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FREEDOM IN THE WORLD 2025

Algeria

31
/100

NOT FREE

<u>Political Rights</u>	10 /40
<u>Civil Liberties</u>	21 /60

LAST YEAR'S SCORE & STATUS

32 /100 **Not Free**

A country or territory's Freedom in the World status depends on its aggregate Political Rights score, on a scale of 0–40, and its aggregate Civil Liberties score, on a scale of 0–60. See the methodology.



Overview

Political affairs in Algeria have long 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 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 *Hirak* protest movement in 2019 put pressure on the regime to reform, but a crackdown on dissent in the following years has prevented large-scale demonstrations from continuing.

Key Developments in 2024

- In May, authorities published a new penal code. It includes a series of measures that significantly limit freedom of expression online by targeting any criticism of the security forces and national symbols.
- In September, President Abdelmadjid Tebboune was reelected with 84.3 percent of the vote. The election was marred by controversies related to which candidates were allowed to run and the results published by the electoral commission.
- In November, security forces arrested French-Algerian writer Boualem Sansal, alleging that he had threatened national unity due to a controversial statement questioning Algeria's sovereignty over its eastern territory.

Political Rights

A. Electoral Process

A1 0-4 pts

Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections?	1/4
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The president, who is directly elected for five-year terms, is the dominant figure in the executive branch. A two-term limit has been in effect since 2016, but it did not apply to the prior terms of longtime president Abdelaziz Bouteflika, whose plans

to seek a fifth term sparked the Hirak protests in 2019. Bouteflika resigned that April after losing the support of the armed forces.

President Abdelmajid Tebboune secured a second term in power in September 2024. He won with 84.3 percent of the vote, followed by moderate Islamist presidential hopeful Abdelaali Hassani Cherif with 9.6 percent and the candidate of the secular, Berber-dominated Socialist Forces Front (FFS), Youssef Aouchiche, with 6.1 percent. The turnout rate was 46.1 percent.

However, the run-up to the ballot was marred by a controversial decision that significantly reduced the number of candidates. The Constitutional Court barred a number of candidates from running because of alleged irregularities with their collection of the signatures necessary to participate. An Algiers prosecutor launched an investigation of these candidates, alleging bribery was involved in the gathering of signatures. The opposition denounced these maneuvers as a tactic to limit competition in the presidential race and favor the incumbent.

The electoral commission issued preliminary results that pointed to a better performance for Tebboune, with 95 percent of votes. This announcement was heavily contested by all three candidates' campaigns, which issued a joint statement alleging irregularities. Hassani Cherif's campaign director called it an attempt to "inflate the results."

The president nominates the prime minister after consulting with the parliamentary majority. In 2023, Tebboune appointed Nadir Larbaoui as the new prime minister.

A2 0-4 pts

Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections?

1/4

The 407 members of the National People's Assembly, the lower house of Parliament, are directly elected to five-year terms, which can only be renewed once. In early elections held in 2021, the ruling FLN won 98 seats, while the allied National Democratic Rally (RND) took 58. The Islamist Movement of Society for Peace (MSP) won 65 seats, the Future Front captured 48, and the moderate

Islamist National Construction Movement (El-Binaa) took 39. No other party won more than 10 seats, though 84 independent lawmakers were elected.

The MSP and El-Binaa alleged that the elections were marred by fraud, while Hirak supporters boycotted the polls. Nationwide turnout stood at 23 percent. The Independent National Authority for Elections (ANIE) reported that over 360 polling facilities were shuttered due to looting and other disruptions.

The president appoints one-third of the members of the upper house, the Council of the Nation, which has 144 members serving six-year terms. The other two-thirds are indirectly elected by local and provincial assemblies. Half of the chamber's mandates are renewed every three years. Partial upper house elections took place in 2022. The FLN won 25 seats, independents took 14, RND took 11, and the Future Front and the FFS took 5 and 2 seats, respectively.

A3 0-4 pts

Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies?	1/4
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Prior to 2019, Algeria's elections were administered by the Interior Ministry and were often subject to government interference. Pressure from protesters ultimately forced the government to establish the ANIE. However, in 2024 the barring of presidential candidates and the contested preliminary results of the presidential elections raised doubts about the ANIE's efficacy and independence.

