



SUPPORTING
AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT
FOR CIVIL SOCIETY

Enabling Environment Snapshot Algeria June 2025

Context

Since the end of the Hirak movement (2019-2021), Algeria has been going through a period marked by democratic regression, [increased repression of civil society](#) and persistent socio-economic tensions. Algeria is governed by a [Constitution](#) adopted in November 2020, which maintains a strong presidential regime. President Abdelmadjid Tebboune [was re-elected](#) on 7 September 2024 with 84.3% of the vote, according to the Constitutional Court. However, the election was marred by controversy: an official turnout of 46.1% was disputed by observers and candidates, with some believing that the actual turnout was less than 25%. Allegations of fraud, pressure on election officials and manipulation of the results were raised, notably by opposition candidates Abdelaali Hassani Cherif and Youcef Aouchiche, as well as by Tebboune himself.

The authorities stepped up their repression of activists, journalists and political opponents. In April 2025, Amnesty International [denounced](#) the increased repression of dissenting voices, particularly online, in the run-up to the sixth anniversary of the Hirak. Freedom House rated Algeria as ["not free"](#) in 2025, with an overall score of 31/100 (10/40 for political rights and 21/60 for civil liberties). The Algerian economy grew by 3.9% in the first half of 2024, supported by agriculture and stable food prices. Inflation [fell to 4.3%](#) in the first nine months of 2024, after reaching 9.3% in 2022 and 2023. GDP at purchasing power parity is [estimated](#) at \$822 billion in 2024. However, social tensions persist. In February 2025, teachers staged a [two-day national strike](#) to protest against low salaries and poor working conditions, following student protests against outdated curricula and costly additional tuition fees. Algeria is ranked among authoritarian regimes in the [2024 Democracy Index](#). This [ranking](#) reflects significant deficiencies in key areas such as electoral pluralism, government functioning, political participation, political culture and civil liberties. Behind the façade of institutional political stability, Algeria is experiencing an authoritarian drift, a spectacular decline in freedoms, a weakening of the rule of law and an unstable socio-economic climate. International data corroborate a worrying deterioration in the democratic fabric, despite the efforts of a civil society that is still active, often in an informal setting and [subject to transnational repression](#).

1. Respect and protection of fundamental freedoms

The Algerian [Constitution](#) of 30 December 2020 guarantees fundamental freedoms. Article 51 states that "freedom of opinion is inviolable", article 52 that "freedom of expression is guaranteed", and article 53 that "the right to create associations is guaranteed. It may be exercised by simple declaration". In theory, these provisions lay the foundations for an open and pluralist civic space. In practice, however, the exercise of these rights remains very [limited](#). In 2024, Algeria [scored](#) 31 out of 100 in the CIVICUS Monitor ranking, placing it in the category of countries where civic space is considered "repressed". This ranking reflects severe restrictions on the freedoms of association, expression and peaceful assembly, notably through the arrest of journalists and writers, and the adoption of new criminal laws reinforcing the repressive climate.

[Article 87 bis](#)', introduced by Ordinance 21-08 of 8 June 2021, excessively broadens the definition of terrorism to include acts such as "changing the system of governance by unconventional means". This provision makes it possible to prosecute civil society actors for mere political opinions or peaceful protest actions. It has frequently been used against activists, [journalists](#) and human rights [defenders](#). In addition, [Article 95 bis](#) of Law 20-06 of 28 April 2020 amending and supplementing Ordinance 66-156 of 8 June 1966 on the Criminal Code makes it a criminal offence to receive foreign funding or support when it is considered likely to undermine State security. These legal provisions have been used to prosecute and imprison people expressing critical opinions: for example, journalist Mustapha Bendjama and researcher Raouf Farrah were [imprisoned](#) for "receiving funds to commit acts undermining State security" and "publishing classified information on electronic networks".

In April 2025, [a draft law](#) on general mobilisation, adopted by the Council of Ministers and currently being [examined](#) by the National People's Assembly, requires all citizens and institutions to participate in the war effort in the event of a serious threat to national security. It also provides for the requisitioning of persons, goods and services, and the mobilisation of the armed forces. Failure to comply with these obligations is punishable by up to ten years' imprisonment and a fine of one million dinars (article 59). In addition to its security implications, this bill could be used as a lever to further restrict freedoms of association, assembly and expression. Under the guise of "security", demonstrations or advocacy campaigns could be banned or criminalised, thereby reinforcing the closure of an already severely restricted civic space.

These laws, applied without sufficient guarantees of transparency and fair appeal, have the effect of considerably [restricting](#) civic space in Algeria. They contradict not only proclaimed constitutional principles, but also the country's international human rights obligations, in particular those arising from the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which the country ratified in 1989. The United Nations Human Rights Committee has reiterated on several occasions that States may not invoke national security grounds to arbitrarily restrict freedom of expression or criminalise civil society, and reform of these texts is an essential condition for guaranteeing a safe, free and pluralist environment for civil society actors.

