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Algeria

The Algerian Regime: Incompetence, Inconsistency, Arrogance and Repression!

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Early 2026 has been turbulent for the Algerian regime, marked by an accumulation of improvisations and tensions creating a state of alert. A series of social and political events have highlighted structural and latent contradictions in governmental affairs management that contradict the president's triumphalist rhetoric.

On the morning of 1 January, Algerian motorists arriving at petrol stations discovered that fuel prices had increased. The decision was taken secretly without any announcement or information. Even social media, through which alerts are typically issued, was caught off guard! Previously, a punitive and police-oriented road traffic law, which makes drivers exclusively responsible for the fatal accidents plaguing Algerian roads, was promulgated without debate or explanation! These two events were sufficient to trigger a strike amongst transport workers, which paralysed the movement of passengers, students and especially goods for over a week. [1] Other hasty economic decisions, often following triumphalist presidential announcements, prove impracticable in the country's financial reality. Institutions react belatedly to implement them. This was the case, for example, with the decision to increase the tourist allowance for travellers abroad from €100 to €750 per year. However, its implementation has been delayed and continues to cause difficulties at the borders!

These economic or security decisions, often taken without prior study, combined with the opacity surrounding the institutional landscape, generate a general feeling amongst the public that the country is advancing without clear direction. Added to this internal context is a limping and hesitant foreign diplomacy on all matters: from Palestine to Western Sahara, from tensions at its Sahel borders [2] to the crises and upheavals in the Middle East, from the rejection of its BRICS [3] candidacy to the remarkable silence regarding the violent United States attack on Venezuela, at a moment when the international scene is marked by a manifest return to the imperialist and predatory logic of American domination. These are all signs reinforcing the impression amongst public opinion that the country is preparing to face a complex future.

A traffic law... a strike that paralyses the country's economy

Whilst the police regime strikes "preventively" at any hint of worker protest or trade union action, it had not anticipated the scale of the protest launched by transport workers. A new law, drafted in reaction to fatal accidents and recurrent discourse about "road terrorism", provoked strong reactions amongst drivers. Confronted with deteriorating infrastructure and operating costs deemed very high, sector representatives quickly reacted to the new text, judged "disconnected from reality".

A general strike, which began on 1 January, paralysed goods transport and highlighted the fragility of numerous supply chains. Faced with the scale of the protest and its effects on Algerians' daily lives, the regime decided to open dialogue and retreat towards modifications to the law. This constitutes the first breach in the repressive edifice and firmness displayed by the authorities.

Economic and financial improvisation...

Another improvisation that also appears inapplicable in the immediacy of its promulgation concerns the financial sphere. The Bank of Algeria ordered commercial banks to rapidly transition to digital operations and limit cash transactions to only "exceptional and justified" cases. Whilst the aim of this order was to establish greater transparency in financial transactions and somewhat reduce the informal economic sphere's reach, in practice, this directive provoked an immediate reaction from capital holders. The measure was withdrawn a fortnight later,

confirming the resilience of opaque circuits and money laundering practices. Technically, this directive placed operators in a position where immediate implementation was impossible. It acted without taking into account that cash constitutes the principal form of transaction, and electronic payments remain uncommon.

If this measure provoked a wave of protests, it is because those concerned — merchants, small and large businesses — judged this decision inapplicable and liable to "disrupt their daily activity"; economic activity based largely on informal and illegal practices that evade taxpayers. Faced with this "passive" resistance, the Bank of Algeria officially retreated and granted commercial banks a margin of appreciation based on assessing each client's "risks".

These two "corrective" measures clearly reflect the close link between fraudulent practices in financial transactions and the executive government component. This reinforces growing suspicion amongst public opinion.

