

WORLD WATCH LIST 2026

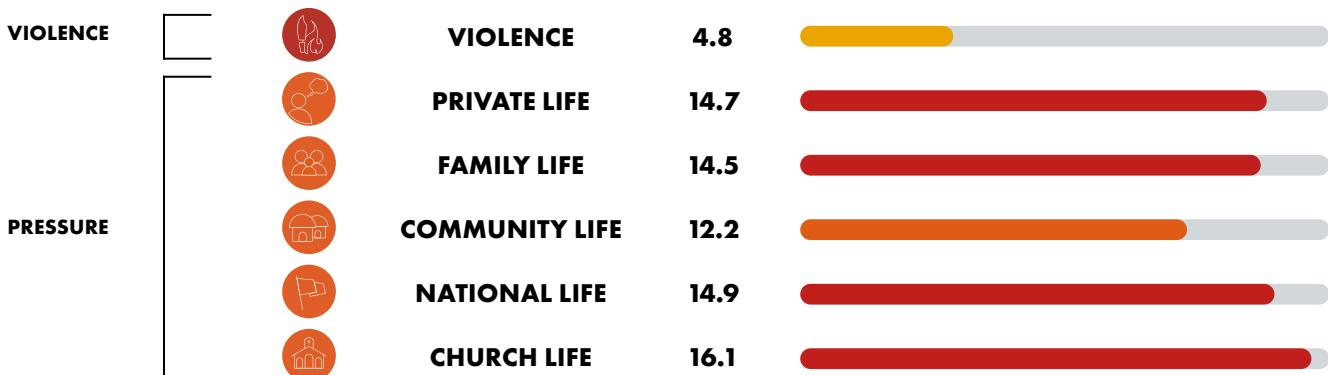
SITUATION OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM FOR CHRISTIANS

WORLD WATCH LIST NO.
20

ALGERIA



LEVELS OF VIOLENCE AND PRESSURE



Each of the six categories is scored out of a maximum of 16.7 points. The categories added together total 100 points ($6 \times 16.7 = 100$).

Key findings

Over the past three years, state pressure on Protestant Christians in Algeria has intensified to levels unseen in decades. During WWL 2026, authorities increasingly targeted the church's online presence, including the December 2024 closure of a Christian Facebook group with over 50,000 followers. Authorities have kept previously closed churches shut and ordered others to cease activities. As a result, all 47 churches under the Evangelical Protestant Church of Algeria (EPA) have halted their activities, and other independent churches have also stopped meeting due to fear of government action. These closures have strongly increased isolation among Algerian Christians, who are mostly converts from Islam. In addition to church closures, more than 50 Christians have been prosecuted in the past year, with many receiving suspended prison sentences and fines. Converts continued to face strong opposition from families and communities, especially in rural, conservative, and Arab regions where pressure and danger are particularly acute.

Quick facts

LEADER

President Abdelmadjid Tebboune

POPULATION

46,922,000

NUMBER OF CHRISTIANS

156,000¹

MAIN RELIGION

Islam

GOVERNMENT

Presidential Republic



Context

Religious context	Number of adherents	% of adherents in country
Christians	156,000	0.3
Muslims	46,006,000	98.1
Agnostics/Atheists	731,500	1.5
Others	23,600	0.1
	Total	100%

Source²

Historically, Algeria is an ethnic mix of people of both Arab and Berber descent, with the dominant ethnic identity in the country being Arabic. Ethnicity and language are sensitive issues after many years of government marginalization of Berber culture. Despite the conservative Islamic context, Algeria has one of the biggest communities of converts from Islam to Christianity in the wider Middle East. Most of these converts belong to the Berber community in the Kabyle region. In-country sources show that converts outside the Kabyle region experience higher levels of pressure from society and family.

Ordinance 06-03, passed in March 2006, regulates religions other than Islam and severely limits non-Muslim worship. The government has not registered any new churches since its enforcement, so Christians meet in private homes or business properties. This is forbidden, with a maximum sentence of three years in prison and a high fine. The church closures in recent years have now even forced the church to go underground and meet in secret.