2. Supportive legal framework for the work of civil society actors

The right of association in Algeria is governed by [Law 12-06](#) of 12 January 2012 on associations. Unlike a declaratory system, the creation of an association is subject to prior authorisation from the administration, which must either issue a registration receipt with the value of approval, or notify a refusal (Article 8). Although this legislation codifies an administrative practice that is already widely applied, it further strengthens the discretionary power of the authorities and does not guarantee [independent and impartial](#) regulation of associations.

In 2024, the Algerian authorities [began](#) examining [a draft organic law](#) intended to replace law 12-06. Although this draft law refers to article 53 of the 2020 Constitution, which enshrines a

declaratory system, it actually introduces additional restrictions, strengthening State control over the civil society sector. In addition, recent [amendments](#) to the Criminal Code have considerably broadened the scope of criminalisation of activism. [Ordinance no. 21-08 of 8 June 2021](#) broadened and supplemented article [87 bis](#) with articles 87 bis 13 and 14. These two provisions equate certain forms of peaceful activism with acts of terrorism.

[Article 95 bis](#) of Law 20-06 of 28 April 2020 makes undeclared foreign financing a criminal offence. Other provisions have been introduced, most recently [the amendment of the Criminal Code](#) in April 2024. Articles such as [Article 79](#) on "undermining the integrity of the national territory", [Article 96](#) on "distributing leaflets undermining the national interest", Article [144](#) on "insulting a public official", and [Article 196 bis](#) on "disseminating false information", are also used to [repress](#) critical [expression](#) and restrict the activities of journalists and human rights defenders. These laws, combined with the absence of mechanisms for institutional dialogue, seriously hamper the work of NGOs.

3. Accessible and sustainable resources

Law 12-06 of 12 January 2012 on associations in Algeria strictly regulates foreign funding of civil society organisations. Under Article 30 of this law, it is forbidden for any association to receive funds from foreign legations or non-governmental organisations without the prior agreement of the competent authority. The purpose of this provision is to make all foreign funding subject to administrative authorisation, which may hinder the operation of associations. In addition, article 43 of the same law provides that any association that receives foreign funds without authorisation may be dissolved. This measure strengthens State control over the resources of associations and may limit their financial autonomy.

[Article 95 bis of the Algerian Penal Code](#) , introduced by Law 20-06 of 28 April 2020, criminalises the receipt of foreign funds for activities perceived as undermining State security, national unity or public order. This provision has been used to prosecute civil society actors, including journalist Mustapha Bendjama and researcher Raouf Farrah, who were [sentenced](#) in August 2023 to two years in prison for receiving funds deemed suspicious.

Against this backdrop, Algerian civil society operates in an environment marked by financial insecurity, legal instability and political stigmatisation. The lack of a structured, equitable and protective framework in terms of resources is a major obstacle to the autonomy, participation and professionalisation of the associative fabric.

There are national subsidies granted by the public authorities (such as the Ministry of the Interior and the people's assemblies of the communes and wilayas (governorates)). However, this funding is granted within a restricted framework, reserved for approved associations, and is often granted on the basis of a political assessment. There is foreign funding, such as programmes from the European Union, the United Nations and certain embassies such as the Dutch embassy. These programmes are thematic (environment, culture, society, agricultural development) and focus on projects approved by the Algerian government. Civil society involved in the defence and promotion of human rights, with the exception of women's and children's rights, is seen as potentially disruptive. There are still foreign grants that are not part

of official programmes, but they require prior authorisation from the Ministry of the Interior, as they risk being considered as interference activities.

USAID does not currently provide direct support to civil society in Algeria. However, according to the [official website](#), Algeria has received USAID assistance through programmes such as the World Food Programme and initiatives related to disaster prevention and preparedness.

4. State openness and responsiveness

Dialogue between the public authorities and civil society organisations remains extremely limited. The authorities [rarely](#) engage in consultations with independent organisations and [systematically](#) refuse to recognise non-accredited associations as valid interlocutors, even when they are continuously active and recognised in their field. This accreditation requirement, imposed by law 12-06, effectively [excludes](#) a large number of organisations from public debate, particularly those defending human rights, the environment or minority rights.

The National Council for Human Rights ([CNDH](#)), a body that is supposed to play a mediating role between civil society and the State, [suffers](#) from a lack of independence and credibility. In January 2025, Ms Lawlor, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, [recommended](#) that the Algerian National Council for Human Rights (CNDH) be strengthened to play a more active and independent role in the protection of human rights. She stressed the importance of ensuring that the CNDH complies with the Paris Principles, which define international standards for national human rights institutions, in order to guarantee their effectiveness, independence and plurality.

