



Migration Profile

ALGERIA

A. Executive summary

In the 1990s, Algeria experienced substantial emigration due to civil war. Many Algerians entered Tunisia unlawfully without visas and claimed they were tourists, but stayed on as workers. Other Algerians sought asylum in Europe.

After the civil war, sub-Saharan African migrants came to Algeria to work in agriculture and mining. In the 2000s, a wave of educated Algerians went abroad seeking skilled jobs in a wider range of destinations and consequently increased their presence in North America and Spain. At the same time, legal foreign workers (principally from China and Egypt) came to work in Algeria's construction and oil sectors. Irregular migrants from Sub-Saharan Africa, especially Malians, Nigerians, and Gambians, continue to enter Algeria in search of work or as a step on their way to Libya and Europe.

Algeria has the largest landmass in Africa and is bordered by the Mediterranean Sea to the north and six countries: Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger and Tunisia. Although Algeria is best known as a country of transit because of its location, it has increasingly become a country of destination. Between 2005 and 2019 the number of international migrants in Algeria increased by approximately 10,000. In mid-2020 there were 250.4 thousand international migrants in Algeria, approximately 0.6% of Algeria's total population. Among them was a stable number of refugees – 100.8 thousand refugees in 2015 and 100.6 thousand in 2019. Algeria faces a number of social and economic issues as a result of the influx of irregular migrants. Algeria supports international cooperation on migration and development and the promotion of a common regional approach on migration issues and management. It actively participates in dialogue initiatives among both African and Mediterranean countries.

There are continually high levels of internal migration from certain rural regions, including parts of the Khenchela and Souk-Ahras provinces, to the country's urban areas.

The migration corridor from Algeria to France is ranked first among the top 20 migration corridors involving African countries. From the perspective of European countries, it ranks sixth among the top 20, with over one and a half million Algerians migrating to France.

There were 98.6 thousand refugees in Algeria in 2019, slightly higher than in 2006, with an annual average of approximately 94 thousand between 2005 and 2018. As of October 2020, there were 7,587 refugees and 2,171 asylum seekers in Algeria, a total of 9,758.

Algeria is a Tier 3 country with respect to human trafficking: it neither fully complies with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking nor makes significant efforts to do so. From 2014 to 2019, human traffickers exploited domestic and foreign victims in Algeria. Undocumented sub-Saharan migrants (primarily from Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Guinea, Liberia, and Nigeria) were and continue to be most vulnerable to labour and sex trafficking in Algeria, especially because of their irregular migration status, poverty, and in some instances language barriers.

B. Country Profile

I. Basic Information

In 2020, Algeria's population was approximately 43.9 million with over 99% of the population of Arab-Berber ethnicity and less than 1% of European ethnicities. The primary languages spoken in Algeria are Arabic (a national official language), French (lingua franca) and Berber/Tamazight (a national official language). An overwhelming majority of the population are Muslim (mainly Sunni) constituting approximately 99% of the population, with the remainder Christian and Jewish. International migrants constitute 0.6% of the population. Algeria is Africa's biggest country by land area and is bordered by Mediterranean Sea to the north and six neighbouring countries: Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger and Tunisia. Algeria rejects Moroccan administration of Western Sahara and supports the Polisario Front representing the "Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic" which is recognised by Algeria. The Algerian-Moroccan land border remains closed.

II. International and Internal Migrants

The number of international migrants in Algeria increased by approximately 10,000 from 2015 to 2019, while the number of refugees within this population remained virtually the same with 100.8 thousand refugees in 2015 and 100.6 thousand in 2019. In mid-2020, Algeria's international migrant population was 250.4 thousand, approximately 0.6% of the country's total population. Of this total number of international migrants, 15.6% were 19 years of age and younger, 11.6% were 65 and older and 47.2% were female. From 2000 to 2019 the proportion of female migrants within the overall international total increased by 2%. During this same period, there was a significant shift in the age of migrants as the 20-64 age group increased by more than 5% and the 65 and older group increased by just over 2%. The corresponding proportion of international migrants aged 19 and under shrank over by more than 7.5% over this same period, a decrease from 23.9% in 2000 to 16.3% in 2019. A majority of international migrants in Algeria are from Western Sahara, numbering approximately 170,000, and the remaining four of the top five populations of international migrants in Algeria include Palestinian (about 35,000), Somali (approximately 12,000), Iraqi (about 9,000) and Saudi Arabian (about 5,000). Emigrants slightly exceed immigrants, with a net emigration over the period between 2015 and 2020 of about 50 thousand. However, in 2019 and 2020 emigrants substantially outnumbered immigrants.

