



Algeria

Democratic and Popular Republic of Algeria

Africa

Geography

Area 2,381,741 sq km. Agriculture is possible on the Mediterranean coast, in the Atlas Mountains and at oases; 80% is desert.

Population	Ann Gr	Density
2010 35,422,589	1.52%	15/sq km
2020 40,630,046	1.30%	17/sq km
2030 44,726,253	0.85%	19/sq km

Over 90% live north of the Atlas Mountains. About 500,000 are nomadic or semi-nomadic in the Sahara. A further 4 million ethnic Algerians live in Europe.

Capital Algiers 2,799,667. **Other major cities** Oran 767,000; Constantine 630,000. **Urbanites** 66.5%. **Pop under 15 yrs** 27%. **Life expectancy** 72.2 yrs.

Peoples

Maghreb Arabs 69.9%. Many are Arabized Berber. **Berber** 22.8%. 14 groups, including Kabyle 9.4%; Shawiya 5.3%; Imazighen 3.8%; Rif/Northern Shilha 2.0%. **Bedouin** 6.0%. 8 groups. Tajakant 4.0%. **Other Arabs** 1.0%.

Other 0.3%. Asian, European, sub-Saharan African. **Literacy** 69.8%. **Official languages** Arabic and Berber. French and English are widely used, and 25% speak one of the Berber languages. **All languages** 22. **Indigenous languages** 18. **Languages with Scriptures** 2Bi 1NT 7por.

Economy

A fast-growing economy due to oil/gas reserves and rapid nationalization of related industry. Most oil wealth does not reach the ordinary citizen. Foreign debt repayment is ahead of schedule, but the financial structures of the country are generally poor and unemployment is high. **HDI Rank** 104th/182. **Public debt** 8.4% of GDP. **Income/person** \$4,588 (10% of USA).

Politics

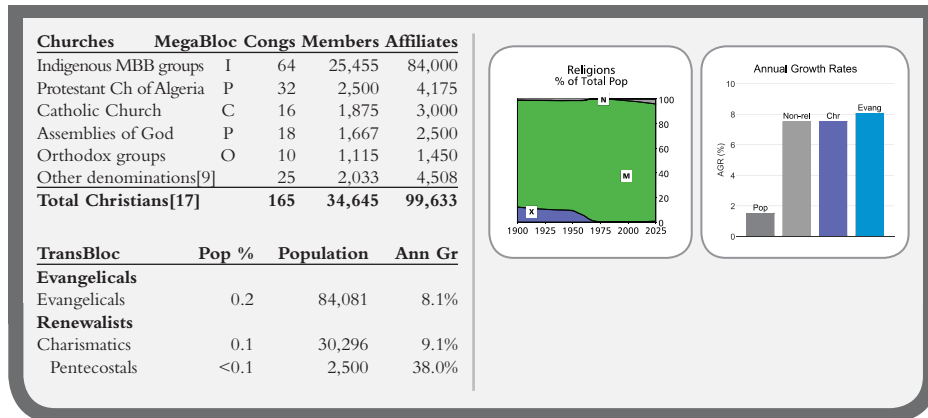
French colony for 132 years. Independence in 1962 after a bitter war of liberation. A one-party socialist regime backed by the army held power for over 25 years. Economic failure and political abuses of power provoked widespread agitation for change. Islamists won the 1992 elections but the army intervened. An ensuing civil war caused more than 100,000 deaths. The current president's attempts at forging peace via the Charter for Peace and National Reconciliation meet with broad national approval, but the government appears to be accommodating militant Islamist groups to a dangerous degree, and this appeasement approach may prove disastrous in the long-run.

Religion

Freedom of religion is dwindling since legal changes in 2006, and persecution has been intensifying since 2008. Islamist groups are increasingly intolerant of other expressions of faith. Catholics and the Protestant Church of Algeria are the only Christian bodies officially recognized. Muslim fundamentalists are strongly agitating for the institution of Islamic shari'a law.