The EPA was officially recognized by the government in 1974. Its member churches, however, were required to obtain their own registration. None of them succeeded in doing this because the government has not approved any of the applications. In 2013, the EPA had to reapply for recognition after a new NGO law was introduced. However, the government never responded to this application, leaving the EPA in legal limbo.

Algeria is rated as [authoritarian](#) and [not free](#) since it is *de facto* led by its powerful army and a group of businessmen and politicians known as “Le Pouvoir” (the Power). Article 73 of the Constitution requires the president to be a Muslim and *de facto* non-Muslims are banned from holding high-level government positions. In 2019, the Hirak movement emerged as a series of mass, peaceful protests demanding political reform and the resignation of then-President Abdelaziz Bouteflika. Although the movement initially led to Bouteflika’s resignation, the government later suppressed Hirak through arrests, restrictions on demonstrations, and increased security measures, effectively ending large-scale protests by 2021.

¹ Gina A. Zurlo, ed., *World Christian Database*, Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed April 2025

² Other refers to all the rest to make up 100%: Gina A. Zurlo, ed., *World Christian Database*, Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed April 2025

How the situation varies by region

Most Christians live in the northern Kabyle region and belong to a Berber ethnic group. The Kabyles were discriminated against and neglected by the government for many years, which created an environment for the Christian community to develop. In the Arab part of the country, especially in the south, there are very few Christians and circumstances are difficult. Though Islamist militants lack broad support, the country remains firmly gripped by Islam, reinforced by the expanding Salafist movement. Anti-Western and, consequently, anti-Christian biases, have increased due to the Israel-Gaza war, further complicating the situation for Christians in the country.

Who is affected?

COMMUNITIES OF EXPATRIATE CHRISTIANS

The group includes Sub-Saharan migrant and Western expatriate Christians, with Sub-Saharan students often facing discrimination in universities and daily city life.

HISTORICAL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES

The Roman Catholic Church has four dioceses in the country (Alger, Oran, Constantine et Hippone, Laghouat-Ghardaïa). It faces restrictions outside places of worship, but registered churches, including Algiers' cathedral (the seat of the Archbishop), may hold services freely.

CONVERTS TO CHRISTIANITY

The majority of Christians are converts from a Muslim background, and they face discrimination and pressure from the state and family members. Since the law prohibits non-Muslim worship, except in registered churches, these converts previously congregated in business properties or private homes.

NON-TRADITIONAL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES

This category is not included in the WWL scoring and analysis.



Main sources of persecution and discrimination

ISLAMIC OPPRESSION

Islamist groups exert strong pressure on the Algerian government, which avoids challenging citizens' Islamic convictions. Though the Islamic Salvation Front is banned, parties like the Movement of Society for Peace, the National Construction Movement, and the National Reform Movement wield considerable influence. They oppose reforming the sharia-inspired family code, push for Islamic education, and promote measures preserving Algeria's Islamic identity. Their influence extends into neighborhoods and social media, where they monitor behavior and demand action against perceived violations. Some government officials are aligned with Islamist currents, reinforcing their ideological impact on governance and public life.

DICTATORIAL PARANOIA

The government, autocratic in nature, imposes strict restrictions on Christians, including church closures and prosecutions on charges such as proselytizing. Deeply rooted in its anti-colonial and revolutionary ideology, the ruling party that has dominated since independence remains suspicious of Christian missionary activities. This is particularly the case when such activities are perceived to be aligned with churches or Christian groups in the West.

CLAN OPPRESSION

Islamic oppression is the foundation of family and community pressure on converts to Christianity. In Arab regions, family honor plays a central role too, with elders ensuring conformity. While elders' influence is weaker in urban settings, family pressure often remains high.

ETHNO-RELIGIOUS HOSTILITY

Most Algerian Christians are found in the northern Kabyle region and are from a Berber background. Since independence, there has been political tension between this region and the central (Arab) government over issues of ethnic identity, culture and language. Ethnic tension bleeds into religious tension.

