.6	86	85	85	85	85
9	Nigeria	13.3	13.2	13.9	14.1	14.1	16.7	85	80	80	77	78
10	India	13.0	12.9	13.5	14.9	13.7	15.4	83	83	83	81	73
11	Iraq	13.6	14.6	14.2	14.8	13.8	11.5	82	76	79	86	86
12	Syria	13.3	13.9	13.5	14.5	14.0	12.0	81	82	82	76	86
13	Sudan	13.4	13.4	13.7	13.6	15.7	9.1	79	85	87	87	87
14	Saudi Arabia	15.1	13.9	14.4	15.8	16.6	2.2	78	79	77	79	76
15	Maldives	15.4	15.5	13.9	15.8	16.6	0.4	77	78	78	78	76
16	Egypt	12.5	13.2	11.5	12.7	11.0	14.1	75	76	76	70	65
17	China	12.6	9.7	12.0	13.2	15.4	11.1	74	70	65	57	57
18	Myanmar	11.9	12.0	13.1	12.9	12.3	11.9	74	73	71	65	62
19	Vietnam	12.1	8.8	12.7	14.0	14.5	10.0	72	72	70	69	71
20	Mauritania	14.3	14.0	13.5	14.1	13.6	1.9	71	68	67	57	55
21	Uzbekistan	15.1	12.9	14.1	12.2	15.7	1.3	71	73	74	73	71
22	Laos	12.1	10.2	13.6	13.5	14.3	6.9	71	72	71	67	64
23	Turkmenistan	14.5	11.3	13.8	13.3	15.7	1.5	70	70	69	68	67
24	Algeria	13.9	13.9	11.5	13.1	13.4	3.9	70	73	70	58	58
25	Turkey	12.5	11.5	10.8	13.3	11.6	9.3	69	63	66	62	57
26	Tunisia	12.0	13.1	10.4	11.5	13.2	7.4	67	64	63	62	61
27	Morocco	12.6	13.5	11.2	12.4	14.1	3.7	67	66	63	51	49
28	Mali	9.4	8.2	12.7	10.3	11.5	15.4	67	66	68	59	59
29	Qatar	14.0	13.9	10.8	13.1	14.1	1.5	67	66	62	63	66
30	Colombia	11.4	8.8	12.4	11.0	9.7	13.9	67	62	58	56	53
31	Bangladesh	11.5	10.3	13.0	11.3	10.1	10.6	67	63	58	58	63
32	Burkina Faso	9.4	9.7	12.0	9.4	11.8	14.3	67	66	48	-	-
33	Tajikistan	14.0	12.3	11.9	12.5	13.2	2.2	66	65	65	65	58
34	Nepal	12.4	9.7	9.9	13.0	12.3	8.5	66	64	64	64	53
35	CAR	9.0	8.6	13.1	9.6	9.9	15.6	66	68	70	61	58
36	Ethiopia	9.9	8.5	10.7	10.3	10.8	14.4	65	63	65	62	64
37	Mexico	10.3	8.1	12.4	10.7	10.3	12.6	64	60	61	59	57
38	Jordan	13.1	13.9	11.4	11.6	12.4	2.0	64	64	65	66	63
39	Brunei	13.9	14.6	10.7	10.9	13.5	0.7	64	63	63	64	64
40	DRC	8.0	7.9	11.2	9.4	11.6	16.1	64	56	55	33	-
41	Kazakhstan	13.2	11.5	11.0	12.5	13.4	2.4	64	64	63	63	56
42	Cameroon	8.8	7.6	12.6	7.0	12.3	15.7	64	60	54	38	-
43	Bhutan	13.1	12.1	11.9	12.7	13.8	0.0	64	61	64	62	61
44	Oman	13.2	13.5	10.3	12.5	13.0	0.9	63	62	59	57	53
45	Mozambique	9.3	7.6	11.3	7.9	11.1	16.1	63	43	43	-	-
46	Malaysia	12.1	14.3	12.9	11.5	10.0	2.4	63	62	60	65	60
47	Indonesia	11.5	11.4	12.4	10.7	9.3	7.8	63	60	65	59	55
48	Kuwait	13.2	13.5	9.9	12.2	13.2	1.1	63	62	60	61	57
49	Kenya	11.7	9.2	10.5	8.0	10.3	12.8	62	61	61	62	68
50	Comoros	12.5	11.1	11.4	11.3	14.2	1.9	62	57	56	56	56

Rank	Country	Private life	Family life	Community life	National life	Church life	Violence	Total Score WWL 2021	Total Score WWL 2020	Total Score WWL 2019	Total Score WWL 2018	Total Score WWL 2017
51	Cuba	10.9	7.7	11.8	12.9	13.4	5.4	62	52	49	49	47
52	Sri Lanka	12.2	9.1	11.7	12.2	9.7	7.0	62	65	58	57	55
53	UAE	13.4	13.3	9.7	12.0	12.4	1.1	62	60	58	58	55
54	Niger	9.4	9.5	13.3	7.2	11.6	10.6	62	60	52	45	47
55	Kyrgyzstan	12.9	10.3	11.2	10.4	12.0	1.3	58	57	56	54	48
56	Palestinian Territories	12.5	13.3	9.1	10.4	11.7	0.9	58	60	57	60	64
57	Tanzania	9.3	10.8	10.3	8.6	8.7	10.2	58	55	52	53	59
58	Russian Federation	12.3	8.0	10.2	10.5	12.1	3.9	57	60	60	51	46
59	Djibouti	12.3	12.3	10.3	10.0	11.2	0.0	56	56	56	56	57
60	Bahrain	12.1	12.5	9.1	10.7	10.5	0.9	56	55	55	57	54
61	Azerbaijan	12.8	9.8	9.4	11.1	12.6	0.0	56	57	57	57	52
62	Chad	11.5	8.2	10.2	9.6	10.3	3.7	53	56	48	40	-
63	Nicaragua	6.9	4.6	9.9	11.3	10.0	8.1	51	41	41	-	-
64	Burundi	5.1	5.8	9.7	9.2	9.6	8.9	48	48	43	-	-
65	Uganda	8.1	4.6	6.7	6.7	9.1	12.0	47	48	47	46	53
66	Guinea	10.3	7.5	8.3	7.0	8.1	5.9	47	45	46	-	-
67	Honduras	6.8	5.0	10.6	7.6	9.0	7.6	46	39	38		
68	Angola	6.4	3.6	7.0	10.1	11.4	7.2	46	43	42	-	-
69	South Sudan	5.7	1.5	7.0	6.3	7.8	15.0	43	44	44	-	-
70	Gambia	8.3	8.2	8.7	8.3	8.8	0.6	43	43	43	-	-
71	Togo	9.2	6.7	9.3	7.1	9.8	0.7	43	41	42	-	-
72	Rwanda	5.3	4.4	6.7	7.8	10.1	8.1	42	42	41	-	-
73	Ivory Coast	9.8	8.6	8.2	5.5	6.6	3.3	42	42	43	-	-
74	El Salvador	6.6	4.9	9.8	4.2	8.7	7.8	42	38	30		