On the "technical revision" of the Constitution

Added to these tensions are questions and another grey area following the announcement, at the end of 2025, of a "technical" constitutional revision, before it was postponed indefinitely. No information on the content and nature of this revision has been published except "the need to deepen the question" as official justification. This amplifies existing doubts and the feeling of institutional uncertainty in a country that has experienced multiple successive constitutional modifications for the benefit of regime perpetuity, or indeed the president. Voices on social media, in their capacity as unofficial pollsters, are already evoking "the necessity of extending the president's term", which is constitutionally limited to two. [\[4\]](#)

A faltering diplomacy... moderated sovereigntist discourse

At the international level, a change in diplomatic approach is notable. Contrary to a known tradition of firmness and reciprocity on questions of sovereignty and rejection of interference, the Tebboune/Chengriha [\[5\]](#) presidency has observed remarkable silence regarding the violent United States attack on Venezuela, an attack that undermines what remains of already-violated international legitimacy, notably in occupied Palestine. Similarly, on this latter question, or on the Syrian question and now on Iran, which is experiencing internal revolt and external interference, Algerian diplomacy remains timid or silent. What is placed in the register of "new realism" is in reality a remarkable shift distancing Algeria from the "axis of resistance", however formal it may be, to move closer to the imperialist axis of evil that is on the warpath.

Indeed, recent votes at the United Nations Security Council have forced Algeria into strategic abandonments, notably on Western Sahara [\[6\]](#) and the war in Gaza, pillars of its international action. These reversals have eroded the credibility of its ultra-nationalist discourse by sowing doubt about its sincerity and the regime's capacity to implement it. They have caused internal trouble and anxieties, rendered more acute by the fall in Syria of Bashar al-Assad, militarily victorious over his opponents but himself a victim of isolation and abandoned by the Russian ally — supposedly also Algeria's ally. An "ally" that had already preferred Ethiopia over Algeria for BRICS membership and had chosen to support Sahelian juntas hostile to Algeria.

These waverings contrast, however, with a more virulent tone towards Morocco, France and the United Arab Emirates. The latter have moved to the forefront of the media scene, in the context of a rebalancing of forces in the Gulf. Certain media, in their roles as "pollsters and opinion-makers", have openly questioned the possibility of a rupture in relations between Algeria and Abu Dhabi, at a moment when the Emirates are going through a delicate phase in their relations with Saudi Arabia.

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Each dossier, taken individually, seems to belong to different contexts. But their combination, coincidence and synchronisation revive questions about the regime's capacity to anticipate and resist the challenges introduced by the new global situation and new regional stakes. None of these facts constitutes a rupture in itself, but together they outline contours of a situation of waiting, where future decisions will be observed beyond triumphant presidential speeches.

An anti-national law to strip Algerian opponents of their nationality

It is, however, on the internal level where the repressive system, established since the end of the Hirak [7] to counter any hint of protest, is reinforced by other legal artifices beyond Article 87 bis. [8] This is the case with the latest law allowing "stripping of Algerian nationality by origin" voted unanimously by the Algerian National Assembly. A world first.

To justify this stripping, the law cites acts "threatening the security or unity of the State" and "participation, including financial or propagandist, in terrorist or subversive organisations abroad". Need we recall that hundreds of Algerians languish in prison under such elastic and vague accusations. In reality, through this law, the regime wants to extend repression to any dissenting voice, which de facto encompasses any form of critical political or activist expression, particularly expressed from abroad. For abroad is increasingly becoming the space where any criticism and opposition to power attempts to organise. This is a return to square one where, in the past, Aït Ahmed, Boudiaf or Mohammed Harbi, [9] to cite only the most emblematic, were obliged to go into exile without however being stripped of their nationality.

This recalls the German Nazi regime with its "denaturalisation" law as the first regime in the world to have dared to legislate on stripping nationality of origin, before being followed by similar regimes such as Vichy!

The alibi of a largely fabricated "external threat"

This law providing for nationality stripping, directly targeting binational opponents even when their Algerian nationality is by origin, whilst brandishing the "external threat", has as its primary function to conjure tensions within the regime through muscular nationalist discourse that will better facilitate acceptance of inevitable future concessions to real external injunctions. These are — or already have been — dictated to it by its impotence on the international level and its internal fragility.

The external threat is now embodied solely by the Movement for the Self-Determination of Kabylia (MAK). [10] The Islamists are no longer "dangerous", since their setbacks in the Middle East, notably with the retreat of Iran embodying the "axis of resistance" since its 1979 revolution. It is therefore necessary to give this ultra-minority movement, the MAK, an importance it does not possess to make it a scarecrow. This offers the opportunity to caricature and demonise protest expressions coming from Kabylia, the beating heart of contestation in Algeria, to discredit and neutralise them by conflating any contestatory political posture with this movement.