Religions	Pop %	Population	Ann Gr
Muslim	97.29	34,462,637	1.4%
Non-religious	2.40	850,142	5.3%
Christian	0.28	99,183	7.5%
Chinese	0.02	7,085	1.5%
Baha'i	0.01	3,542	1.5%

Christians	Denoms	Pop %	Affiliates	Ann Gr
Protestant	8	0.03	10,000	12.2%
Independent	3	0.24	86,000	7.5%
Catholic	1	0.01	3,000	0.0%
Orthodox	4	<0.01	1,000	-1.8%
Marginal	1	<0.01	100	0.0%



Answers to Prayer

- 1 The growth of the Algerian Church** over the past decade is an answer to prayer. A long road of tearful sowing by a tenacious succession of missionaries and intercessors is bearing beautiful fruit – while impossible to assess accurately, some believe that the number of believers far exceeds 100,000. The large majority are Kabyle Berber in background, but faith is growing among Arabs and almost every other people as well. New fellowships are popping up all over the country. This is in part due to the commitment of Berber believers to move into unreached, Arab areas in order to sow the seeds of the good news.
- 2 The Church is a very indigenous, truly Algerian expression of faith.** Scriptures and study materials, worship styles and, increasingly, training and leadership are all expressed in culturally relevant ways. The resources available to believers in their own languages and forms, once scarce, are multiplying.
- 3 Unity among Berber, Arab and foreign Christians** stands in glorious contrast to the legacy of animosity among these ethnic groups so prevalent for centuries outside of faith in Christ.

Challenges for Prayer

- 1 Algeria has suffered deeply** in the past. From French colonial exploitation to the war of liberation to the more recent brutal civil war that cost over 100,000 lives, its people are familiar with violence and loss. Pray for the following issues:
 - a) The spiritual and psychological legacies of a land fraught with bloodshed.** Fear of murderous attacks by terror groups has lessened, but the violence has never ended. Many people are war-weary and wish for the upheaval to end, but that seems a distant dream.
 - b) Democracy** is enshrined in the constitution but struggles elsewhere to hang on. A single-party state more or less remains, and the freedoms promised on paper rarely materialize.
 - c) Human rights abuses are widespread.** Change to some laws opened the door for further abuse. The Charter for Peace and National Reconciliation is more lenient to the perpetrators of civil war crimes than to the victims; few will be brought to account for the terrible crimes committed (by both terrorist groups and state security forces), and the media will be subject to greater state control. Most vulnerable are non-Muslims.
- 2 Islam in Algeria is volatile and deeply polarized** between secularists – who espouse a more liberal Islam and a Western view of progress – and Islamists, who want to submit all of society to shari'a principles. Since 1992, fundamentalists led by the Islamic Armed Group (GIA) have waged a bloody war of terror – with the state, the media and foreigners as targets. There is once again a strong push to re-enter the political sphere as

Islamists gain ground in popularity. Meanwhile, they are moving at the grassroots level by gaining control of schools and mosques, and intimidating or even murdering imams who oppose them. Pray that God might use Islamists to draw many more into discovering Christ, as He has done elsewhere. Pray for powerful conversions to Jesus among Islamist leaders in Algeria.

3 The Berber peoples comprise 23% of the population, although the dominant Arabs may be largely an ancient admixture of Arab and Berber. Domination by Arab language and culture spawns Berber nationalism, a significant force as they seek to reaffirm their identity and return to their cultural roots. Their forebears were once Christian, and now many thousands have turned to Christ among the Kabyle, some through supernatural revelations of the Lord Jesus, but mainly through personal evangelism.

a) Praise God for the continued growth of this people movement to Christ. Pray that it may continue to spread and to deepen. Reprisals are beginning to occur against the young and growing Church.

b) Pray for reconciliation efforts by the president and government. Legislation for a greater recognition of Berber language and culture will go a long way in bridging the divide between these two intransigent groups. Some Berbers identify themselves with Christianity and the West more out of spite toward “Arabic” Islam than out of love for Jesus.

4 Persecution of Christians is intensifying as a reaction to unprecedented church growth; the future of the Church in Algeria hangs in the balance. Legislation passed has made proselytism a criminal offence. A law forbidding the “practice of non-Muslim worship” outside of pre-approved buildings was cleverly followed by a spate of church closings. Believers face threats and intimidation by family, friends, employers, Muslim extremists and now the government. The Algerian Church has grown due to bold witness and evangelism. Pray that they will respond to these pressures with faith and perseverance.