Algeria is known primarily as country of transit because of its geographical situation, but has increasingly become a destination country. Algeria faces social and economic issues as a result of the influx of irregular migrants. Algeria supports international cooperation on

migration and development and the promotion of a common regional approach on migration issues and management by actively participating in dialogue initiatives in African and in Mediterranean countries.

In the 2000s, as many Algerians left the country seeking skilled jobs elsewhere, a number of regularised foreign workers (mainly from China and Egypt) came to work in Algeria in the oil and construction sectors. Irregular migrants from Sub-Saharan Africa (especially from Mali, Niger and Gambia) continue to come to Algeria in search of work or in order to use the country as a leg on an intended journey to Libya and Europe. Since 1975, Algeria has been the main recipient of Sahrawi refugees due to ongoing conflict in Western Sahara, currently part of Morocco. Numerous Sahrawis are living in five refugee camps near Tindouf in south-western Algeria. In 2013, terrorists carried out an attack at In Amena, crossing from Libya to Algeria. This forced Algeria to refocus on cross-border terrorism and the protection of its frontiers.

Poor economic conditions and the absence of employment opportunities cause continuing high levels of internal migration from certain rural regions, including parts of Khenchela and Souk-Ahras provinces to urban areas. This internal migration is prevalent among the youth and compounds the economic decline of these regions as both the labour force and population base decline. The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development is engaged in an economic development strategy for the sustainable economic development of rural regions in order to reverse this trend. The projects provide employment opportunities and training to improve land management practices for sustainable and economically viable agricultural practices. The IOM is working with the Algerian Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development on this strategy in Wilaya De Khenchela and in the Souk-Ahras province, by improving agricultural infrastructure and local community capacity building for sustainable and productive agricultural practices.

III. Emigration and Skilled Migration

In the 2000s, a wave of educated Algerians left the country in search of skilled jobs in a wide range of destinations abroad, increasing their presence especially in Spain and in North America. The increasing emigration of skilled and highly skilled persons in 2014 and 2015 further consolidated existing ties with the Algerian community abroad. This resulted in the creation of new domestic policies and instruments that would allow for the diaspora's involvement in the socio-economic development of the country, one of the priorities identified by the Algerian Government; also addressed were the needs and protecting the rights of the Algerian community abroad.

The lack of employment opportunities and generally poor economic conditions cause certain rural regions in Algeria to experience constantly high levels of emigration, especially by youth, which in some cases involves irregular migration to international destinations. The Algerian Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (in some instances in partnership with the IOM) has engaged in strategies and projects focused in rural regions which could stem the effects of a drain of emigration on both the labour force and the population base.

The migration corridor from Algeria to France tops the list of 20 migration corridors that involve African countries in the world. The corridor ranks sixth in the 2019 top 20 migration corridors that involve European countries, with over one and a half million Algerians migrating to France.

IV. Forced Migrants (internally displaced, asylum seekers and refugees)

There were 98.6 thousand refugees in Algeria in 2019, slightly higher than the approximately 94 thousand who entered annually from 2005 to 2018. As of October 2020, there were 7,587 refugees and 2,171 asylum seekers in Algeria, a total of 9,758. The number of asylum applications in Algeria decreased in 2020. Between January to October in 2019, there were 3,399 applications, but in the same time period in 2020 only 2,109. Additionally, during the January to October 2020 period, the months of January and February saw the highest number of applications (552 and 389 respectively), then following a substantial dip from March to August 2020, asylum applications more than doubled in September and October 2020 as September alone saw 301 applications. The decrease in numbers in this period was largely due to COVID-19 related movement restrictions and border closures. The main countries of origin of applicants for asylum in 2020 were Guinea (461), Mali (311), Cameroon (196), Syria (194) and Ivory Coast (150). Asylum applications were temporarily suspended in 2020 as a COVID-19 preventive measure. The process was conducted remotely until late June; after that, registration and status determination resumed in person, although with lowered numbers because of COVID-19 prevention measures.