This institutional closure prevents the emergence of a climate of trust between the State and civil society and deprives public policies of the expertise and social roots that associations can offer. A formal framework for consultation between public institutions and associations must be put in place to ensure structured, inclusive and regular dialogue. The current absence of such a mechanism is a major shortcoming, and its creation would represent an essential step in any democratic reform aimed at strengthening citizen participation and the legitimacy of public policies.

5. Political Culture and Public Discourses on Civil Society

In Algeria, the dominant official and media discourse tends to [discredit](#) civil society organisations. Far from being seen as partners in development or human rights, they are often portrayed as being [instrumentalised](#) by foreign forces or driven by intentions hostile to the State.

This rhetoric stigmatises any form of criticism or autonomous engagement, particularly when associations tackle sensitive issues such as human rights, governance, individual freedoms or social justice. In this climate, associations are suspected of undermining national sovereignty or the unity of the country, which justifies their [marginalisation](#) or repression.

Emblematic organisations such as [the Ligue Algérienne pour la Défense des Droits de l'Homme](#) (LADDH), which was dissolved in 2022, and the [Rassemblement Action Jeunesse \(RAJ\)](#), which was very active during the Hirak movement, have been particularly targeted by this dynamic. Wrongly accused of inciting subversion, these organisations were subjected to legal proceedings, defamation campaigns and administrative restrictions, sometimes without any clear legal basis.

The concentration of state advertising resources in the hands of media aligned with the government, through bodies such as the National Publishing and Advertising Agency ([ANEP](#)), reinforces the political hierarchy of information, [marginalising](#) critical and independent voices.

The dominant discourse thus contributes to restricting civic space and isolating independent initiatives, in contradiction with the constitutional principles guaranteeing freedom of expression, association and assembly.

6. Access to a secure digital environment

Civil society organisations in Algeria operate in a digital environment marked by insecurity, surveillance and a lack of institutional protection. The use of information technologies is strictly regulated by [Law 20-05 of 28 April 2020](#) on preventing and combating discrimination and hate speech. This broadly worded legislation is frequently used to prosecute activists on the basis of online publications, including opinions expressed peacefully. For example, on 21 May 2025, the Algiers Court of Justice upheld the conviction of [Fathi Gheres and Messaouda Chebala](#), former coordinators of the Mouvement Démocratique et Social (MD), a political party whose activities had been frozen by court order, and sentenced them to imprisonment without a committal order. They were accused of disseminating hate speech because of their political opinions. On 17 November 2024, the Bainem court in Algiers convicted the human rights defender and the political activist from the same party. [Yacine Mekireche](#) was sentenced to six months' imprisonment on the same charges. He was released after serving six months in prison. On 16 February 2025, the Ouargla court sentenced activist [Abla Kemari](#) to three years' imprisonment, suspended for one year, and a fine of 300,000 Algerian dinars (€2,079). She was accused of "offending the President" and "inciting hatred and discrimination".

Social networks have become [closely monitored](#) spaces where any public criticism can lead to [criminal prosecution](#). Human rights defenders, journalists and members of associations have been prosecuted for "disseminating false information", "disturbing public order" or "inciting unauthorised gatherings", often simply for sharing content. Voluntary organisations also lack the technical and financial resources to secure their digital communications, databases and working tools. There are no public programmes to support cyber security in the voluntary sector or to build capacity in data protection or digital risk training.

Internet access remains unstable. [Targeted interruptions](#) have been observed, particularly during demonstrations or elections, which considerably limits [freedom of expression](#) online and the possibility of collective coordination. This repressive digital environment seriously [compromises the](#) exercise of civic rights in the digital space, which has become essential for mobilisation, information and citizen participation.

