

A L G E R I A

SECTION A

Capital

Algiers 1,483,000 (1987 est.)

Area

2,381,741 sq km (919,595 sq mi)

Form of government

Multiparty Republic with two legislative bodies

GDP—per capita

Purchasing power parity - \$4,700 (1999 est.)

Population

31,193,917 (July 2000 est.)

Ethnic composition

Arab	80%
Berber	19%
European (e.g. French, Jewish)	1%

Official language

Arabic (Modern Standard Arabic)

Other languages

Amazigh (Berber) languages:

- Chaouia (pronounced "shawiya") is spoken by about 1,400,000 Algerians
- Kabyle is spoken by about 8% of the population (1987 survey)

- Tamazight is an important Amazigh language, This name is inappropriately given by non-linguists to all Amazigh languages
- Others: Tachelhit, Tadaksahak, Tagargrent, Tamahaq, Hoggar (Touareg), Tarifit, Taznatit, Temacine Tamazight, Tidikelt Tamazight, Tumzabt,

French is still an important language both widely known and understood in Algeria. About 20% of the population is fully literate in French and even more speak it. The majority Berber (Amazigh)-speaking peoples in the region are bilingual in both the Arabic and Berber languages.

In all, there are 17 different languages listed for Algeria, including Algerian Sign Language for the deaf (according to the Ethnologue, Summer Institute of Linguistic 1996).

Legislation dealing with the use of languages

The Constitution of the Republic of Algeria, revised and approved by Referendum on November 28, 1996

The Algerian Arabisation Law (January 16, 1991), was amended on December 21, 1996; specifically Articles 11, 12, 18, 23, 32, and 36.

The law requires that Arabic be the official language and requires, under penalty of fines, that all official government business be conducted in Arabic. The law also requires that Arabic be used in all broadcasts of national television and radio for dubbing or subtitling all non-Arabic films, as well as for medical prescriptions and communications equipment.

Background notes

Independence was achieved from France on July 5, 1962. The Evian Accords, which were signed in 1962, gave Algeria immediate independence and French aid to help reconstruct the country.

The Constitution was approved on November 19, 1976, effective November 22, 1976. It was later revised on November 3, 1988, February 23, 1989, and November 28, 1996. Note: Referendum approving the revisions of November 28, 1996 was signed into law December 7, 1996. A new Constitution was approved by referendum in 1989 establishing a multi-party democracy. Algeria is the tenth largest country in the world, and its population is considered one of the youngest.

After independence, Algeria became a revolutionary “Islamic socialist” republic with the National Liberation Front (FLN) as the only legal

political party. In the 1960s and 1970s, it was a leader of the Third World and carried out ambitious economic and social planning policies to try and catapult Algeria into prosperity along socialist lines. In the 1980's, Chadli Benjadid attempted to move the country away from socialism through decentralization.

Algeria is undergoing its second bloody civil war in 40 years. The country which fought itself free of the French in the 1950s and 1960s in a war which cost two million lives and earned it admiration across the world is now wracked by bitter fighting between Islamic fundamentalists and military authorities. Over 60,000 people have died in the latest conflict. There are perhaps 30,000 Islamic guerrillas across the country and the army cannot end the war.

The violence has been gruesome and fiercely controversial. Not only soldiers but even secular intellectuals such as writers and journalists have had their throats cut in front of their families. There have been massacres in which almost entire villages have been slaughtered. In the information blackout that the authorities operate, it is hard to know who or what to believe. The Government says that these atrocities have been carried out by Islamic guerrillas who want to take Algeria back into the Dark Ages. Islamists claim that many of these atrocities were carried out by government forces that had penetrated the ranks of the guerrilla movement in order to discredit them. The only certainty is that all sides have much blood on their hands.

SECTION B

Where does one observe language to be a problem in the country?

ARABISATION

Algeria absorbed an extremely heavy colonial impact. The French controlled education, government, business, and most intellectual life for 132 years. Through a policy of cultural imperialism they attempted to suppress Algerian cultural identity and to remold the society along French lines. The effects of this policy, which continued to reverberate throughout Algeria after 1962, have perhaps been most evident in the legacy of a dual language system.

Beginning in the late 1960s, the government of President Houari Boumediene decided upon complete Arabization as a national goal and began the first steps to promote Arabic in the bureaucracy and in the schools. Arabization was introduced slowly in schools, starting with the primary schools in the social science and humanities subjects. Only in

the 1980s did Arabic begin to be introduced as the language of instruction in some grades and some subjects at the secondary level.