In 2018 there were more than 100,000 Western Saharan Sahrawi refugees in Algeria most of whom were living in Algerian-sponsored camps in Tindouf province near the southwestern Algerian town of Tindouf. In 2019 there were 7,757 Syrian refugees in Algeria.

As of June 2020, at least 173,600 Sahrawi refugees (or former refugees) were reportedly residing in five camps located in Tindouf province. Most of the refugees arrived after conflict increased in Western Sahara in 1975, and others were born in the camps. According to the UNHCR, some 90,000 refugees are especially vulnerable and rely heavily on humanitarian assistance for necessities and education. Their livelihoods are limited in the camps due to their remote desert location with minimal employment opportunities. Approximately 40% of Sahrawi refugees have unacceptably low levels of access to food; refugees are also exposed to flooding and sandstorms. In May 2019, refugees staged protests in the Tindouf refugee camps because the Algerian authorities had confiscated Algerian passports from Sahrawi refugees who had used them for travelling internationally.

In January 2019, weather related natural disasters displaced 3,200 people in Algeria: 1,200 due to a cold snap and 1,800 were displaced due to flooding. The IDMC did not report any IDPs in Algeria as a result of conflict.

In 2017, Algeria decided to repatriate migrants to Niger and Mali, a decision that caused diplomatic tensions. It was reported that migrants arrested in northern cities were transferred to detention centres (the existence of which Algeria has denied), to Tamanrasset and thereafter to In Guezzam or In Khalil from which they had to walk through the desert to Niger or Mali.

V. Victims of Human Trafficking

Algeria is primarily a transit country for human trafficking, and to a lesser extent it is a destination and source country. Women are the main victims and subjected to forced labour and sexual exploitation. To a lesser extent, men are subjected to forced labour. Criminal networks engage in trafficking within Algeria and some networks extend to Sub-Saharan Africa and also to Europe. These criminal networks are involved in both human smuggling and trafficking. For example, in some cases Sub-Saharan adults enter Algeria on a voluntary but irregular basis, often with the assistance of smugglers. They are en route to Europe, yet some of the women are forced into domestic service, prostitution, and/or begging, while some Sub-Saharan men, especially those from Mali, are forced into domestic servitude. Additionally, some Algerian women and children are forced into prostitution inside the country.

Victims of human trafficking have limited legal recourse in Algeria; and in some instances international migrants who become trafficking victims encounter additional prejudice and harm due to their migration status. Typically, the government has ineffective identification and screening measures for trafficking victims within vulnerable populations such as African migrants, refugees, asylum-seekers, and individuals being exploited in the sex trade. The authorities punish some victims for unlawful acts that their traffickers have forced them to commit. Another example is how undocumented migrants are deterred by the Algerian government's extensive deportation measures, so some victims among this population neither report trafficking crimes to the authorities nor seek assistance. This is compounded by a lack of appropriate protection services to address the needs of trafficking victims.

Algeria is a Tier 3 country. It neither fully complies with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking nor makes significant efforts to do so. From 2014 to 2019, human traffickers exploited domestic and foreign victims in Algeria and also undocumented sub-Saharan migrants (primarily from Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Guinea, Liberia, and Nigeria) who were and continue to be the most vulnerable to forced labour and sex trafficking in Algeria. They are especially vulnerable because of their irregular migration status, poverty, and in some instances language barriers. Unaccompanied women and women traveling with children are also particularly vulnerable to forced domestic work and to sex trafficking. Before coming to or while in Algeria, refugees and asylum-seekers are also vulnerable to trafficking. Their traffickers often make false promises of work.

Migrants who are unsuccessful in reaching Europe often attempt to work and raise funds in Algeria and are at high risk of sex trafficking and debt bondage. Restaurants, households, or informal worksites are often used by traffickers to exploit victims, making locating traffickers and victims difficult. Migrants can become indebted to their smugglers, who then exploit them into forced labour and sexual service when they arrive in Algeria. Female migrants in Tamanrasset, the main southern transit point into Algeria for migrants, are exploited through debt bondage which forces them to work to repay their smuggling debts through sex trafficking, domestic servitude and forced begging. In some instances, migrants fall into debt to their fellow nationals in Tamanrasset who pay the debts to the smugglers and then exploit the migrants. Tuareg and Maure smugglers and traffickers in northern Mali and southern Algeria force or coerce those who are in debt to them differently according to

gender and age. The men must work as masons or mechanics, the women wash dishes, clothes and cars, while the children draw water from wells in southern Algeria.