Copyright notice

No copyright - This report is the property of World Watch Research (WWR), the research department of Open Doors International. It may be used and distributed free of charge, but please always acknowledge WWR as the source.

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).
- The highlighted links in the text can be found written out in full at the conclusion of each main section under the heading “External links”.
- The WWL 2021 reporting period was 01 October 2019 - 30 September 2020.
- 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).

Effect on data-gathering during COVID-19 pandemic

In the WWL 2021 reporting period, travel restrictions and other measures introduced by the governments of various countries to combat the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic did cause delays and create the need for restructuring grass-roots research in some cases. Through the agile cooperation of Open Doors field networks, research analysts, external experts and an increased use of technological options, Open Doors is confident that the WWL 2021 scoring, analysis and documentation has maintained required levels of quality and reliability.

External Links - Introduction

- Sources and definitions: World Watch List Documentation - http://opendoorsanalytical.org/world-watch-list-documentation/

WWL 2021 Short country profile / Algeria

Brief country details

Algeria: Population (2020 UN estimate)	Christians	Chr%
43,333,000	129,000	0.3

Data source: Johnson T M and Zurlo G A, eds., World Christian Database (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed February 2020)

Algeria: World Watch List	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2021	70	24
WWL 2020	73	17
WWL 2019	70	22
WWL 2018	58	42
WWL 2017	58	36

Scores and ranks are shown above whenever the country scored 41 points or more in the WWL 2017-2021 reporting periods

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, Non-Christian religious leaders, Government officials, Political parties, Violent religious groups, Ethnic group leaders
Dictatorial paranoia	Government officials
Clan oppression	One's own (extended) family, Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs, Ethnic group leaders, Political parties

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 the region, 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 violations of their religious freedom especially from their family members and extended family. Therefore, the family and the wider community - including local ethnic leaders and elders - are important drivers of persecution. State officials at various levels of the administrative hierarchy also play a role in 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'. Christians also suffer from 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 rural and religiously more conservative parts of the country. These regions acted as a stronghold for Islamist insurgents in the fight against the government in the 1990s.

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

- **18 February 2020:** During a speech on National Martyr Day (Independence Day) on 18 February 2020, President Tebboune stated Algeria will keep defending the national identity against "conspiracies of Christianization and conversion". (Source: Unpublished transcript by Middle East Concern - MEC)

- **17 August 2020:** An administrative court rejected an appeal against the forced closure of the Spring of Life church in Makouda, the second largest Protestant church in Algeria with about 700 members. It was closed on 15 October 2019, the same day as two other churches, including the largest Protestant church in Algeria, the Tizi Ouzou Full Gospel church. (MEC, 17 August 2020)
- **COVID-19:** It was reported that several Christian converts from a Muslim background were refused aid in their local communities.

Specific examples of positive developments

The Hirak protest movement (which had to pause during the COVID-19 crisis) has been a glimmer of hope for change that would lead to reforms and more freedom, which subsequently might also improve the position of religious minorities in the country as well (The New Arab, 17 September 2020). However, it appears that the Algerian regime is not willing to give in to such demands for reforms and more freedom.

External Links - Short country profile

- 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, 17 August 2020 - https://www.meconcern.org/2020/08/17/algeria-court-orders-church-closure-to-remain-in-effect/
- 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

WWL 2021: Keys to understanding / Algeria

Link for general background information

- Algeria country profile - BBC News

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 been 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 unfolded into demonstrations which finally led to Bouteflika's resignation in April 2019.

He was replaced by interim President Abdelkader Bensalah who organized presidential elections in December 2019. The elections 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 continued.

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 the such a low turnout (23.7%) that it is clear that "it was seen by many as merely a manouevre to extend the life of an authoritarian and corrupt system" (Chatham House, 9 November 2020). Neither the prison sentences, nor the new Constitution 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 protests and even the COVID-19 pandemic have not stopped 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 onward, the ordinance has been used to close at least thirteen churches affiliated with the EPA (Église Protestante d'Algérie), the umbrella organisation for Protestant churches in Algeria (Middle East Concern, January 2020). In addition, several groups have been forbidden to meet in other venues during 2020.

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. However, de facto Algeria has been led by its powerful army and a select group of powerful businessmen and politicians, known as 'Le Pouvoir' (the Power). This is why Algeria has been called a 'controlled democracy' (New York Times, May 2015).

Nonetheless, the political situation in Algeria still appears to be relatively stable at present and it seems unlikely that the current levels of unrest would 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 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 has used the COVID-19 pandemic as a golden opportunity to halt the Hirak protests.

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.