It is in this register that we must understand the implausible police arrest of our comrade Lyes Touati, member of the PST [11] leadership. Formally, he is accused of being an element of the pro-Zionist MAK and propagandist for the Kabylia self-determination project. Yet in fact, his positions, which everyone can read by following his writings on social media, are the complete opposite and a proven pro-Palestinian stance. It is in substance that this arbitrariness must be grasped. It is the policy of repression and arbitrary power vis-à-vis any opinion coming from the population and political organisations, which moreover remains expectant in terms of action, that persists and intensifies. [12]

But this repression, scorning all form and all political good sense, is not entirely blind, coming from a security power

known for its "professionalism" since the MALG [13] up to the security services that succeed in making and unmaking presidents.

Questions then arise:

Is this the excess of zeal and amateurism of local police? Possible! Indeed, Lyes Touati is considered a dangerous influencer. He has long been in the police's sights on various legal cases linked to his activism. But, beyond simple arbitrariness or local excess of zeal, in this type of situation, the "central" never or rarely disavows its local subordinates publicly. It lets things happen whilst washing its dirty linen quietly. From this point of view, local justice will go to the end of its logic, fearing the worst.

In any case, locally, there are enough points that can explain his arrest: he is someone who is genuinely an "influencer", notably on environmental questions. [14] His positions and actions have surely blocked certain local investors. This repressive climate fulfils its function well.

Every capital in crisis diverts peoples' attention by deploying a logic of internal purification. This political project is supported by a rhetoric of the internal enemy that must be eradicated, as one must treat a sick body. One must thus eliminate the "impurities" that parasitise the nation and prevent the liberation of its productive forces and cause its loss.

The neoliberal forces of underdeveloped countries largely incorporate the political ambitions of the historical far-right of advanced capitalist countries and progressively climb the ladder of nationalism and authoritarianism, translating into the development of surveillance, the hunting down of recalcitrants, the criminalisation of social movements, the restriction of civil rights and the deployment of constant anti-progressive rhetoric.

But the crisis that Algerian neoliberalism is experiencing is not solely economic in its difficulties in integrating and being integrated into the world market. It is above all ideological, a crisis of political representation, a crisis of political institutions and a crisis of mediation between the State and citizens. The Tebboune/Chengriha power creates a sort of state of exception where everything is permitted, to the point of absurdity. What counts is not the substance of accusations and ongoing trials. In Lyes Touati's case, it is the Kafkaesque arbitrariness that goes to the point of caricature.

On the strictly legal formal level, making the MAK and the "Kabyle danger" the spectre for incriminating any dissenting voice seems to be the leitmotiv of the repressive apparatus. For at the same moment, another PST activist, Samir Larabi, is forbidden from defending his doctoral thesis because he also deals with Kabylia and the MAK project. The link between the two incriminated individuals is developing a Marxist critique of Kabylia's weight on the political chessboard and in the country's political history. They develop a "Berbero-Marxist" critique, one might say! which brings us back to the treatment of the 1949 political crisis also qualified as "Berbero-Marxist". [15] With this game, drift is possible!

A bill to accentuate the regime's grip on political parties

The control exercised by the Algerian State over political life is tightening. To crown this repressive ensemble, an organic bill, adopted in the Council of Ministers at the end of 2025, will soon be examined by Parliament. It provides for toughening the conditions for creating and operating parties, whose room for manoeuvre is already restricted.

Presented as a "modernisation" of the legal framework and a means of rationalising a fragmented partisan

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landscape, the bill introduces, amongst other things, a limitation of party leaders' terms, which should not exceed two five-year terms. It also imposes compulsory electoral participation on political formations. It raises territorial representativeness thresholds and strengthens administrative control, considerably reducing their autonomy and further weakening partisan plurality.

Inscribed in the extension of the 2020 constitutional amendment — conceived by the regime in the wake of the 2019 Hirak to regain control over the political field — the text aims to transform militant and partisan engagement into an activity subject to permanent administrative constraint, where a party's survival depends on its strict obedience to rules dictated by the State.