B. Political Pluralism and Participation

B1 0-4 pts

Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings?	1/4
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The Interior Ministry must approve political parties before they can operate legally. Parties cannot form along explicitly ethnic lines. The Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), which swept the 1990 local and 1991 national elections that preceded Algeria's decade-long civil war, remains banned.

Since the Hirak emerged in 2019, the authorities have intensified their repression of opposition groups, especially Islamist groups, parties that espouse separatism, and parties perceived as closely aligned with the Hirak. In 2023, the Council of State closed all offices belonging to the left-leaning Democratic and Social Movement (MDS) and suspended all of its activities for failing to comply with regulations on political parties. In August 2024, police arrested MDS official Fethi Ghares. He was released a few days later. In the same month, approximately 20 activists from the secular, Berber-majority Rally for Culture and Democracy (RCD) party were briefly detained before they could reach Ifri, where they planned to commemorate a historical event related to Algeria's independence war.

In recent years, authorities have increasingly used vaguely worded antiterrorism legislation to prosecute members of the opposition. In 2021, the High Security Council designated the Rachad—an organization that includes former FIS members—and the Movement for the Self-Determination of Kabylie (MAK) as terrorist organizations. Numerous people accused of affiliation with the groups have since faced arrest. In 2022 and 2023, exiled MAK leader Ferhat Mehenni was sentenced in absentia to life in prison on terrorism-related charges. In June 2024, Mehenni's deputy, Aksel Bellabbaci, was arrested by the French police after Algerian authorities requested his extradition, though he was released the day after.

B2 0-4 pts

Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections?

1/4

Opposition parties play a marginal role in Parliament, and their campaigns are regularly curtailed by the government. Election boycotts by opposition groups are not uncommon. Opposition leaders have been subject to detention and prosecution.

B3 0-4 pts

Are the people's political choices free from domination by forces that are external to the political sphere, or by political forces that employ extrapolitical means?

1/4

The military retains its long-standing influence over civilian politics. Its vast resources and lack of public accountability have helped shape its role as the most powerful political actor in Algeria.

Allegations and scandals involving corruption in the selection of political candidates, as well as vote-buying during elections, have surfaced in recent years.

B4 0-4 pts

Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, racial, religious, gender, LGBT+, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities?

1/4

No specific ethnic or religious group dominates the main state institutions, which tend to include both Arab and Amazigh (Berber) officials. The activities of Kabylie-based parties associated with the Amazigh community are often curtailed by the military. Some Amazigh activists have been targeted by the authorities for mobilizing in support of their political interests.

Women remain reluctant to run for office, and are often unable to secure meaningful influence within Parliament. Women won only 8 percent of the seats in the 2021 lower house elections.

LGBT+ people are politically marginalized and have little practical ability to advocate for their political interests.

C. Functioning of Government

C1 0-4 pts

Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government?

1/4

The military has historically served as the ultimate arbiter of policy disputes in Algeria, and elected leaders have relied on its support to maintain office. The loss of military backing played a significant role in Bouteflika's resignation in 2019. The army chief of staff continues to wield considerable influence over the administration of President Tebboune.

C2 0-4 pts

Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective?

1/4

Inadequate anticorruption laws, a lack of official transparency, low levels of judicial independence, and bloated bureaucracies contribute to widespread corruption at all levels of government. Anticorruption investigations that do occur are often used to settle scores between factions within the regime and boost the popularity of the authorities in office.

A number of Bouteflika's former political and economic allies have received harsh prison sentences as part of the anticorruption campaign that followed his resignation. In September 2024, Algeria demanded the extradition of former Industry Minister Abdeslam Bouchouareb from France after he was sentenced to jail in multiple corruption cases.

Whistleblowers have few legal protections, and safeguards that exist often go unenforced in practice. Several high-profile whistleblowers have faced retaliation from the government in recent years. In May 2024, Mohamed Abdellah, a whistleblower who denounced corruption in the army, was sentenced to five years in jail. In 2023 an anticorruption whistleblower, Nouredine Tounsi, was sentenced to two years in prison for publishing classified information and documents. While this sentence was overturned in March 2024, in July UN Special Rapporteur for Human Rights Defenders Mary Lawlor denounced the fact that Tounsi had not been reinstated in his job or able to renew his passport.