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 likely that Ordinance 06-03, which regulates non-Muslim worship, will remain in place and that their hopes will not materialize in the near future. Ordinance 06-03 was passed in March 2006 and severely limits non-Muslim worship. Since enforcing Ordinance 06-03 in February 2008, the government has not registered any individual new churches (notwithstanding the EPA's official recognition obtained in July 2011 - International Christian Concern, 14 September 2011), so 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 of prison and a fine of 300,000 DA (3,000 Euros). Currently, no Christians are in prison for this, but the pressure remains in place and at least thirteen churches affiliated with the Protestant Church of Algeria (EPA) remained closed during the WWL 2021 reporting period (Middle East Concern, 14 January 2020).

Other sources report:

- EIU Democracy Index 2019: The Economist Intelligence Unit classifies the country of Algeria as a 'hybrid regime' (p.37). With an overall score of 4.01 out of 10, it is the lowest scoring country in this category, having been classified in previous years as 'authoritarian'.
- FFP's 2020 Fragile State Index: This index indicates that Algeria is improving overall, although the indicators 'Group grievances' and 'Factionalized elites' are on the rise; which might be indicative for the growing gap between those in power and the average Algerian citizen (FSI, accessed 3 September 2020).

- Freedom House's Freedom in the World 2020 report: Freedom House rates Algeria as 'not free' and reports: "Political affairs in Algeria have 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, with President Abdelaziz Bouteflika resigning and the armed forces moving to maintain their grip on power in response." (Freedom House, accessed 4 September 2020)

Religious landscape

Algeria: Religious context	Number of adherents	%
Christians	129,000	0.3
Muslim	42,572,000	98.2
Hindu	0	0.0
Buddhist	6,500	0.0
Ethno-religionist	0	0.0
Jewish	50	0.0
Bahai	3,900	0.0
Atheist	8,000	0.0
Agnostic	600,000	1.4
Other	13,000	0.0
OTHER includes Chinese folk, New religionist, Sikh, Spiritist, Taoist, Confucianist, Jain, Shintoist, Zoroastrian.		

Data source: Johnson T M and Zurlo G A, eds., World Christian Database (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed February 2020)

According to WCD 2020 data, an estimated 98.2% 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 less than 1% (Pew Forum, 2009). 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 them 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.

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 registration. Although hopes were high, no local churches belonging to the EPA succeeded in obtaining registration. 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.

Algerian Christians (from a Muslim background) face legal discrimination from the State in personal status issues and those living within Muslim families frequently experience hostility from their own extended families.

Economic landscape

According to the World Factbook (accessed 4 September 2020) and World Bank reports:

- ***GPD per capita (PPP):*** $15,200 (2017 est.)
- ***Unemployment:*** 11.3%, with youth unemployment being twice as high at 29.5% (World Bank data, June 2020)
- ***Percentage of population below national poverty line:*** 5.5% (World Bank Country profile 2018)

According to World Bank's April 2020 update:

- "Algeria is facing a combined shock from halving oil prices, a public health crisis and the consequences of global economic disruptions following the COVID-19 outbreak."
- "An oil price at US$ 30/barrel in 2020 would decrease Algeria's total fiscal revenues by 21.2%."
- "Meanwhile, the sharp decline in export revenues (-51%) will lead the trade deficit to expand to 18.2% of GDP and the current account deficit to peak at 18.8% of GDP in 2020, despite efforts to contain imports and weak domestic demand."

According to World Bank's World Development Indicators (Fiscal Year 2021):

Algeria is ranked in the 'Lower middle income' category. Nevertheless, with a Gross National Income per capita of 15.200 dollar PPP, Algerians enjoy better economic conditions than most other countries in Africa. However, youth unemployment is still a problem and the fall in energy prices has caused serious economic difficulties since natural gas is a key export commodity. The economic indicators of the 2020 Fragile State Index show some improvement over 2019, but current economic challenges, including the effects of COVID-19, will probably worsen the situation.

Algerian Christians, most of them of Muslim background, experience discrimination because of their faith while looking for employment in both the private and public sphere. If the faith of a convert becomes known, it is likely that they will lose their job.

Social and cultural landscape

According to the World Factbook (accessed 4 September 2020):

- ***Main ethnic groups:*** The majority of the Algerian population (99%) are from Arab or Berber decent. 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 2020, 73,3% of the population lived in urban areas, while the annual urbanization rate stands at 2.5%
- ***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
- ***Life expectancy:*** 77.5 years on average; women (79.1 years), men (76.1 years)
- ***Education:*** Algerians enjoy 14 years of schooling on average

According to the UN Global Human Development Indicators (2019):

- ***HDI score and ranking:*** Algeria ranks #82 out 189 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 0.759. Algeria scores highest among the countries on the African continent and scores significantly better than its neighboring countries
- ***Gender inequality:*** With a Gender Development Index (GDI) score of 0.865, 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.

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 as 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.

With official figures of around 43,000 infections and 1,475 deaths, Algeria was the third worst hit country by COVID-19 on the African continent in the first half of 2020 (BBC News, August 2020). The country went into lockdown for five months from February 2020, when the first cases were discovered. The country has also closed its borders since mid-March and President

Tebboune has declared that all borders, including air and sea, will remain closed until the end of the COVID-19 pandemic (Africa News, June 2020).

Most Algerians are socially conservative and there is a strong Islamist current in the country, as shown by the defacing of a mural in Algiers in May 2020 (The Arab Weekly, May 2020). Nonetheless, Algeria has one of the biggest communities of converts from Islam to Christianity in the wider Middle East. Most of those converts belong to the already marginalized Berber community in the Kabyle region. Reportedly, converts outside of the Kabyle region experience higher levels of pressure from society and (extended) family.