By the mid-1980s, Arabization had begun to produce some measurable results. In the primary schools, instruction was in literary Arabic. French was taught as a second language, beginning in the third year. At the secondary level, Arabization was conducted on a grade-by-grade basis. French remained the main language of instruction in the universities, despite the demands of Arabists. The “Berber Cultural Movement” was created as an opposition to the Arabization of the education system and the government bureaucracy.

Antagonistic sentiments between Berbers and the Algerian government became explosive in the “Tamazight Spring” of 1980. Riots were set off when a renowned Berber writer, Mouloud Mammeri, was barred by local Algerian authorities from giving a lecture on ancient Kabyle poetry at the University of Tizi Ouzou. The censoring of Mammeri provoked a strong reaction by the Berbers of the Kabyles, who accused the government of repressing Berber culture. Following the cancellation of Mammeri’s lecture, Berber students demonstrated in Algiers and throughout Kabylia, calling for freedom of expression and for recognition of the Berber language and culture. The protesters were violently dispersed by the police and a number of students were arrested. In Tizi Ouzou, students voted in favor of a strike and occupied the University. Berbers demanded recognition of Amazigh as a national language, respect for Berber culture, and greater attention to the economic development of Kabylie and other Berber homelands.

In a both ill timed and ill advised move the military backed government of President Liamine Zeroual made language, an important national identity tool, yet another cause of conflict. On July 5, 1998 the “Algerian Arabic Language Generalization Law” came into force, making Arabic the only language allowed in public life and banning any official use of French and the Berber language. Fury exploded in the Berber-speaking mountain region of Kabylia. As the law came into force, Kabylia was already showing signs of unrest following the killing of an immensely popular Berber singer, Lounes Matoub, on June 25. His wife and two sisters-in-law were wounded in the attack. Although most Algerians, Berbers and Arabs alike, believe that the singer, an outspoken secularist, was killed by GIS militants (an armed Islamic group), Berber anger swiftly turned against the state and its Arabisation policy. Protesters sacked government-owned shops and tore down Arabic signs. As tens of thousands of Kabyles poured into a mountain village for his burial, the divisions in Algerian society were never more obvious.

There is clear evidence of violation of linguistic human rights. Government policy in North Africa aims at the extinction of Berber as a language. While government policy in Western Europe does not provide speakers of Berber with any support. There is, therefore, a clear need for raising awareness in the political, scholarly, educational and media worlds, and for substantial policy measures to be introduced in Western Europe to remedy these violations.

The World Amazigh Congress, based in France, is an international non-governmental organization whose goal is to defend the fundamental rights of the Amazigh (Berber) nation. Alongside the Amazigh Cultural Movement it is determined to continue its fight until the Amazigh recover their identity as well as their linguistic and cultural rights.

Another non-governmental organization is the World Algeria Action Coalition (WAAC), which was incorporated on September 29, 1998. Its mission is to raise the international community's awareness of the economic, social, and political issues in Algeria and to enhance the appreciation of the country's rich culture and history. WAAC strives to present a balanced educational forum on the one hand, while offering a touch of home to Algerians abroad, on the other. It is a politically neutral organization, not offering support to any specific political party or ideology, other than the desire for peace, security, and dignity for all Algerians.

The use of language in everyday life e.g. education, broadcasting and other

ARABIC

Diglossia exists in the country due to the fact that two variants of Arabic are used for different purposes.

Modern Standard Arabic, a streamlined, modernized form of Classical Arabic (the language of the Koran, of poetry, and of other literature) is used in education, for official purposes, and for written communication within the Arabic-speaking international community. In contrast, Algerian colloquial Arabic is the language of spoken communication in informal settings, such as in the home, the work place, the market, and among friends and common acquaintances. There is also a spoken form of Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) that is used by educated persons for communication in semiformal situations, for example, in debates and interviews. Speech forms from the local vernacular often influence it.

Major cities, such as Algiers, Oran, and Constantine, are identified as centers of their own urban dialects. Linguistic differences between these communities are sufficiently large to create serious problems in

comprehension. Proficiency in Algerian colloquial Arabic does not always translate into proficiency in either Classical or MSA. An uneducated person who has had no experience with either will not understand it beyond a few words and common sayings.

AMAZIGH (BERBER) LANGUAGE

The Amazigh language is an oral language still in the process of being codified.