C3 0-4 pts

Does the government operate with openness and transparency?	1/4
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Algeria lacks access-to-information legislation. There is considerable opacity surrounding official decision-making procedures, the publication of official acts is rarely timely, and rules on asset disclosure by government officials are weak and poorly enforced. While the constitution nominally guarantees the right to access information, it includes vague exceptions for “the rights of others, the legitimate interests of businesses, and the requirements of national security.”

Civil Liberties

D. Freedom of Expression and Belief

D1 0-4 pts

Are there free and independent media?	1/4
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Most papers rely on government agencies for printing and advertising, encouraging self-censorship. Authorities sometimes block the distribution of independent news outlets that are based abroad or online. News sites must be directed by Algerian nationals, be based physically in Algeria, report their income sources, and keep an archive of at least six months. Foreign-language websites must be approved by a special authority. Viewers can access unlicensed private television channels that are located in Algeria but legally based abroad, though these are subject to government crackdowns.

In 2023, Parliament approved a new law that requires journalists to get a permit from the information ministry in order to operate, establishes a council to regulate the media sector, authorizes the judiciary to force journalists to disclose their sources, and bans media outlets from receiving foreign funding.

Authorities use these and other legal mechanisms to restrict media activity. Journalists and bloggers are frequently subjected to harassment, including brief detentions and fines for offenses such as defamation and “undermining national unity.” Journalists covering demonstrations or who are close to the Hirak have been arbitrarily arrested and interrogated.

In 2023, the editor in chief of Radio M, Ihsane El Kadi, was sentenced to five years in prison on charges of undermining national security. In June 2024, his website, Radio M, ceased all activities after a court dissolved its holding company. In November, he received a presidential pardon and was released. Also in 2023, Mustapha Bendjama, the editor in chief of *Le Provincial* newspaper, was sentenced to two years in prison for publishing classified information. He was released in April 2024, but his former employer refused to hire him again, allegedly due to pressure from authorities. In June 2024, Omar Ferhat and Sofiane Ghirous, two journalists working for the *Algeria Scoop* outlet, were detained after their website showed a video in which young entrepreneurs protested being sidelined at a government event. In November, they received a presidential pardon and were released from jail.

Foreign outlets are also subject to government interference. In 2021, the government withdrew France 24’s authorization to operate in Algeria.

D2 0-4 pts

Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private?	1/4
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Algeria’s population is overwhelmingly Sunni Muslim. Members of religious minorities, including Christians and non-Sunni Muslims, suffer from state persecution and interference. Authorities have cracked down on the small Ahmadi community, claiming that its members denigrate Islam, threaten national security, and violate laws on associations. In December 2024, Adem Kebieche, a follower of the Ahmadi religion, was arrested as he was handing out flyers about his faith outside of a university.

Religious communities may only gather to worship at state-approved locations. Accusations of nonbelief or blasphemy can draw criminal punishments. Proselytizing by non-Muslims is illegal.

Authorities have cracked down on the Algerian Protestant Church (EPA) since 2017. In 2023 the deputy chairman of the EPA, Youssef Ourahmane, was sentenced to a year in prison and fined for lacking the authorization to celebrate a religious service. In May 2024, the Tizi Ouzou court sentenced him to an additional six months in prison.

D3 0-4 pts

Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination?	2/4
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Authorities generally do not interfere directly with the operations of universities, but debate is circumscribed in practice due to restrictive laws that limit speech more broadly. Academic work is also affected by state censorship of domestically published and imported books. Student organizations were active in the Hirak, and authorities occasionally resorted to violence to suppress their demonstrations.

D4 0-4 pts

Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution?	1/4
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Social media users are subject to prosecution for critical comments that touch on the government or religion. The government monitors internet activity in the name of national security and does not disclose information about the program's targets or range, which is thought to be extensive.

The new penal code, published in May 2024, introduces a series of considerable constraints on freedom of expression. The text punishes the use of social media to share confidential information related to national security, defense, and the economy, without defining "confidential"; to criticize the reputation of government and religious officials and the security forces; or to dishonor the national anthem and flag.

Authorities are known to prosecute social media users, particularly Hirak supporters. In 2022, Hakim Debbazi died in while in pretrial detention for a pro-

Hirak Facebook post; a court had rejected a request that he be released due to his deteriorating health.