Technological landscape

According to World Internet Stats (accessed June 2020):

- ***Internet usage:*** 58.0% penetration - survey date: December 2019
- ***Facebook usage:*** 43.3% penetration – survey date: December 2019

According to World Bank's country profile (2018):

- ***Mobile phone subscriptions:*** 111.7 per 100 people

Besides Facebook, Twitter and YouTube are also popular. Statistics can be found in the 2017 Arab Social Media Report (ASMR).

Algeria was not assessed by Freedom House in its Freedom on the Net Report 2019. However, according to Reporters without Borders' 2020 World Press Freedom Index, Algeria ranked 146th out of 180 countries with the government strictly controlling both social media and other methods of communication: "An unstable political environment is increasing the threats to the freedom to inform in Algeria. The authorities continue to step up their harassment of the media. Journalists covering the 'Hirak' protests that began in February 2019 are often detained for questioning, placed in police custody or even jailed for extended periods. As a result of judicial harassment, the Algerian media struggle to fulfil their role".

Christians are also not free to exercise their Freedom of Religion and Belief online. Although some of its broadcasts are still accessible on social media (see for example: YouTube, accessed 4 September 2020), 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 online 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 in particular. 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 2019) and avoid being captured by international anti-terrorist operations like 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 4 September 2020).

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 tries to gain influence among the Sahara population, including the Tuareg, while Algeria views the Sahara as its region of influence. Thirdly, among other matters, the expulsion of a number of each other's citizens in the 1970's is still unresolved (Algeria - Morocco relations (2018, p.11). It is unlikely, however, that these tensions will escalate in the near future.

Another issue regarding the security situation in Algeria is the organized-crime scene (Ref World, August 2017). 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 trade (especially illegal trade) globally. 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.

Trends analysis

1) The Hirak Movement looks set to continue

Although the Algerian government successfully used the COVID-19 pandemic to halt the demonstrations, it is unlikely that the government will be able to contain the protests in the long term. Algeria's young population wants economic opportunities and political change. Given that oil and gas prices are low and the COVID-19 crisis has worsened the economic situation, it is unlikely that the Algerian government will be able to buy off the call for reforms by providing enough economical opportunities.

2) Algeria's stability is fragile

Months after Bouteflika's forced resignation, a major cause for concern is the continuing political struggle and the lack of a clear plan regarding the transition of power. Also, like other countries in the MENA region, Algeria is having to deal with the 'dual-shock' of the COVID-19 pandemic (World Bank, 14 April 2020): Both domestic demand has fallen as people lives are interrupted by lockdowns and travel restrictions, as has global demand for natural gas and oil. This will severely limit Algeria's economic growth and any hopes of meeting the population's economic demands, especially in the face of rising unemployment.

3) Lawlessness in neighboring Libya is a threat

Lawlessness in Libya could undermine stability in Algeria since the two countries share a long border. However, because Algeria's involvement in Libya is marginal, this is not currently viewed as being a major threat.

4) The situation for Christians is not improving

Any instability arising from the above-listed factors is likely to make the situation for Christians deteriorate. 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 will improve as long as the government feels threatened by the protests and (economic) unrest. It is more likely, at present, that the government will maintain pressure on the Christian community to appease the Islamists in the country.

External Links - Keys to understanding

- Link for general background information: Algeria country profile - BBC News - https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-14118852
- Recent history: World Politics Review, August 2020 - http://worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/29028/in-algeria-protests-pause-for-covid-19-as-the-regime-steps-up-repression
- Recent history: Chatham House, 9 November 2020 - https://www.chathamhouse.org/2020/11/algeria-when-boycott-best-way-participate
- Recent history: Middle East Concern, January 2020 - https://meconcern.org/2020/01/14/algeria-another-church-closed-by-government-2/
- Political and legal landscape: New York Times, May 2015 - https://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/30/opinion/the-algerian-exception.html?_r=0
- Political and legal landscape: The Africa Report, August 2020 - https://www.theafricareport.com/39522/algeria-how-president-tebboune-is-dismantling-gaid-salahs-military-networks/
- Political and legal landscape: EPA's official recognition - https://www.persecution.org/2011/09/14/algerian-protestant-churches-approved-for-government-registration-2/
- Political and legal landscape: Middle East Concern, 14 January 2020 - https://meconcern.org/2020/01/14/algeria-another-church-closed-by-government-2/
- Political and legal landscape: EIU Democracy Index 2019 - https://www.eiu.com/topic/democracy-index
- Political and legal landscape: FFP's 2020 Fragile State Index - https://fragilestatesindex.org/country-data/
- Political and legal landscape: Freedom House's Freedom in the World 2020 report - https://freedomhouse.org/country/algeria/freedom-world/2020
- Religious landscape description: Pew Forum, 2009 - https://www.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2009/10/Shiarange.pdf
- Religious landscape description: Freedom of Thought report (September 2019) - https://fot.humanists.international/countries/africa-northern-africa/algeria/
- Economic landscape: World Factbook - https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/algeria/
- Economic landscape: World Bank data, June 2020 - https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.1524.ZS?locations=DZ
- Economic landscape: World Bank Country profile 2018 - https://databank.worldbank.org/views/reports/reportwidget.aspx?Report_Name=CountryProfile&Id=b450fd57&tbar=y&dd=y&inf=n&zm=n&country=DZA
- Economic landscape: World Bank's April 2020 update - https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/algeria/publication/economic-update-april-2020
- Economic landscape: World Development Indicators (Fiscal Year 2021) - http://datatopics.worldbank.org/world-development-indicators/the-world-by-income-and-region.html
- Economic landscape: 2020 Fragile State Index - https://fragilestatesindex.org/country-data/
- Social and cultural landscape: World Factbook - https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/algeria/
- Social and cultural landscape: UN Global Human Development Indicators - http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/DZA
- Social and cultural landscape: BBC News, August 2020 - https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-53946103
- Social and cultural landscape: Africa News, June 2020 - https://www.africanews.com/2020/06/29/algeria-to-keep-borders-closed-till-covid-19-ends-morning-call//
- Social and cultural landscape: The Arab Weekly, May 2020 - https://thearabweekly.com/defaced-mural-algiers-reveals-widening-ideological-rift
- Technological landscape: World Internet Stats - https://www.internetworldstats.com/africa.htm#dz