How are men and women differently affected?

WOMEN

Algerian women remain disadvantaged in law and society, facing gender-based violence. Christian women are at times harassed at school or work and can face sexual assault and death threats if unveiled. Converts from Islam to Christianity, in particular, suffer beatings, threats, or house arrest from family. Families also block access to Christian media, pushing many to live as secret believers. Single women are closely monitored, making it difficult to attend underground churches, while widespread church closures further cut off access to teaching and baptism and has forced thousands into isolation. Converts risk forced marriage or divorce as corrective punishment.

Female typical pressure points:

- Denied access to Christian religious materials, teachings and rites
- Denied access to social community/networks
- Enforced religious dress code
- Forced marriage
- Incarceration by family (house arrest)
- Violence – physical
- Violence – sexual

MEN

Algerian Christian men face community and economic harassment in workplaces and public spaces. As primary providers, losing work can cripple families, creating fear and helplessness. Because most church leaders are men, they face frequent interrogations or detentions by police and gendarmes, leaving families without support; some pastors have fled the country. Male converts face the harshest treatment: ostracism, beatings, forced attendance at mosques, and disowned by their fathers and kin, sometimes with permanent expulsion from the home. Many are forced to live their faith in secret.

Male typical pressure points:

- Denied access to social community/networks
- Forced out of home – expulsion
- Imprisonment by government
- Violence – physical
- Violence – psychological



WWL 5 year trend

WWL Year	Position on Open Doors World Watch List	Persecution rounded score out of 100
2026	20	77
2025	19	77
2024	15	79
2023	19	73
2022	22	71

The overall rounded score stayed at 77 points. The violence score decreased from 6.3 to 4.8 points, mainly because all Algerian Protestant churches had already been closed in previous years, so no new closures occurred. The decrease in the violence score was partly offset by increases in pressure in other spheres of life. The church in Algeria faces extremely high pressure, as church closures have forced thousands of Christians into isolation.

Examples of violence in the reporting period

- The government continued its strict monitoring of church leaders and the activities of all Algerian Christians. A Christian gathering was raided at least once.
- The government increased its crackdown on Christian internet activities and closed several social media pages.
- Because of the church closures in recent years, thousands of Algerian Christians have become isolated and have no opportunity for fellowship with other Christians. This has taken a heavy psychological toll on many Christians.
- In the past three years, at least 50 Christians have been prosecuted, some receiving suspended prison sentences with appeals still pending. Ongoing prosecutions and fear of re-arrest have driven strong self-censorship among Algerian Christians, especially Protestants.



© Alamy

WWL Year	Christians physically or mentally abused	Christians imprisoned or punished by the government	Churches or Christian buildings attacked or closed	Christians forced to flee the country
2026	15	5	1	15
2025	20	10	5	15

This table includes only a few categories of faith-based violence during the reporting period – for full results see the violence section of the country's corresponding WWL Persecution Dynamics. Since many incidents go unreported, the numbers must be understood as minimum figures. In cases where it has been impossible to count exactly, a symbolic round figure (10*, 100* or 1000*) is given which in reality could be significantly higher. The same applies for symbolic numbers 10,000*, 100,000* and 1,000,000*.

PRIVATE LIFE

Christians in Algeria often avoid displaying religious symbols or sharing their faith openly, including on social media, due to the risk of prosecution under strict anti-proselytism and blasphemy laws. Ordinance 06-03 makes proselytizing a criminal offense, punishable by one to three years in prison. Hostility from local communities is common, and even discussing beliefs with family members can be dangerous. Since all Evangelical Protestant churches have been closed, many Algerian Christians are forced into isolation, depriving them of fellowship and discipleship opportunities.