In November 2024, the French-Algerian writer Boualem Sansal was arrested at Algiers airport because of his previous statements questioning Algeria's sovereignty over its eastern territory. The arrest sparked a movement in France to pressure the Algerian authorities to release him.

Score Change: The score declined from 2 to 1 because new amendments to the penal code use overly broad and vague language to further criminalize and suppress free expression, increasing the government's power to arbitrarily prosecute its opponents.

E. Associational and Organizational Rights

E1 0-4 pts

Is there freedom of assembly?	1/4
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Legal restrictions on freedom of assembly remain in place but are inconsistently enforced. Though the Hirak protests that began in 2019 were sometimes tolerated, the authorities frequently used force and arbitrary arrests to preempt or disrupt rallies. Hirak protesters faced increasing repression after demonstrations resumed in 2021.

Large-scale Hirak protests did not occur in 2024, but police continued to arrest individuals with alleged ties to the movement. In January, authorities detained Mohamed Tadjadit, a Hirak activist, charging him with glorifying terrorism. In June, Hirak activist Yassine Cheref was placed in pretrial detention for allegedly glorifying terrorism through his Facebook posts. In July, an Algiers court sentenced singer Djamila Bentouis to two years in prison for undermining national security and inciting an armed gathering because she participated in the Hirak and wrote a song in support of the protest movement.

E2 0-4 pts

Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights– and governance-related work?

1/4

The 2012 law on associations effectively restricts the formation, funding, and activities of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). Permits and receipts of application submission are required to establish and operate NGOs, but organizations often face considerable delays and bureaucratic obstacles when attempting to obtain such documents. NGOs must also notify the government of staffing changes and submit detailed reports on their funding; those that accept foreign funding without government approval risk fines or the imprisonment of their staff.

In February and March 2024, the security forces prevented the NGO SOS Disparus, which focuses on people who disappeared during the 1990s civil war, from holding public events at their headquarters. In September, human rights activist Karim Baaziz was arrested on his return to Algeria from Canada.

The authorities have specifically targeted human rights activists who are close to the Hirak and the political opposition. In 2023, the Council of State confirmed an earlier judicial decision to dissolve the pro-Hirak NGO Youth Action Rally (RAJ).

E3 0-4 pts

Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations?

1/4

The country's main labor federation, the General Union of Algerian Workers (UGTA), has been criticized for its close relationship to the government and for its failure to advocate for workers' interests. Workers require government approval to establish new unions. This is difficult to obtain in practice, leaving many unions without legal status. Authorities routinely clamp down on independent unions.

In 2023, Parliament approved a new law on labor unions. The new legislation requires that unions include at least 25 percent of a sector's employees as members to be recognized as "representative," and expands the list of sectors, including healthcare, where walkouts are not permitted. This law reduced the negotiating power and representation of smaller, independent unions, which are

finding it increasingly difficult to operate. Due to the low rate of unionization, the new 25 percent threshold is likely to eliminate many smaller groups. In addition, the law vaguely defines the government's ability to ban the formation of unions and constrain the right to strike.

F. Rule of Law

F1 0-4 pts

Is there an independent judiciary?	1/4
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The judiciary is susceptible to pressure from the civilian government and the military. Judges are appointed by the High Council of the Judiciary (CSM), which is headed by the president. Concerns regarding the judiciary's independence persist despite some 2020 constitutional reforms. In 2021, the CSM expelled Sadedin Merzoug, a Hirak supporter, from the judiciary for expressing prodemocracy views, claiming that he had obstructed justice and violated his duty of confidentiality.

F2 0-4 pts

Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters?	1/4
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The lack of judicial and prosecutorial independence often erodes the due process rights of defendants, particularly in politically sensitive cases against former officials or civic activists. Lengthy delays in bringing defendants to trial are common, and prosecutors' requests to extend pretrial detention periods are typically granted. Security forces frequently conduct warrantless searches and engage in arbitrary arrests and short-term detentions.

F3 0-4 pts

Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies?	2/4
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A 2006 reconciliation law gave immunity to Islamist and state perpetrators of serious crimes during the civil war, while compensating families of those who were subject to such crimes, which included forced disappearances. The reconciliation law also criminalized public discussion on the fate of the disappeared.