Foreign women and girls are exploited in sex trafficking in informal brothels and bars, typically by members of their own communities across Algeria, as well as the cities of Algiers and Tamanrasset. Criminal organized begging rings have been increasing in number in Algeria over the past several years. Leaders of these begging networks use punishment to coerce or force sub-Saharan African migrant children to beg. Additionally, local leaders suggest that due to extreme economic pressures migrant children may also be coerced into work by their parents.

In terms of prevention, the government has maintained its efforts to stop human trafficking. For example, the anti-trafficking committee launched a website dedicated to human trafficking issues in July 2019, the same year that the government initiated several awareness-raising initiatives. The National Council on Human Rights also continued to lead a sub-committee dedicated to human trafficking issues in 2019.

VI. National Legal Framework

Algeria's international commitments take precedence over national law, as the 2020 constitution states: "The treaties ratified by the President of the Republic under the conditions foreseen by the constitution shall prevail over the law." The 2016 Constitution said the same. Algeria ratified the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1967 Protocol, ratified the OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa and ratified the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime in 2002. Algeria is not, however, a party to the African Union Convention for The Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention).

Although Algeria ratified the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families in 2004, several aspects need to be strengthened in domestic law. Currently, Algerian law addresses undocumented migration as a security concern, which is clear in its repatriation operations. In 2012, the Algerian government developed a draft asylum law, though it was not passed as the focus shifted to reforming the country's constitution, which happened in 2016. Although the constitution includes the principle of non-refoulement (Article 50), it does not explicitly guarantee the right to asylum. Additionally, there is no legislated procedures for the registration and processing of asylum claims, hence UNHCR has processed these claims. However, for reasons such as security concerns in the South of Algeria, applications are only processed in Algiers where UNHCR has a presence; hence many would-be applicants have no access to asylum. The Algerian constitution protects only those who reside lawfully in the country, although there is provision in accordance with Law 08-11 (2008) that under limited circumstances (including a temporary work authorisation), foreigners who reside in Algeria may obtain residence permits allowing them to work. But in the case of irregular entry, a migrant's status cannot be regularised; and the law explicitly criminalises clandestine immigration and emigration. Children have the right to health and education in terms of international instruments, but there is ambiguity about the right to health of migrant children in domestic legislation.

It appears that legislation and policy in Algeria are becoming more restrictive and securitized. In October 2020, there was an increase in the pace and number of expulsions when “the Minister for the Interior Kamel Beldjoud announced an intensification of the fight against irregular migration on 1 October 2020, including the intensification of controls and the dismantling of reception networks. (Blidi 2020)¹”

VII. Main Actors

The State

The primary government ministry with respect to migrants is the Ministry of the Interior, Local Authorities and Regional Planning; it contains the Directorate of Territorial Security Coordination. Among the agencies to counter human trafficking in Algeria are various branches of the Joint Staff including the army, National Gendarmerie (GN) (the rural national police service), the Border Guards, the Ministry of National Defence, Department of Intelligence and Security and the Ministry of Interior’s national police: General Directorate of National Security.

Since independence, the Algerian National Popular Army (ANP) has been a core political actor in Algeria that secures the country’s borders and counters terrorism. Like the ANP, the Ministry of the Interior, the primary ministry responsible for migrants, is focused on security and a securitised response to increasing migrant flows. Although refugees fall under the Foreign Ministry’s *Bureau Algérien pour les Réfugiés et les Apatrides* (BAPRA), in practice, UNHCR handles asylum seekers and refugees. The security forces tend to not differentiate between different categories of migrants when rounding up individuals for collective expulsions.

International Organizations

Algeria cooperates internationally on migration and development and promotes a common regional approach on migration issues management by actively participating in dialogue initiatives both in Africa and Mediterranean countries. The main organisations working on migrant-related projects in Algeria include: the African Union (AU), United Nations Development Programme, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), UNHCR, International Labour Organization (ILO) and Médecins du Monde.