- Technological landscape: World Bank's country profile - https://databank.worldbank.org/views/reports/reportwidget.aspx?Report_Name=CountryProfile&Id=b450fd57&tbar=y&dd=y&inf=n&zm=n&country=DZA
- Technological landscape: Arab Social Media Report - https://www.mbrsg.ae/getattachment/1383b88a-6eb9-476a-bae4-61903688099b/Arab-Social-Media-Report-2017
- Technological landscape: Freedom on the Net Report 2019 - https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2019-11/11042019_Report_FH_FOTN_2019_final_Public_Download.pdf
- Technological landscape: 2020 World Press Freedom Index - https://rsf.org/en/algeria
- Technological landscape: YouTube, accessed 4 September 2020 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pc3zmOOUjBI
- Security situation: Live Universal Awareness Map, July 2019 - https://algeria.liveuamap.com/en/2019/29-july-algeria-large-scale-and-interesting-weapons-cache
- Security situation: Code Book Africa, accessed 4 September 2020 - https://codebookafrica.wordpress.com/operations/recent-us-military-operations-relating-to-africa-2000-present/recent-us-counter-terrorism-operations/operation-juniper-shield/
- Security situation: Algeria - Morocco relations (2018, p.11 - https://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/menara_wp_20.pdf
- Security situation: Ref World, August 2017 - https://www.refworld.org/docid/5ac380cd4.html
- Trends analysis: World Bank, 14 April 2020 - https://www.worldbank.org/en/region/mena/brief/coping-with-a-dual-shock-coronavirus-covid-19-and-oil-prices

WWL 2021: 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 period of great freedom, the authorities has now made it harder for these congregations to meet freely. Since the 1990s, sub-Saharan African

migrants have also started their own churches, which some local Algerians have also joined.

Church spectrum today

Algeria: Church networks	Christians	%
Orthodox	1,300	1.0
Catholic	6,500	5.0
Protestant	11,400	8.8
Independent	110,000	85.3
Unaffiliated	150	0.1
Doubly-affiliated Christians	0	0.0
Total	**129,350**	**100.3**
(Any deviation from the total number of Christians stated above is due to the rounding of decimals)		
Evangelical movement	55,000	42.6
Renewalist movement	40,000	31.0

Data source: Johnson T M and Zurlo G A, eds., World Christian Database (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed February 2020)

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.*

The Protestant Church in Algeria (EPA) consists of 46 member churches, of which currently 13 are closed by the government, including the two biggest churches in Tizi Ouzou and Makouda. All other churches were also closed due to the COVID-19 crisis and have not yet been allowed to re-open.

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

WWL 2021: Persecution Dynamics / Algeria

Reporting period

1 October 2019 - 30 September 2020

Position on the World Watch List

Algeria: World Watch List	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2021	70	24
WWL 2020	73	17
WWL 2019	70	22
WWL 2018	58	42
WWL 2017	58	36

Scores and ranks are shown above whenever the country scored 41 points or more in the WWL 2017-2021 reporting periods

The score for Algeria decreased 3 points in WWL 2021 in comparison to WWL 2020. Despite growing government restrictions and increasing pressure on the church, the score dropped as a result of less churches being closed compared to WWL 2020. However, 13 churches closed during the last reporting period remain closed despite appeals from the Algerian church. 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	Not at all
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)

As Islam has become increasingly influential in Algeria's government in the past few years, so the freedom of Christians is becoming more and more restricted. 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, encouraged by the Arab Spring in other North African countries, are exerting pressure on a government that has been forced to work with Islamic parties. Despite this cooperation, 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 the use of physical violence against Christian demonstrators, it seems that the government has increased its 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)

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 per engine	IO	RN	ERH	CO	CDP	CPCO	SI	DPA	OCC
	VERY STRONG	-	-	MEDIUM	-	-	-	STRONG	-
Government officials	Strong	-	-	-	-	-	-	Strong	-
Ethnic group leaders	Medium	-	-	Medium	-	-	-	-	-
Non-Christian religious leaders	Strong	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Religious leaders of other churches	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Violent religious groups	Medium	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Ideological pressure groups	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs	Strong	-	-	Medium	-	-	-	-	-
One's own (extended) family	Very strong	-	-	Strong	-	-	-	-	-
Political parties	Strong	-	-	Medium	-	-	-	-	-
Revolutionaries or paramilitary groups	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Organized crime cartels or networks	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Multilateral organizations (e.g. UN, OIC, embassies etc.)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

The scale for the level of influence of Drivers of persecution in society is: Not at all / Very weak / Weak / Medium / Strong / Very strong. Please note that "-" denotes "not at all". 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 more than 13 churches since 2019, the government's rhetoric towards Christians is often hostile, basically stating that Christians do not belong in Algeria.
- ***Ethnic group leaders (Medium):*** Elders of villages and towns often actively oppose the visible presence of the church. They can also put families under pressure to act against any converts in their homes.

- ***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.
- ***Political parties (Strong):*** 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 Clan oppression

- ***Extended family (Strong):*** 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).
- ***Government officials / Political parties (Medium):*** Government officials and the ruling party 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.

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.

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 people, 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 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.