In Africa, Berber is not used in public services, the media or the administration of justice and is apparently not taught at any level of mainstream education subsidized by the State. After a boycott of formal education in Algeria lasting one year, some experimental use of Berber has been allowed, but in such a way that it is marginalized in mainstream education. There are however, professorships in the Amazigh culture at the University of Tizi Ouzou. The government-owned national television station broadcasts a brief nightly news program in the Amazigh language.

Berber speakers in France, 1 million of whom are French citizens, have petitioned the French Government to have Berber recognized as a language entitled to recognition under the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.

SECTION C

Legislation dealing with the use of languages

Updated (April 2002)

On March 12, 2002 the Algerian president Abdelaziz Bouteflika announced a constitutional amendment according to which the Tamazight language will be, along with Arabic, an official language in the country.

Tamazight, the language of the Berber population, is spoken by 9 million Algerian citizens (out of 30), mainly in the region of Kabyle. Throughout the last decades claims have been made from Berber region for a major respect and recognition of their culture.

Where does one observe language to be a problem in the country?

Updated (August 2001)

In April 2001, the tragic events aroused again in the region of Kabylia. The riots sparked by the police's aggressive response to pro-Berber demonstrations, demanding acknowledgement of the Amazigh language and culture, and later also by the death of a student in the police custody. General peaceful strike, which has been called by "Cultural Berber Movement", has started on April 20, 2001 as a result of build-up years of frustration, betrayal and also as a response to the President Bouteflika's refusal to recognize officially the Amazigh language. The people living in this region were not only frustrated from the high unemployment rate, the shortage of housing, the deteriorating social conditions, which affect Algerians throughout the country, but also by the issue of identity and recognition of the Tamazight language.

The violations spread through the other cities and places in northeast of Algeria caused that hundreds of people have been killed and thousands wounded.

On May 2, 2001 the President issued a public appeal to end the violence and to promote dialogue and consensus building. An independent National Commission of Enquiry was set up to provide investigations on the events. According to the preliminary report of the commission the Berber demonstrators were not the original aggressors but "those responsible" remain to be identified.

The demands in the Kabylia region (as dismissal of the gendarmes and the replacement with the local police, the end to the corruption, fair distribution of hydrocarbon profits and Tamazight as an official language) have not been met and they require an overhaul of the entire system.

Updated (October 2001)

At the beginning of October, Algerian President Bouteflika announced that Tamazight would be a national language of Algeria. According to his statement, the President decided the "constitutionalization of Tamazight as national language at the time of the next amendment to the Constitution." The announcement arrived about a month after creation of the Movement for the Autonomy of Kabylia.

"While some perceive this announcement as a step forward, nationalizing the language constitutionally does not necessitate any de facto changes. The people of Kabylia and the Amazigh movement have been demanding

Tamazight to be national and official language. Without official status, there is no guarantee that Tamazight will be allowed to be more than the neglected and oppressed stepsibling of the officially imposed Arabic language. However, nothing has been said of allocating funds for Tamazight, of accrediting classes in the language, of demanding that courts provide translators for non-Arabic-speaking Tamazighophones (this particularly affects women, who have a high illiteracy rate in Algeria). Nationalizing the language does not ensure that Tamazight will be allowed to move from the realm of “traditional” to that of modern, progressive, and utilitarian. It should be noted that while the government radio channel 2 broadcasts in Kabyle Tamazight, modern terms are in formal Arabic and thus Tamazight is being restrained from using its modern lexicon.” (<http://www.waac.org/>)

APPENDIX A

MAP OF ALGERIA



APPENDIX B

ALGERIA - CONSTITUTION

(Adopted on November 19, 1976)

(Revised Constitution approved by the Referendum of November 28, 1996)

GENERAL PRINCIPLES GOVERNING THE ALGERIAN SOCIETY

CHAPTER I

Article 3

Arabic is the national and official language.

Note: Translation undertaken by the services of the Direction of Documentation of the Constitutional Council, 9, Rue Abou Nouas, Hydra Algiers, Algeria

THE LAW NO. 91 - 05 FROM JANUARY 1991 ON THE GENERALISATION OF THE USE OF ARABIC LANGUAGE,

The President of the Republic,

Promulgates the law with the following content:

CLAUSE I

GENERAL

Article 1

The present law is intended to specify the general rules of the use, the promotion and the protection of the Arabic language in different areas of nation's life.

Article 2

The Arabic language is an authentic component of the national identity and a constant of the nation.