Human rights activists accuse the police of using excessive force and abusing detainees. Pro-Hirak activist and whistleblower Mohamed Benhalima reported in 2022, and again in March 2024, that he had been tortured in pretrial detention.

Prison conditions are poor, with some inmates reportedly facing significant overcrowding and poor sanitation.

Terrorist groups, including Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and the Islamic State (IS) militant group, continue to operate in Algeria, though attacks have grown less frequent in recent years.

F4 0-4 pts

Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population?

2/4

Officials have made gradual efforts to address the Amazigh community's cultural demands. Tamazight, the Berber language, became an official language nationwide through a 2016 constitutional amendment. However, Arabic remains the prevailing language of government.

The constitution guarantees gender equality, but women continue to face both legal and societal discrimination. Many women receive lower wages than men in similar positions, and there are few women in company leadership posts. Sexual harassment, while punishable with fines and jail time, is nevertheless common in workplaces. NGOs dedicated to women's rights became more vocal as part of the Hirak, calling for a renewed commitment to the constitutional promise of gender equality.

LGBT+ people face discrimination and violence, and many LGBT+ activists have fled the country. Same-sex sexual activity is punishable with prison sentences as long as two years. LGBT+ Algerians face mistreatment at the hands of police and discrimination by health care providers and employers.

About 175,000 Sahrawis from Western Sahara live in refugee camps near the border with Morocco. The camps have been present since 1975, in a remote desert region with limited job opportunities. About 90,000 of the residents are considered “vulnerable” by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), as they rely on humanitarian assistance for food, water, and education.

Sub-Saharan African migrants, including refugees and asylum seekers, are subject to racial discrimination. They are often arbitrarily arrested and deported from the country—or simply abandoned at the southern desert borders—without being given the opportunity to challenge the actions in court. According to the NGO Alarme Phone Sahara (APS), Algeria deported around 20,000 migrants between January and September 2024.

Growing tensions with Morocco have led to a diplomatic rupture between the two countries, with repercussions for the Moroccan population in Algeria. In September 2024 the authorities arrested seven suspects, including four Moroccans, on charges of espionage. In October, two more Moroccans were arrested with the same accusations. In September 2024, a Moroccan NGO advised against visiting Algeria and denounced the treatment of Moroccan nationals, alleging that Algerian authorities had arrested around 500 Moroccans on a variety of charges.

G. Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights

G1 0-4 pts

Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education?

2/4

While most citizens are relatively free to travel domestically and abroad, the authorities closely monitor and limit access to visas for non-Algerians. Police reportedly limit the movement of sub-Saharan African migrants attempting to reach the Mediterranean coast. Married women younger than 18 must obtain the permission of their husbands to travel abroad, and men of military draft age

cannot leave the country without official consent. At times, the government has also banned Algerian diaspora activists who visit the country from leaving.

The land border between Algeria and Morocco remains closed.

G2 0-4 pts

Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors?	2/4
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The government plays a dominant role in the economy, leaving little room for private competitors. Cronyism is also a major obstacle to private enterprise, with businesspeople who are not aligned with the regime often facing harassment by the authorities. Numerous regulations and their flawed implementation make Algeria one of the most difficult environments in the world in which to establish and operate a business. Inheritance rules favor men over women.

G3 0-4 pts

Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance?	2/4
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Women do not enjoy equal rights in marriage and divorce under the family code, which is based on Islamic law. Among other provisions, women must obtain a male guardian's permission to marry, and the father is the legal guardian of his children. No law addresses spousal rape.

Domestic violence is common, and the laws against it are weak. Women's rights groups report that between 100 and 200 women are killed in domestic abuse incidents each year. Femicides Algeria reported on 48 women who were killed in 2024.

G4 0-4 pts

Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation?	1/4
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The weak rule of law, government involvement in the economy, and bureaucratic obstacles pose major barriers to economic opportunity and social mobility. Laws against unsafe or abusive working conditions are poorly enforced.

A 2009 law criminalized all forms of trafficking in persons, and Algeria reported its first conviction under the law in 2015. In recent years, the government has made an effort to enforce the ban through prosecutions and has provided protection for victims, though not systematically. Undocumented sub-Saharan African migrants are particularly susceptible to trafficking, including through debt bondage and sexual exploitation.



On Algeria

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Country Facts

Population

44,900,000

Global Freedom Score

31/100 **Not Free**

Other Years

2024

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