

## Algeria Country Report

2024

By Brooklyn Quallen

After a bloody war with France, Algeria won its independence in 1962. Algerian nationalists seized power and ran Algeria as a one-party state until 1988, when the constitution was amended to allow for multiple political parties. The nationalist party, the National Liberation Front (FLN), remained in power and still controls the government.

The FLN espouses Pan-Arabism as a core tenet of its ideology, which has isolated non-Arab, especially Berber Kabyle, ethnic minorities. Repressive Arabization policies have catalyzed ethnic conflict and violence, especially in the region of Kabylia.

Kabylia is home to the Kabyles, the largest indigenous group of Algeria. Kabylia was not conquered during the Arab conquests of the 7<sup>th</sup> century, so it developed a more unified regional identity than is found among other North African indigenous groups. In 1857, the French brutally colonized Kabylia.

During the Algerian war for independence, anti-colonial Kabyle forces fought alongside Arab nationalist factions against the French colonizers. After the war, those same Arab nationalist factions turned on the Kabyles and attempted to force them to assimilate into the new, Arabized Algerian national identity.

Repression of Kabyle culture led to the 1980 “Berber Spring” protests. Harsher suppression, such as the arbitrary detention and killing of Kabyle activists, led to the 2001 “[Black Spring](#)” mass protests. Following those protests, Kabyle activists created the [Movement for the Autonomy of Kabylie \(MAK\)](#), now called the Movement for the Self-Determination of Kabylie.

Although MAK was a peaceful movement for the region’s autonomy, the Algerian government ignored its demands and continued to quash indigenous opposition to Arabization.

In 2021, Kabyles [boycotted national elections](#) to protest arbitrary detentions and other corrupt government practices, in hopes of prompting some reforms.

In response, the Algerian government sought to discredit the opposition. It [amended its penal code and its definition of terrorism](#) to repress Kabyle parties. It used the amended definition to declare MAK a terrorist organization and began prosecuting MAK members for “undermining national unity” and “harming the national interest.”

From May 2021 to March 2022, [some 281 Kabyle activists were detained](#) on largely fabricated charges. At least ten were tortured and sexually abused in custody. (These numbers are only what rights groups have been able to verify.) In 2022, [54 Kabyle activists](#) were sentenced to death under the new and expanded definition of terrorist activity.

Due to the Algerian state’s human rights abuses against its Kabyle Berber ethnic minority, Genocide Watch recognizes Algeria as being at **Stage 3: Discrimination** and **Stage 8: Persecution**.

### Genocide Watch recommends:

- The Algerian government must immediately release all arbitrarily detained Kabyle political prisoners. Those who have received death sentences should have their sentences overturned.
- The Algerian government must recognize Kabylia’s right to self-government and hold a referendum to allow the region to choose whether it should be an autonomous region.
- International governments must [reject Algeria’s amended definition of terrorism](#) that criminalizes self-determination movements and other forms of political opposition.