Algeria: Crime situation, including organized crime; police and state response, including effectiveness; state protection for witnesses and victims of crime (2009-September 2012)

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1. Crime

According to the 2012 US Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC) report for Algeria, "[t]errorist threats posed by al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb continue to dominate security concerns and media reporting" (16 Feb. 2012, 1). Meanwhile, the OSAC reports that according to "embassy observation," the frequency and intensity of street crime in Algeria is considered "moderate" (ibid., 1, 7).

The OSAC report indicates that kidnapping by both criminals and terrorist organizations is a "common occurrence," though kidnapping by terrorist organizations is an "immediate threat" in the Sahara region of South Algeria (US 16 Feb. 2012, 5). The report indicates that criminals and terrorists use false checkpoints as a tactic for kidnappings, especially in rural areas (ibid., 1). The US Department of State's Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2011 for Algeria indicates that, according to government officials, 177 kidnappings were reported in 2010 (ibid. 24 May 2012, 3).

2. Organized Crime
Sources cite the Algerian president as saying, during the opening of the [translation] "judicial year," that "organized crime is becoming more and more serious" (Le Soir d'Algérie 30 Oct. 2010; Le Midi libre 30 Oct. 2010). According to media sources, the events in neighbouring countries are likely to contribute to the strengthening of organized crime in Algeria (Algérie 1 5 Apr. 2011; Le Jour d'Algérie 14 June 2012). A report by Le Jour d'Algérie, a national newspaper, indicates that security problems in Libya, Tunisia, Mali and Egypt have favoured the growth of organized crime in Algeria (ibid.).

2.1 Trafficking

According to the US 2012 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report (INCSR) for Algeria, the country is a transit point for drugs transported from Morocco and South America into Europe, and authorities are concerned with the increasing connections between al Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb and drug traffickers (US 7 Mar. 2012). The report cites press articles indicating that hashish is trafficked from Morocco to Europe and other Arab countries via Algeria, given the "lawlessness" at some of Algeria's borders (ibid.). Le Jour d'Algérie cites investigations undertaken by the National Gendarmerie (Gendarmerie nationale, GN) who have identified criminal organizations loading hashish in stolen vehicles from Europe in Morocco, driving them to Algeria, and then sending the drug to Libya, Mali, Lebanon, Israel, Europe and Jordan (14 June 2012). The OSAC report points out that the number of drug seizures increased in 2011, especially seizures of hashish (also referred to as "kif" in Algeria) (US 16 Feb. 2012, 6).

Midi libre, a national newspaper, reports the growing problem of fuel trafficking by organized crime in Algeria (Midi libre 8 July 2012). According to the article, an estimated five million litres are trafficked each year in Morocco (ibid.). The article adds that in the wilaya of Tébessa, the GN is seizing [translation] "hundreds of millions of litres of gas" each year (ibid.). The source reports that according to security forces, some fuel smugglers from Libya are paying smugglers from Algeria with gold bars (ibid.). It also indicates that the hike in oil prices in Morocco has made smugglers more interested in Algerian fuel (ibid.). Additional information on fuel trafficking could not be found by the Research Directorate among the sources consulted within the time constraints of this Response.

Liberté, an Algiers-based newspaper, reports the detention of seven people involved in the trafficking of 680 grams of mercury, which is classified as a [translation] "sensible material" for its use in the manufacturing of "artisanal" bombs (23 Feb. 2012). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

Concerning trafficking in persons, the US Trafficking in Persons Report 2012 for Algeria indicates that the country is a transit and, to a lesser extent, a destination and source of trafficked persons (US 19 June 2012, 65). The report points out that women from Sub-Saharan countries who, with the assistance of smugglers, enter voluntarily but illegally into Algeria, can be "forced into prostitution," notably by leaders of "non-Algerian ethnic enclaves" in and around the Southern city of Tamanrasset (ibid.). The same source indicates that sub-Saharan migrants can be forced to work in Algeria as domestic workers (ibid.). The report also cites civil society groups as saying that as Europe tightens its borders, Algeria is "increasingly becoming a destination for both undocumented migration and trafficking" (ibid.). Corroborating information could not be found by the Research Directorate among the sources consulted within the time constraints of this Response.

3. State Response

The 2011 Corruption Perceptions Index published by Transparency International (TI) ranks Algeria in 12th place out of 182 countries (TI 1 Dec. 2011). According to Freedom House, the judiciary in Algeria is "susceptible to government pressure" (2012). The US Country Reports 2011 also notes the lack of independence of the judiciary, and that impunity of security forces and police remained a problem (US 24 May 2012, 6-8). In addition, according to the US Country Reports 2011, there is "widespread corruption" and "limited government transparency" (ibid., 1-2).

3.1 Crime

Algérie 1, an Algerian news source, reports that, according to a report by the General Directorate of National Security (Direction générale de la sûreté nationale, DGSN), in February of 2012, a total of 74,647 people throughout the country were questioned by police, arrest warrants were used for 605 of them, 2,118 were questioned about offences such as drug consumption or public intoxication, and 2,723 were [translation] "referred to competent public prosecutors" (Algérie 1 25 Mar. 2012). For the month of June 2012, Radio Algérienne reports the following DGSN information: 78,692 people were questioned with 1,323 of them sent to [translation] "provisional detention" (Radio Algérienne 1 Aug. 2012). The report also indicates that out of the total number of people questioned, the police detained:

- 615 for drug consumption,
• 344 for carrying a prohibited weapon,
• 80 for [translation] "illegal" immigration, and
• 841 for other offenses such as public disturbance, theft, and selling of alcoholic beverages without authorization (ibid.).