Here then is an ensemble of political and legal facts and events that gives an overview of the Algerian regime's political purification project. A project that began after the Hirak and seems to be engaging for the long term, in the wake of the repressive arsenal being put in place at regional and global level.

4 February 2026

Translated by Mark Johnson for [ESSF](#).

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[1] On repression of social movements in Algeria, see "Algerian government uses Covid-19 lockdown to increase repression", Europe Solidaire Sans Frontières. Available at: <http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article52794>

[2] The Sahel is the semi-arid region stretching across Africa south of the Sahara, where several countries have experienced military coups since 2020, including Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger.

[3] BRICS is an intergovernmental organisation comprising Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, which has been expanding to include other emerging economies.

[4] On the 2019 presidential election and military control in Algeria, see "The Algerian people reiterate their rejection of military rule", Europe Solidaire Sans Frontières. Available at: <http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article71931>

[5] Abdelmadjid Tebboune has been President of Algeria since December 2019. Saïd Chengriha is Chief of Staff of the Algerian People's National Army since 2019 and a key figure in the military-backed regime.

[6] Western Sahara is a disputed territory in North Africa, largely controlled by Morocco but claimed by the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic. Algeria has historically supported Sahrawi independence.

[7] The Hirak ("Movement" in Arabic) refers to the mass protest movement that erupted in Algeria in February 2019 against President Bouteflika's bid for a fifth term. It continued until March 2020 when it was suspended due to COVID-19 restrictions. See Samir Larabi, "Algeria: Students Build Unity in Struggle", Europe Solidaire Sans Frontières. Available at: <https://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article53741>

[8] Article 87 bis of the Algerian Penal Code broadly defines terrorism and related offences. It has been criticised by human rights organisations for

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its vague wording, which allows authorities to criminalise peaceful dissent and political opposition.

[9] Hocine Aït Ahmed (1926–2015), Mohamed Boudiaf (1919–1992) and Mohammed Harbi (1933–2025) were prominent figures in Algeria's independence struggle who later went into exile due to their opposition to the post-independence regime. On Harbi's legacy, see Mahmoud Rechidi, "Mohammed Harbi left us yesterday", Europe Solidaire Sans Frontières, January 2026. Available at:

<https://europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article77773>

[10] The MAK (Mouvement pour l'autodétermination de la Kabylie) is a separatist movement founded in 2001 seeking independence for the Kabylia region. The Algerian government has designated it as a terrorist organisation. On Kabylia's political significance, see Shelagh Smith and Hamza Hamouchene, "Algeria: The Struggle in Kabylia", Europe Solidaire Sans Frontières. Available at:

<http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article53736>

[11] PST: Parti Socialiste des Travailleurs (Socialist Workers' Party), an anti-capitalist organisation in Algeria that has been administratively suspended since April 2022. See "Petition (Algeria) - For the immediate release of socialist activist Lyes Touati", Europe Solidaire Sans Frontières. Available at:

<http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article77411>

[12] On the persecution of Lyes Touati, see "Lyes sentenced to six months in prison in Algeria", Europe Solidaire Sans Frontières. Available at:

<http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article76562>; and "Algeria - Against arbitrariness and repression: Freedom for our comrade Lyes Touati!", Europe Solidaire Sans Frontières. Available at: <http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article77410>

[13] MALG: Ministère de l'Armement et des Liaisons Générales (Ministry of Armament and General Liaisons), the intelligence service of the FLN during the Algerian War of Independence (1954–1962), which formed the basis of post-independence Algerian intelligence services.

[14] On environmental activism and repression in Algeria, see "Algeria: Environmental alert is not a crime! It's a duty", Europe Solidaire Sans Frontières. Available at: <https://europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article68845>

[15] The "Berbero-Marxist crisis" of 1949 refers to a political crisis within the Algerian nationalist movement when several Kabyle militants were expelled from the MTLD (Mouvement pour le triomphe des libertés démocratiques) after being accused of promoting Berber identity claims alongside socialist ideas. This episode established a template for the regime's conflation of Berber identity claims with subversion.