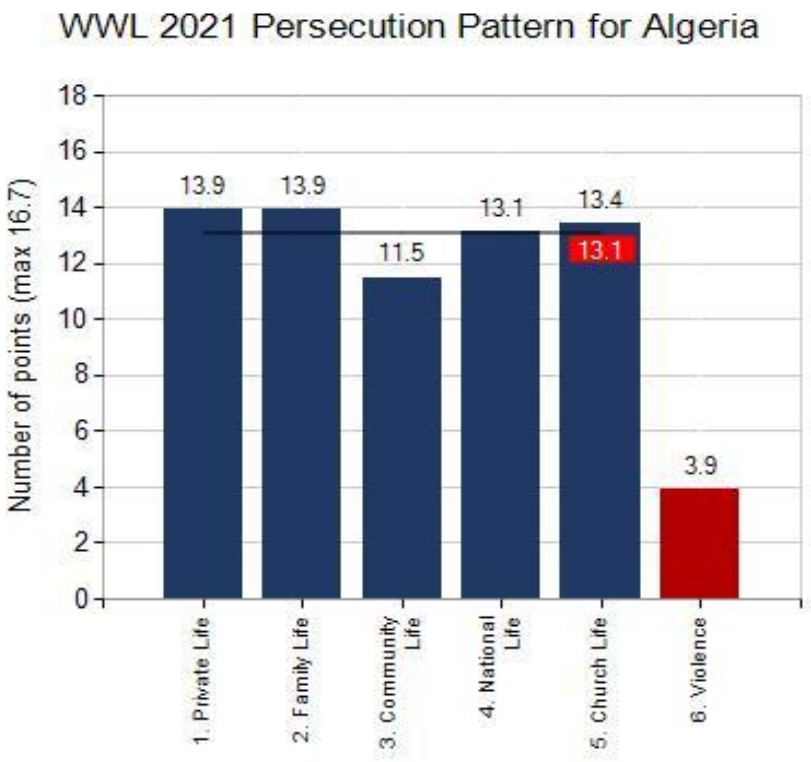
Converts to Christianity: The vast majority of Christians in Algeria are converts with a Muslim background and face on-going pressure. The law prohibits public assembly for the purpose of practicing a faith other than Islam - with the exception of registered churches. However, individual churches are often 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.

The Persecution pattern

The WWL 2021 Persecution pattern for Algeria shows:

- The average pressure on Christians stayed at a very high level, rising from 12.8 points in WWL 2020 to 13.1 in WWL 2021. This is mainly due to increased pressure from the government on churches.
- Pressure is highest in the *Family* (13.9), *Private* (13.9) and *Church* (13.4) *spheres of life*. This reflects the very high 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 down from 9.3 points in WWL 2020 to 3.9 in WWL 2021, after an initial increase from almost 2.0 points in WWL 2020 due to the closure of church buildings. The WWL 2021 decrease has mainly been caused by less churches being closed, despite all 13 closed churches from the previous reporting period remaining closed.



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 2021 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: http://opendoorsanalytical.org/world-watch-list-documentation/, password: freedom).

Pressure in Block 1 / Private sphere

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 Christians 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 1.8: It has been risky for Christians to speak about their faith with those other than immediate family (extended family, others). (3.50 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 1.3: It has been dangerous to privately own or keep Christian materials. (3.25 points)

Both converts as well as Christian sub-Saharan migrants and other Christians have to be very careful in this respect. Having (and reading) a Bible can lead to pressure from family members or harassment from members of society. The use of (Bible) apps on mobile phones is very helpful in this regard.

Algeria has a law that criminalizes any attempt to proselytize and make someone leave Islam for another religion. However, converting from Islam by 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 they are exposed to a lot of 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.

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 2.1: Babies and children of Christians have automatically been registered under the state or majority religion. (3.25 points)

If the father is a Muslim, the government considers the child to be a Muslim. Converts are still considered as Muslims by the government, and thus their children are seen as Muslim as well. In rare cases, depending on the government official, a Christian name can be given to the child.

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.

For the Algerian government, every citizen is a Muslim. 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 3.2: 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.). (3.50 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 responsibilities 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 3.9: Christians have faced disadvantages in their education at any level for faith-related reasons (e.g. restrictions of access to education). (3.50 points)

Although this is mostly an issue for known converts, sub-Saharan migrant Christians (in combination with elements of racism) and other Christians can also face discrimination and disadvantages in the educational system. Christian school-children living in more conservative Islamic areas have to hide their faith, as otherwise they are likely to face discrimination by teachers and be refused entry to university studies.

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 discrimin-

ation when applying for a job. Christians, whether convert or not, do not have access to senior positions in government.

Block 3.13: Christians have been interrogated or compelled to report to the local vigilante/police for faith-related reasons. (3.50 points)

Individual Christians are actively monitored and questioned.

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 2019 International Religious Freedom Report states that "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 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 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 Christian engages with the authorities. Reportedly, this attitude has improved slightly in some places in the Kabyle region, where, for example, some children have been registered with a Christian name.

Block 4.12: Christians, churches or Christian organizations have been hindered in publicly displaying religious symbols. (3.50 points)

Anything that can 'shake a Muslim's faith' is forbidden under Ordinance 06-03 and churches and Christian organizations apply self-censorship in this regard.

Block 4.14: Those who caused harm to Christians have deliberately been left unpunished. (3.50 points)

Converts from Islam to Christianity can be abused and mistreated by their family members with impunity. Most of this abuse remains outside of public view and government officials regard this to be a family issue.

Pressure in Block 5 / Church sphere

Block 5.1: Church activities have been monitored, hindered, disturbed, or obstructed. (3.75 points)

The government constantly monitors all church activities and several Christian gatherings have been closed during the WWL 2021 reporting period. This has continued despite the changes in government leadership.

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 5.12: Churches or Christian organizations have been hindered in printing Christian materials or owning printing presses. (3.75 points)

Printing materials with Christian content is forbidden under Ordinance 06-03. The government actively monitors churches and enforces Ordinance 06-03 in this regard.

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.

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. Since many incidents go unreported, the numbers below must be understood as being minimum figures. In cases where it has been impossible to count exactly, a symbolic round figure (10, 100 or 1000) is given. (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 1000 could go well over 10,000 but, again, the real number is uncertain.) In cases where it is clear that (many) more Christians are affected, but a concrete number could be given according to the number of incidents reported, the number given has to be understood as being an absolutely minimum figure. The symbol "x" denotes a known number which cannot be published due to security considerations.