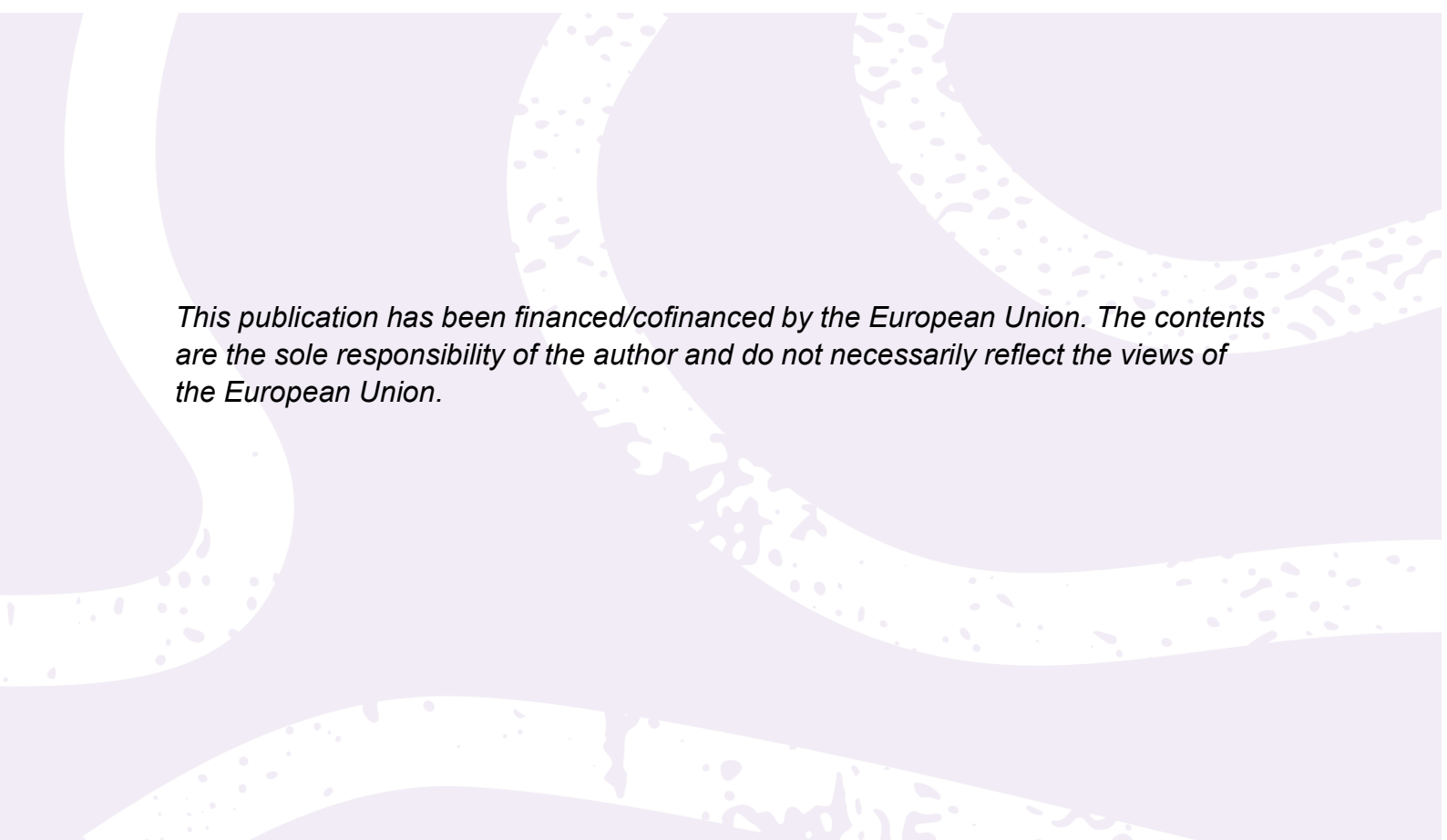
Challenges and opportunities

Algerian civil society will continue to face severe restrictions, largely due to a repressive legislative framework and its arbitrary application. Law 12-06 of 2012, based on a system of prior authorisation, severely restricts freedom of association, despite Article 53 of the 2020 Constitution enshrining this right. No reform has been undertaken to bring this law into line with international standards. Worse still, a new draft law on associations, currently in preparation, is raising serious concerns. Available information indicates that it could further strengthen state control mechanisms, restrict access to foreign funding and further exclude independent associations, particularly those working in the field of human rights. Far from correcting the current excesses, this draft could institutionalise even more rigid surveillance of civil society.

In the same vein, the reform of the code of criminal procedure proposed by the government would extend the powers of preventive detention and weaken judicial guarantees, which could make it easier to criminalise the actions of associations and activists. At the same time, the General Mobilisation Bill, under discussion since 2024, contains vague provisions that would authorise the requisitioning of citizens and civilian resources in times of "crisis", opening the door to abuses against critical or organised players under the guise of national security. Added to this are the existing provisions of the Criminal Code, notably article 87 bis, which equates certain forms of peaceful activism with terrorist acts, and article 95 bis, which criminalises undeclared foreign funding. These legal tools are regularly used against human rights organisations, women's groups, migrant defenders and minorities.

Despite this hostile climate, some opportunities remain. International mechanisms such as United Nations bodies and special procedures still offer opportunities for recourse and advocacy. Regional networks such as EuroMed Rights, AfricanDefenders and CIVICUS also help to relay Algerian demands at international level. At the same time, citizen mobilisation, although weakened, remains alive on social networks, and several unrecognised associations continue their activities thanks to their expertise and external support. This dynamic, albeit limited, enables a minimal citizen presence to be maintained and prepares the ground for the reforms to come.

To sum up, the coming period will be critical for freedom of association, in the face of unprecedented legislative tightening. However, regional solidarity, international instruments and the resilience of those working on the ground still allow civil society to take action.

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This publication has been financed/cofinanced by the European Union. The contents are the sole responsibility of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.