FAMILY LIFE

Both government and society continue to regard converts and their children as Muslims, making it difficult for Christian families to openly practice or pass on their faith to their children. Mandatory religious education in public schools is strictly based on Islamic principles, leaving little room for alternative beliefs. Adoption is only permitted for Muslims, and children are legally considered Muslim if their father is Muslim. Converts to Christianity often face severe family pressure, including divorce initiated or forced by Muslim spouses or relatives. In those cases, children can be kept away from their Christian parent.

COMMUNITY LIFE

Christians in Algeria are closely monitored, with leaders often experiencing phone tapping and email surveillance. Gathering as Christians outside approved church buildings is illegal, though this

pressure is somewhat lighter in the Kabyle region. Christian students living in conservative Islamic areas, especially children of converts, must conceal their faith to avoid discrimination from teachers and restricted university access. Similarly, converts risk discrimination when applying for jobs and often must hide their beliefs.

NATIONAL LIFE

Christians face discrimination when dealing with authorities, especially converts and immigrants from Sub-Saharan Africa. Converts from Islam often suffer abuse from family members, who act with impunity as the government treats domestic violence as a private family matter. Christians, regardless of background, are excluded from senior government positions, further restricting their participation in public life. Likewise, government control and bureaucratic hurdles prevent Christians from actively developing civil society.

CHURCH LIFE

Churches in Algeria face severe restrictions: they cannot organize activities for non-Christian youth, and minors are only allowed to attend church when accompanied by an adult. Printing Christian materials is banned under Ordinance 06-03, and foreign Christians struggle to obtain visas due to constant monitoring. Nearly all Protestant churches have been forcibly closed or pressured to cease regular services. Christian leaders risk prosecution, and most believers are forced into isolated, underground worship.



International obligations & rights violated

Algeria has committed to respect and protect fundamental rights under the following international treaties:

1. International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights ([ICCPR](#))
2. Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment ([CAT](#))
3. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women ([CEDAW](#))
4. Convention on the Rights of the Child ([CRC](#))

Algeria is not fulfilling its international obligations by regularly violating or failing to protect the following rights of Christians:

- Christian leaders are monitored and their activities actively watched (ICCPR Art. 17)
- Churches are arbitrarily closed by the Government (ICCPR Arts. 18 and 20)
- Christian women and girls are raped and sexually abused because of their faith (ICCPR Art. 7)
- Christians cannot discuss their faith with non-Christians or proselytize (ICCPR Arts. 18 and 19)
- Christians cannot adopt children or serve as foster parents (ICCPR Art. 26)
- Christians are falsely accused and charged of blasphemy (ICCPR Art. 19)

Situation of other religious minorities

Algerian Jews, Ahmadi Muslims, and Shia Muslims experience varying degrees of pressure and violence. The Ahmadi Muslims face harsher violations, including criminal charges for “denigrating Islamic dogma,” hostility from officials, and denial of association rights. Additionally, atheists and those questioning Sunni Islamic doctrine often encounter hostility in Algeria. Antisemitism also persists in public discourse, affecting Algerian Jews.



Open Doors in Algeria

In cooperation with local partners and churches, Open Doors is supporting the church in North Africa through the following activities:

- Leadership: Leaders retreats, leadership training and mentoring
- Discipleship: Encouragement through face-to-face visits, discipleship training, support theological initiatives, persecution preparedness training and distribution of Bibles and Christian literature
- Ministry: Trauma counselling training to women, legal aid to persecuted Christians and practical support, we formed women's groups for support, run family conferences and pre-marriage courses/conferences
- Livelihood: Micro-loans to start small businesses, offer vocational training, when needed we support medical help or offer relief items
- Raising prayer support for believers in Algeria



ABOUT THIS DOSSIER

- The content of this Country Dossier is based on detailed analysis carried out by World Watch Research (WWR), the research department of Open Doors International. This dossier may be used and distributed free of charge, but please always acknowledge the source as: © 2026 Open Doors International.
- All 50 Country Dossiers – along with the latest update of WWL Methodology – can be accessed [here](#).
- The WWL 2026 reporting period was 01 October 2024 - 30 September 2025.

Most photos in this dossier are for illustrative purposes.