



Genocide Watch
The Alliance Against Genocide

Algeria Country Report May 2021

The Algerian military has maintained control of politics and oil revenue since the Algerian Civil War (1991-2002) and the disputed 1999 election of Abdelaziz Bouteflika. By keeping loyal politicians in positions of power, the military has ensured that no meaningful reform is carried out. The Algerian government is dominated by the Arabic-speaking military. It excludes Amazigh (Berbers).

The [Hirak movement](#) began in February 2019 in protest of President Bouteflika's intention to run for a fifth term. It continued after Bouteflika resigned on April 2, 2019. The movement demands democratic reform and a readjustment of the role of the military. It is the largest sustained political movement since Algerian independence. The movement also advocates for the rights of the Amazigh (Berber) minority.

[President Abdelmajid Tebboune](#), elected in December 2019, praised the Hirak movement, recognized the need for political dialogue, and released some imprisoned activists. However, the Tebboune government has since used [COVID-19](#) restrictions to restrict freedom of speech and political meetings.

Algerian authorities have [arbitrarily arrested](#) more than 300 people on political charges such as harming "the integrity of the national interest," "incitement to unarmed gathering," or publications meant to "harm the national interest." These charges violate the rights to free speech, expression, association, and peaceful assembly. Courts use [social media posts](#) as evidence against activists. Those arrested have reported excessive use of force, brutal interrogation techniques, and extended solitary confinement.

Algerians have not forgotten the brutality of [French colonialism](#) in Algeria (1830-1962), which just prior to independence became genocidal. While French President Emmanuel Macron created a "Memories and Truth Commission" to examine France's colonial past, he has refused to apologize for what Macron himself in 2017 described as a "crime against humanity."

France and Algeria still have hostile relations. Within Algeria, the eleven million [Amazigh \(Berber\)](#), a third of the population, face discrimination and [harassment](#) for their former association with the French. During its occupation of Algeria, the French army recruited Amazigh men from the Kabylie region in the northeastern mountains. Tamazight, the Amazigh language, was not recognized as an official language in Algeria until 2016. Although Algeria adopted the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) in September 2007, Amazigh people do not possess legal indigenous status.

The Kabylie region is a stronghold of the Hirak movement, which has contributed to conspiracy theories that the Amazigh are directing the Hirak movement in collaboration with descendants of the 900,000 French who fled in 1960. The Algerian government instituted a ban on carrying non-Algerian flags in June 2019, a measure clearly aimed at Amazigh demonstrators who carry the Amazigh flag at protests.

Genocide Watch considers Algeria to be at **Stage 3: Discrimination**. Amazigh and Hirak activists are targeted for expressing their political opinions.

Genocide Watch recommends:

- The Algerian Government should end its surveillance and targeting of Hirak and Amazigh activists who are exercising their rights to free speech, association, and peaceful assembly.
- The ban on carrying flags other than the national Algerian flag at protests should be revoked.