Algeria: Violence Block question	WWL 2021	WWL 2020
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	13
6.3 How many Christians have been detained for faith-related reasons?	97	90
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?	0	0
6.5 How many Christians have been abducted for faith-related reasons (including Christians missing in a persecution context)?	0	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	10
6.8 How many Christians have been otherwise physically or mentally abused for faith-related reasons (including beatings and death threats)?	50	50
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	10
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?	0	10
6.12 How many Christians have been forced to leave the country for faith-related reasons?	0	5

For the WWL 2021 reporting period:

- ***Christians attacked:*** in addition to harassment and abuse faced by converts from their families, many Christians were treated aggressively by the police during a protest against church closures in October 2019. This kind of violence did not happen in previous years.

- ***Churches attacked:*** Several gatherings were forced to stop meeting, while two churches were closed in October 2019.
- ***Christians arrested:*** At least 97 Christians were arrested during a protest against the church closures in Tizi Ouzou in October 2019.
- ***Christians forced to leave:*** Due to the restrictions surrounding the COVID-19 crisis, relocating became very difficult for converts from Islam to Christianity. It is believed that isolated converts living with their Muslim families experienced increased pressure because of the lockdown measures.

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.

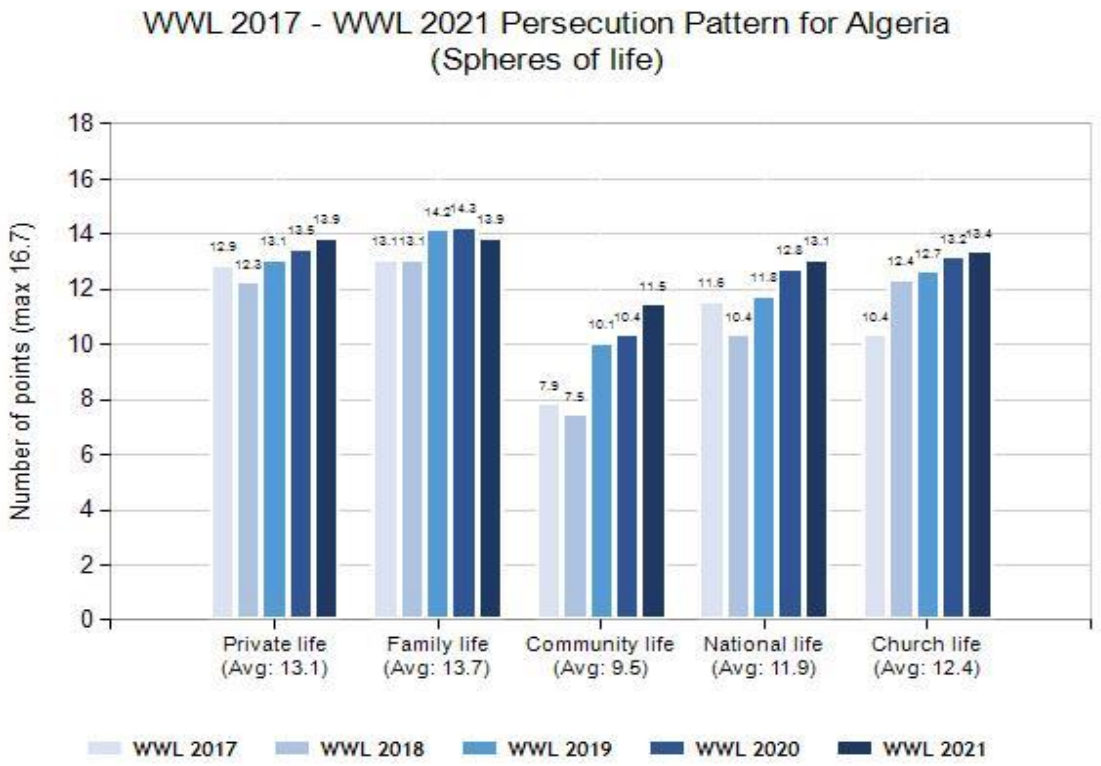
5 Year trends: Average pressure

Algeria: WWL 2017 - WWL 2021 Persecution Pattern history	Average pressure over 5 Spheres of life
2021	13.1
2020	12.8
2019	12.4
2018	11.1
2017	11.2