El Moudjahid, an Algiers-based newspaper, cites a DGSN report that indicates that in the month of July 2012, around 2,600 people were detained in 17,459 police operations throughout the country (22 Aug. 2012).

3.2 Organized Crime

The US INCSR report for 2011 indicates that the Algerian government has increased enforcement personnel, enhanced their training, and provided them with more equipment (US 7 Mar. 2012). The report also indicates that from January to September 2011, 140 drug trafficking networks were dismantled and over 38,000 kilograms of drugs were seized (ibid.). However, the report also indicates that statistics provided by the government are "occasionally at odds" with open source reporting and cannot be verified (ibid.). According to Le Jour d'Algérie, nearly 60 tons of drugs were seized at the North West border with Morocco from January to May 2012 (14 June 2012). The Algerian Press Service (Algérie Presse Service, APS) reports the seizure of 359 kilograms of hashish in Tiemcen on 18 September 2012 (Algeria 18 Sept. 2012). L'Expression, an Algiers-based newspaper, reports the seizure of 4 tons of hashish on 1 September 2012 in Tiemcen (2 Sept. 2012).

According to another APS article, the GN reported a reduction of 7 percent in the number of cases involving organized crime that were processed by the judiciary police in 2011, when compared to 2010 (Algeria 9 Feb. 2012). The state news agency interprets this reduction as a [translation] "decline of organized crime" (ibid.). For 2011, the GN reported the following numbers:

• 3,925 people accused of [translation] "irregular" immigration, which represents an increase of 13 percent compared to 2010;
• 505 cases of trafficking of vehicles, which amounts to a 4 percent increase compared to 2010;
• 3,202 persons detained for drug trafficking,
• 1,286 involved in cases of use or production of fraudulent documents;
• 251 cases of trafficking of fuel (ibid.).

Media sources report the arrest, in January 2012, of 532 civil servants and 1,563 employees for various crimes, including the trafficking of drugs, arms and vehicles (Le Temps 27 Feb. 2012; ANSAMed 28 Feb. 2012). Some of those arrested were allegedly part of international drug trafficking organizations (ibid.; Le Temps 27 Feb. 2012).

Concerning trafficking in persons and human smuggling, the US Trafficking in Persons Report 2012 indicates that the government of Algeria "does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking and is not making significant efforts to do so" (US 19 June 2012, 65). The report further explains that the government of Algeria has "failed" to protect victims of these crimes by not providing them with a program to participate in investigations or prosecution of human trafficking offenders, counselling or legal services, or shelters (ibid., 66). The report indicates that the government prohibited NGOs from running shelters for trafficking victims, by penalizing them for "harboring undocumented migrants" (ibid.). The report also indicates that, according to NGOs, the government deported trafficking victims back to the desert borders of Mali and Niger with "a litre of milk and some bread" and that some of them died in the desert (ibid., 65-66). With regard to police authorities, the report indicates that some police officers have returned victims of prostitution and sex trafficking "back to their pimps" (ibid., 65). Corroborating information could not be found by the Research Directorate among the sources consulted within the time constraints of this Response.

4. Witness Protection

According to media sources, Algeria does not have an adequate witness protection program for corruption-related cases (Tout Sur l'Algérie 26 Apr. 2012; Le Soir d'Algérie 19 Mar. 2012). Le Soir d'Algérie reports that Algerian law does not guarantee the protection of victims or witnesses of corruption, contrary to the recommendations of the UN convention against corruption (ibid.). Tout Sur l'Algérie, an online news source, cites a member of the finance committee of the National Popular Assembly (Assemblée populaire nationale) as saying that there is a lack of laws and regulations concerning witness protection (26 Apr. 2012). Law No. 06-01 of 2006 on prevention of corruption indicates the following in the witness protection section:

[translation]

Art. 45 -Any person who uses any form of retaliation, intimidation or threat in any way against witnesses, experts, informants, victims, their relatives, or any other individual with whom they share close a personal relationship shall be punished by a term of imprisonment of six (6) months to five (5) years and a fine of DZD50,000 to DZD500,000. (Algeria 2006)
Additional information on witness protection could not be found by the Research Directorate among the sources consulted within the time constraints of this Response.

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

References


Additional Sources Consulted

**Oral sources:** Attempts to contact representatives from the following organizations and agencies were unsuccessful: Algeria – Embassy in Ottawa, Embassy in Washington, General Consulate in Montreal, General Consulate in New York, Popular National Assembly; Algeria Watch; Human Rights Watch; a professor of political science at the University of Michigan. Professors at Fordham University, Tufts University, and California State University could not provide information for this Response. An official from the Embassy of Canada in Algeria could not provide information within the time constraints of this Response.

**Internet sites, including:** African Court on Human and People's Rights; African News Agency; African Press Organization; Algeria – Consulate in London, Embassy in Oslo, Embassy in Ottawa, Journal officiel de la république algérienne démocratique et populaire, Ministry of National Defence, Ministry of Youth and Sports, National Gendarmerie; Amnesty International; Country of Return Information Project; ecoi.net; El Watan [Algiers]; Factiva; Le Figaro; GlobalSecurity.org; Grioo.com; Human Rights Watch; Humantrafficking.org; InfoSud Belgique; International Federation for Human Rights; International Institute for Strategic Studies; International Organization for Migrations; Ireland – Refugee Documentation Centre; Jane's Defense and Security; Jeune Afrique; Jeune Indépendant [Algiers]; La Nouvelle République [Algiers]; Organisation internationale de la francophonie; Réseau des médias francophones; United Nations – Integrated Regional Information Networks, Refworld.

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