Its use conveys the national sovereignty aspect. The language is used publicly.

Article 3

All institutions must endeavour to promote and protect the Arabic language and must care of cleanness and good use.

It is forbidden to transcript the Arabic language in any other alphabet than Arabic.

CLAUSE II

AREA OF APPLICATION

Article 4

Public administration, all institutions, enterprises and associations of any kind shall use only the Arabic language in all their activities, such as communication, administration and financial, technical and arts management.

Article 5

All official documents, reports and statements issued by public administration, institutions, enterprises and associations shall be written in the Arabic language. The use of any other foreign language during negotiations and official meeting discussions is forbidden.

Article 6

All acts shall exclusively be written in the Arabic language.

No act may be written nor issued if it is written in any other language than Arabic.

Article 7

Requests, consultations and all pleas in jurisdictions are made in the Arabic language.

Court resolutions and judgements, statements and decisions of the Constitutional Council and national audit offices shall be expressed or issued in the Arabic language.

Article 8

All recruitment for positions in public administration and enterprises shall be carried out in the Arabic language.

Article 9

Educational programmes, national seminars and all professional training, as well as all public manifestations shall be carried out in the Arabic language.

Foreign languages can exceptionally be used hand in hand with the Arabic language at international conferences, meetings and manifestations.

Article 10

Seals, stamps and official signs of public institutions, administration and enterprises shall exclusively be made in the Arabic language.

Article 11

All correspondence of administration, institutions and enterprises shall exclusively be written in the Arabic language.

Article 12

Relations between local administration, institutions, enterprises and associations with any foreign counterpart shall be held in the Arabic language only. Treaties and conventions are adopted in the Arabic language.

Article 13

The official newspapers of the Democratic and People's Republic of Algeria shall exclusively be edited in the Arabic language.

Article 14

The official government journal of debates at the People's National Assembly shall be published in the Arabic language.

Article 15

Teaching, educational and training courses in all sectors and areas shall be held in the Arabic language except for teaching foreign languages.

Article 16

Under the conditions stated in the article 13 of this law, all news, aimed to inform citizens, shall be broadcast in the Arabic language. Specific information or information directed to foreign countries can be broadcast in foreign languages.

Article 17

Cinema and/or video films as well as cultural and scientific broadcasting shall be distributed or translated or dubbed in the Arabic language.

Article 18

Subject to compliance to the measures of the law about information broadcasting, all official statements, interventions, conferences as well as any other television broadcasting shall be distributed in the Arabic language. If originally published in any other language, they must be translated.

Article 19

All advertisements shall be produced in the Arabic language

The use of foreign languages can exceptionally be allowed, provided that it will be used in parallel with the Arabic language, when permission to do so is obtained from competent authorities.

Article 20

Subject to regulations on aesthetic transcription and correct expression, signs, boards, slogans, symbols, billboards and any other form of luminous, engraved or embossed writings indicating an establishment, an organisation, an enterprise or a local and/or mentioning the business therein undertaken, shall be produced in the Arabic language.

Foreign language can be used in parallel to the Arabic language in specified tourist sites.

Article 21

All documents, hard prints, packages and cans with technical instructions, user guides and compositions notably for:

- pharmaceutical products
- chemical products

- dangerous products
- rescue equipment and fire and disaster fighting equipment,

shall be printed in the Arabic language and other foreign languages under the condition that the Arabic language is emphasised.

Article 22

Names and labels of products, goods, services and any other merchandise, imported or traded in Algeria, shall be in Arabic language.

Foreign languages can be used as complementary languages.

CLAUSE III

EXECUTIVE, SUPERVISORY AND SUPPORTING BODIES

Article 23

Under the leadership of the head of the state, a national executive body in charge of supervision and implementation of this law shall be created.

Its foundation and operation shall conform to commonly adopted principles.

Article 24

At the annual national debate of the People's National Assembly, the government shall present a detailed report on the process of the Arabic language generalisation and promotion.

Article 25

Limited to their prerogatives, elected assembly members and members of associations will watch and supervise over the generalisation and good use of the Arabic language.

Article 26

The Algerian Academy of Languages shall supervise over the enrichment and promotion of the Arabic language.

Article 27

A national centre shall be founded to:

- generalise the use of the Arabic language by all available modern means.
- translate scientific and technological research documents published in foreign languages and ensure their publishing in Arabic,
- translate official documents at request,
- ensure that scientific, cultural and documentary films are dubbed,
- put into practise theoretical research of the Algerian Academy of the Arabic Language and other Arabic institutions.