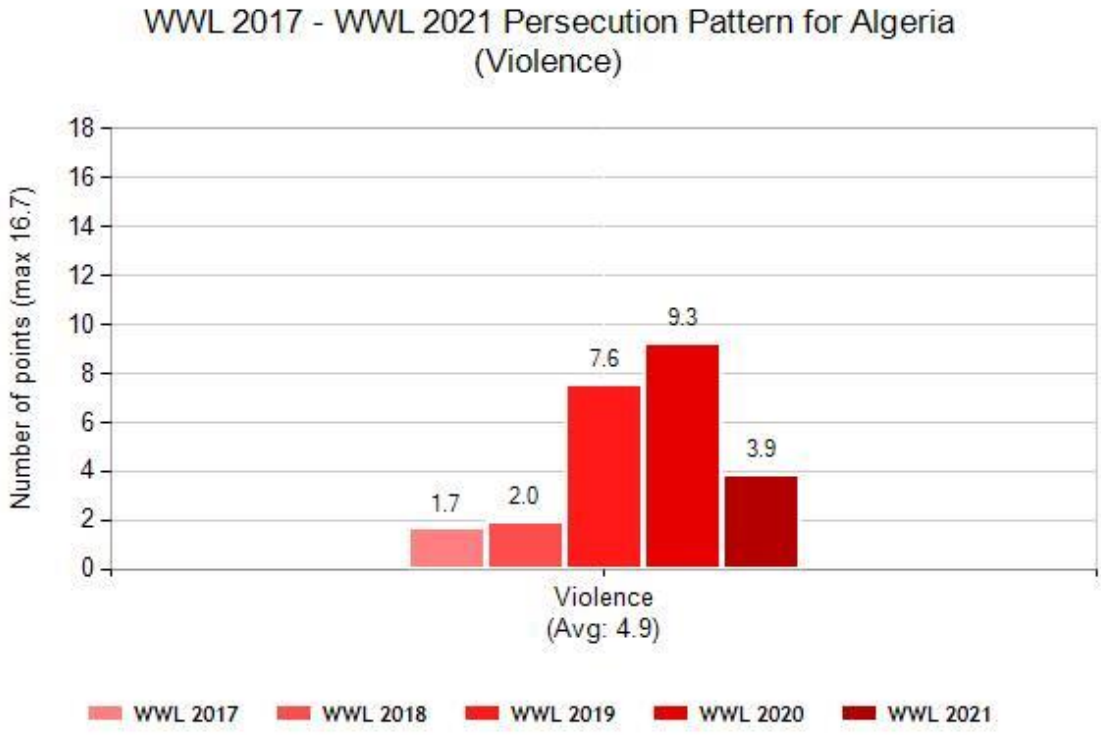
The table above lists the average pressure on Christians over the last 5 reporting periods. It shows that the overall level of pressure on Christians has continually been very high and gradually increasing since WWL 2018. Average pressure reached its highest level in the WWL 2021 reporting period.

5 Year trends: Pressure in each sphere of life

The chart below shows that there has been a steady upward trend of pressure in the *Church sphere of life,* matching the rise in government action against churches in the last three reporting periods in particular. The highest levels of pressure have been consistently in the *Private* and *Family spheres*, reflecting the difficulties experienced by converts.



5 Year trends: Violence against Christians



Although the score for violence was low in the WWL 2017-2018 reporting periods, this shot up to a very high level in the WWL 2019 and 2020 reporting periods, especially due to the number of church closures and arrests. Although all previously closed churches remained sealed, less

churches were closed during the WWL 2021 reporting period, probably because all churches had to cease their activities anyway because of the lockdown measures imposed to combat the COVID-19 pandemic.

Gender-specific religious persecution / Female

Female Pressure Points
Denied access to social community/networks
Discrimination/harassment via education
Economic harassment via business/job/work access
Enforced religious dress code
Forced divorce
Forced marriage
Incarceration by family (house arrest)
Violence – death
Violence – physical
Violence – psychological
Violence – sexual
Violence – Verbal

Despite gaining legal protection against violence against women in 2016 (CBS, 2 February 2016), Algerian women continue to be disadvantaged in law and society, compounding the pressure that Christian women experience due to their faith (OECD, "Social Institutions and Gender Index: Algeria"). Christian women experience pressure in several public spheres, including within workplaces and educational settings. This includes the loss of jobs, 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 West and South of Algeria, violations are even more severe and con-

verts risk being killed in order to restore the perceived 'honor' of the family. In the Kabylia region there is seemingly more freedom.

In the light of this pressure and violence, many female converts opt to hide their faith and live as secret believers. Should their family discover their Christian faith, it is likely that they would be forcibly married to a non-Christian as a corrective measure, and to restore them to the Islamic faith. If already married at the point of becoming a Christian, her husband can divorce her or use her faith to exploit her.

Gender-specific religious persecution / Male

Male Pressure Points
Denied access to social community/networks
Discrimination/harassment via education
Economic harassment via business/job/work access
Forced out of home – expulsion
Forced to flee town/country
Imprisonment by government
Violence – physical
Violence – Verbal

Christian men in Algeria regularly experience economic pressures, caused by harassment in the workplace and the loss of employment altogether. 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. Whilst not common, men are also more likely to be detained, which also affects their ability to work. In light of these pressures, some Christian men choose to emigrate.

Families are often the source of additional violations, such as physical beatings, verbal insults and threats. Like female converts, male converts face the most severe violations of religious freedom in comparison to other Christian men. Male converts in Algeria are more likely to be forced out of their home than their female counterparts. 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 these pressures, 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. According to the US State Department's 2019 IRFR, "Ahmadi leaders stated there were 286 cases against community members pending with the Supreme Court as of the end of the year. Charges included operating an unregistered religious association, collecting funds without authorization, and holding prayers in unauthorized locations."

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, Yacine Mebarki was sentenced to ten years in prison on charges of "inciting atheism" in October 2020 (Al-Arabiya, 8 October 2020).

Future outlook

The outlook for Christians as viewed through the lens of:

Islamic oppression

It is clear that radical Islam is gaining influence in the wider North African region and the future of Algeria will depend in part on developments in neighboring countries. Among the main worries are the relentless attempts by radical Muslims to justify murdering members of security forces and civilians through their interpretation of Islam. It is not likely that the Islamist influence will decrease, nor that society will change its approach towards converts and conversion.

Dictatorial paranoia

The government will likely continue discriminating against Christians, especially converts. Although the governments motives are unknown, it 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 the government is not likely to become more open towards allowing Christians more freedom.

Clan oppression

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

- Areas where Christians face most difficulties: discriminated - https://unpo.org/article/20340
- Pressure in Block 3 / Community sphere: 2019 International Religious Freedom Report - https://www.state.gov/reports/2019-report-on-international-religious-freedom/algeria/
- 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: associations - https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/09/04/algeria-stop-persecuting-religious-minority
- Persecution of other religious minorities: 2019 IRFR - https://www.state.gov/reports/2019-report-on-international-religious-freedom/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 World Watch Research's Open Doors Analytical website (password: freedom) and on the World Watch Monitor website:

- http://opendoorsanalytical.org/reports/
- http://opendoorsanalytical.org/?s=Algeria
- https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/countries/Algeria