IOM aims to support the government through technical cooperation and migration and development activities. UNHCR in Algeria works to safeguard the rights of refugees and asylum seekers through two offices, the Country Office in Algiers and the Sub Office in Tindouf. UNHCR provides protection and humanitarian assistance based on specific needs; legal and psycho-social counselling; and vocational training. It ensures access to government funded medical care and education, and supports voluntary repatriation and resettlement to refugees and asylum-seekers in urban areas, and for Sahrawi refugees in 5 camps around Tindouf, in the southwest of the country.

¹ ECDPM Country Report Algeria, 2020. Available at: <https://ecdpm.org/wp-content/uploads/Algeria-Reforming-Migration-Asylum-Systems-Time-Crisis-ECDPM-Country-Report-November-2020.pdf>

Algeria is also a State party of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers (CMW), the body of independent experts that monitors the implementation of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families by its state parties.

Algeria has been an ILO member State since 1962 and gives a great importance to social protection as a means of producing wealth redistribution and of fighting poverty.

Médecins du Monde supports local partners to restore access to healthcare by supporting health structures and to set up sustainable actions, particularly related to sexual and reproductive health and risk reduction. UNHCR's partners in Algeria are: Algerian Red Crescent (ARC), Association des Femmes Algériennes pour le Développement (AFAD), Asociación de Trabajadores y Técnicos sin Fronteras (ATTSF), Danish Refugee Council (DRC), Humanité et Inclusion (HI), Enfants Réfugiés du Monde (ERM), Green Tea Association, Movement for Peace, Disarmament & Liberty (MPDL), Oxfam, Réseau algérien pour la défense des droits de l'enfant (NADA), Solidaridad Internacional Andalucía (SI-A), Triangle Génération Humanitaire (TGH) and Universidad Autonoma de Madrid (UAM). Additionally, in Tindouf, UNHCR leads inter-agency efforts to support the Sahrawi refugee programme in close coordination with WFP (concerning food assistance and resilience) and UNICEF (health, education and child protection).

The Catholic Church

In Algeria there are four dioceses, including one archdiocese: Algiers, Constantine, Oran and Laghouat.

The Catholic Church in Algeria does not have its own Bishops' conference; its Bishops are part of the North African Regional Bishops' Conference (*Conférence Episcopale Regionale du Nord de l'Afrique*, CERNA), a group that includes the bishops of Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya and Western Sahara. The North African Regional Bishops' Conference is a member of the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM).

Among the main Catholic organisations working with migrants in Algeria are Caritas Algérie, and Rencontre et Développement.

Caritas Algérie (CA) is an executive body of the Humanitarian Service of the Diocesan Association of Algeria (ADA). It supports people who request assistance, regardless of their origin, identity or religious affiliation. In collaboration with Caritas Confederation and other international organizations, CA has implemented relief programs for persons affected by natural disasters. In collaboration with UNHCR and other organizations, it works with migrants crossing the country from sub-Saharan Africa, providing them with medical aid, literacy courses and tutoring classes for younger children. CA also has a shelter for migrants (Centre d'Accueil pour migrants) in Algiers and collaborates with the Sœurs Missionnaires de Notre-Dame d'Afrique (SMNDA) and the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa (MSOLA) in connection with Justice, Peace, Integrity of Creation, Encounter and Dialogue with other cultures and religions (JPIC-RD).

In December 2012, Jesuit Refugee Services (JRS) organised a mission to conduct research entitled Experiences of Migrants Living in Morocco and Algeria, and partnered with Caritas Algérie, Rencontre et Développement (CCSA: Comité Chrétien des Services en Algérie) and the Jesuit Community in Algiers among others.

Rencontre et Développement is an Algerian association formed as an initiative of the Catholic Church of Algeria. This association, seen for years as a “service station” at the side of the migration path, welcomes and treats and educates migrants and asylum seekers. The association assists migrants who seek assistance with repatriation and a safe and secure return in collaboration with local and regional partners.

Other Organizations

LADDH (Ligue Algérienne pour la Défense des Droits de l’Homme) is an NGO that assists in the defence of rights of migrants and refugees. Mr. Wadie Meraghni is a lawyer and member at the Bar Association of Algiers who collaborates with the UNHCR in defending refugees and asylum seekers.

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