5 The Algerian Church faces many other challenges outside of persecution. Pray for the following issues:

a) Unity between the few Christian associations with a public presence. Officially this constitutes the Catholics and the Protestant Church of Algeria (EPA). The Assemblies of God also formed a new association. There is some disagreement between Christian groups on the best way to share the good news in this heavily Muslim nation.

b) The establishment of strong indigenous groups and church leaders. The rapid growth and sensitive context makes leadership development a constant challenge. TEE is developing quickly in order to help raise up a new generation of leaders. Resources are increasingly available in many new media formats, allowing discipleship and training to occur anywhere. There are also three theological schools in the country.

c) A strengthening of Christian families. Religious and social pressures usually force Christian girls to hide their faith and marry Muslims. Pray for the few Christian couples, for their strength and endurance, and that they may minister to the Church.

d) Unemployment among Christians from a Muslim background is as high as 90%. This creates financial burdens for churches, the inability to support pastors and many temptations and complications for those seeking to follow Jesus. Pray for micro-enterprise schemes that create jobs for believers, such as the House of Hope and the EPA programmes.

6 The unreached comprise virtually the whole nation.

a) The growing cities – the educated elite, the middle class and the teeming slums. Algeria rapidly urbanized as people fled into the cities to escape the violence of civil war.

b) Young people are frustrated and disillusioned. Many attempt to move to Europe (often illegally) in search of more freedom and a better life. Those under age 30 make up 65-70% of the population, and this generation comprises the large majority of the Christians in Algeria.

c) The Berber peoples of the Atlas Mountains. Apart from the Kabyles, the other 13 groups are among Africa’s least evangelized. But there is now a Christian witness in the midst of all these, and possibly groups of believers as well.

d) **The Tuareg and Bedouin peoples.** Only a handful of believers were known just a few years ago. They are now rapidly responding to the gospel. Creative strategies will be required to effectively reach those who maintain the traditional nomadic lifestyle.

e) **The Mزاب oasis towns in the Sahara.** Even these tight-knit and deeply religious communities are being reached by Algerian believers; a very small but growing number have come to Christ.

7 **Pray for the active mission force.** Pray that God would raise up more workers to help strengthen the local church. Work is under way in many areas. Especially pray for these:

a) **Relief work** remains very much an urgent priority, but one that requires sensitivity.

b) **Christian music.** Much is being written in Kabyle, less so in other languages. Pray for increased production quality and wider dissemination of this valuable tool for witness and discipleship.

c) **Work among the children of Christians.** There is no ministry specifically geared for children. Pray for strong discipleship of Christian children at home; at school they are bombarded with Quranic teaching.

d) **The leadership of the Algerian Church in Europe,** and for missionary calls to their homeland. There are over 3,000 Algerian Christians in Europe, many of whom fled the violence or persecution back home. Pray for many to be raised up as apostles to their own people.

8 **Algerians in Europe** exceed four million; many are there illegally. They are more accessible to the gospel in Europe, but also to Islamic preaching. Pray for the network of agencies and churches seeking to reach them (**AWM, WEC, Avant** and others). Pray for discipling of individuals and planting of Arabic- and Berber-speaking congregations that can then be channels for the gospel to their homeland.

9 **Bible translation and distribution** are fraught with obstacles and restrictions. Translation work is proceeding in a few Berber languages and in Algerian Arabic, a language spoken by up to 25 million people; most do not understand Standard Arabic. Pray for rapid completion of these projects and for the transfer of these resources into safer and less conspicuous media. The government ban on importing Bibles is a major obstacle to the discipleship and maturation of the Church; pray that the rapidly growing community of believers might have adequate access to Scripture.

10 **Christian media** are vital in this internally restrictive situation. Pray for:

a) **Radio.** Both **AWM** and **Avant** have a comprehensive strategy of preparing radio programmes, evangelistic and discipleship literature and follow-up programmes (radio, satellite TV, personal counselling, magazines and BCCs). Arabic, Kabyle and other languages have broadcasts mostly through **TWR** and **HCJB**; pray for more broadcasting hours. Several thousand are reported as having found faith via this medium.

b) **Audio-visual.** The **JESUS** film on video has had a wide impact in Kabyle and in Arabic; it is available in seven other languages. The **More Than Dreams** DVD is also being used effectively.

c) **Satellite TV** is the medium of greatest fruitfulness and even greater potential. About 85% of homes have satellite dishes and thereby full access to the good news. About 20 channels are reaching Muslims, and **CBN, Life TV** and **CNA** develop programmes specifically for Maghreb peoples. Pray for even better use of this powerful means of witnessing, teaching and encouraging.

d) **Use of portable media.** Music, Scripture, teaching and training series, testimonies and even discipling chat rooms are all available on the Internet, DVD, CD and on handheld electronic devices. Praise God for the increase of these resources and their unstoppable accessibility; pray for their wider distribution.