Article 28

The State shall award the best scientific research accomplished in the Arabic language.

The execution of this article shall further be specified by a special legal procedure.

CLAUSE IV

PENALTIES

Article 29

All official documents, issued in another language than Arabic, are void and with no effect.

The author of the document and anyone, who is responsible of legalising it, bears entire responsibility and the following consequences.

Article 30

Any violation of this law constitutes a grave wrong doing that can lead to disciplinary sanctions.

Article 31

Any violation of the articles 17, 18, 19, 20, 21 and 22 shall penalised by a fine ranging from DA 5,000 to 10,000.

Article 32

While exercising official functions, everyone who signs an official document issued in another language than Arabic, may be punished by a fine of DA 1,000 to 5,000.

However, it is possible to sign translated documents that can be used internationally.

Article 33

Directors of private enterprises, businessmen and craftsmen who have violated the articles of this law may be punished with a fine ranging from DA 5,000 to 10,000.

In case of a second offence, businesses or enterprises shall be closed temporarily or definitely.

Article 34

Political associations violating this law, shall be punished with a fine ranging from DA 10,000 to 100,000.

In case of a second offence, the disposition of the article 33 of the law No. 89-11 dated 5th July 1898 referring to political associations shall be applied.

Article 35

Any person, who has a material or moral interest in the application of the present law, may seek a recourse with administrative authorities or a justice process against any act that may be contrary to the articles of this law.

CLAUSE VI

TRANSITIONAL ARTICLES

Article 36

The law comes into force immediately after its publishing no later than on July the 5th 1992.

Article 37

Teaching in the Arabic language at schools and high schools shall come into effect first from the university year 1991/1992 and shall continue until its complete and definitive establishment, no later than on July the 5th 1994.

Article 38

All reports, analyses and medical prescriptions shall be written in the Arabic language.

However, exceptionally, reports may be written in a foreign language, before the completion of the arabisation process of medical and pharmaceutical sciences.

Article 39

Import of computer equipment, telex and other printing machines that does not allow printing of Arabic characters is forbidden.

CLAUSE VI

FINAL ARTICLES

Article 40

All articles of the regulation n° 68-92 dated April 1968 on the obligation of the knowledge of the Arabic language by all civil servants and employees are abrogated, as well as the regulation n° 73-55 dated October the 1st 1973 on the arabisation of national seals and any other legal regulations except for the present law.

Article 41

The present law will be published in the official government journal of the Democratic and People's Republic of Algeria.

Issued in Alger, January the 16th 1991

Chadli BENDJEDID

REGULATION NO. 96-30 DATED DECEMBER 21, WHICH MODIFIES AND COMPLETES THE LAW NO. 91-05 DATED JANUARY 16, 1991 ABOUT THE GENERALISATION OF THE USE OF THE ARABIC LANGUAGE.

Article 11

All communication and correspondence of administration and enterprises shall be carried out in the Arabic language.

However, communication between administration and associations and foreign partners may be carried out in accordance with international regulations

Article 12

Under regulations required by international usage, all treaties and conventions are settled in the Arabic language.

Article 18

All official statements, interventions, conferences and television broadcasting must be done in the Arabic language. They must be translated into the Arabic language if they have been produced in foreign languages.

Article 23

High Council of the Arabic language is founded under the leadership of the President of the Republic. The Council shall be in charge of:

- supervision over the execution of this law and any other laws seeking the generalisation of the use of the Arabic language, its protection, promotion and development
- co-ordination of all activities executed by different authorities in charge of the supervision over the generalisation process, and the language promotion and development
- evaluation of the performance of authorities in charge of the generalisation process, the language promotion and development
- assessment of opportunities for planning some special educational issues at high schools specified in the article 7 that modifies and completes the article 36 paragraph 2
- presentation of an annual report to the President of the Republic about the generalisation process

Other prerogatives may be predicted in case of a presidential decree.

Article 32

Conforming with regulations stated in the article 2 and 3 that modifies and completes articles 11 and 12 of the present regulation, while or during the exercising of official functions, everyone who signs an official document issued in another language than Arabic shall be punished by a fine of DA 1,000 to 5.000.

In case of a second offence, the fine will be doubled.

Article 36

Articles of the present regulation are applicable as soon as they are promulgated.

Note: We acknowledge with thanks data from Ms Blanca Madani, the founder of the World Algeria Action Coalition

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