

Algeria: Extremism & Counter-Extremism

On August 31, 2017, a man wearing a suicide belt attempted to enter a police station in Tiaret, a city located in northern Algeria. The man was tackled by an officer, which caused the belt to explode. A second officer later died from injuries sustained in the blast. ISIS claimed responsibility for the attack later that day. Since this incident, 16 months have passed without a major terrorist attack, with the exception of random clashes in the mountainous areas between military and terrorist groups affiliated with Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). (Sources: [France24](#) [1], [Middle East Monitor](#) [2])

On July 30, 2018, Algerian security officials announced that violent clashes broke out between security forces and militants in Azzaba, Skikda province. The militants detonate an improvised explosive device (IED) in the clash. According to local reports, four militants and seven soldiers were killed in the fighting. Security forces reportedly seized weapons and ammunition during the operation. It was later confirmed that AQIM was responsible for the attack. (Sources: [U.S. Department of State](#) [3], [GardaWorld](#) [4])

Overview

Algeria has a long history of combatting domestic violent extremism. Beginning with the outbreak of the Algerian Civil War in 1992, the government has worked to quash militant Islamist groups operating within its borders, including the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) and the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC), among others. (Source: [University of Virginia](#) [5])

Since the war began to subside by the late 1990s, the government has nonetheless continued to face the threat posed by “residual” terrorist networks, including the GSPC’s successor, [al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb \(AQIM\)](#) [6]. Since its formation in 2007, al-Qaeda’s North African branch has carried out more than [600](#) [7] attacks in Algeria, including bombings, ambushes, and raids targeting Algerian nationals, foreigners, and military installations. AQIM offshoots have also been responsible for major terrorist attacks in the country, including the January 2013 attack on a gas facility near In Amenas, Algeria, which left 38 people dead, most of whom were foreigners. (Sources: [Carnegie Endowment for International Peace](#) [7], [Council on Foreign Relations](#) [8], [Reuters](#) [9])

Since the 1990s, the Algerian government has relied primarily on military operations to thwart these groups, but in recent years has also invested in counter-extremism efforts geared to tackle the groups’ underlying ideologies. The government has banned violent extremist rhetoric in schools, mosques, and the media, while also working to bolster national counter-narrative programs to counteract violent extremist ideologies. In addition, the Algerian government established the National Observatory of the Struggle against Religious Extremism. The body, comprised of officials with backgrounds in media, religion, and education, aims to tackle [ISIS](#) [10]’s online radicalization and recruitment tactics. (Sources: [Ministry of Religious Affairs and Endowments](#) [11], [Netherlands Institute of International Relations](#) [12])

Algeria’s national counterterrorism efforts have been met with noteworthy success, with the U.S. State Department calling Algeria “an important counterterrorism partner” that has mounted “an aggressive campaign to eliminate all terrorist activity within its borders” and “devoted considerable resources” to advancing security. Unlike neighboring Tunisia, which has produced an estimated 6,000 to 7,000 foreign fighters, Algeria has produced an estimated 170. Nonetheless, Algeria continues to face internal threats posed by al-Qaeda, ISIS, and other violent extremist organizations. (Sources: [U.S. State Department](#) [13], [Wall Street Journal](#) [14], [Soufan Group](#) [15])

The government’s effort to quash violent extremist groups in Algeria by and large reflects national sentiment. According to a poll released by the Doha Institute in December 2015, approximately 70 percent of the Algerian public is staunchly opposed to ISIS. Nonetheless, a small but notable sector of the Algerian public retains a “positive” or “very positive” perception of ISIS, according to the Doha poll. (Source: [Arab Opinion Index 2015](#) [16])

Radicalization and Foreign Fighters

Algeria’s “Black Decade” and the Armed Islamic Group (GIA)

In late 1991, when the Islamist political party Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) was poised to defeat the ruling National

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Liberation Front (FLN) in parliamentary elections, the Algerian military canceled the election, seized control of the government, and initiated a crackdown on Islamic groups and politicians. Supporters of the FIS took up arms to form an insurgent group, the Islamic Salvation Army (AIS). Shortly after, a more hardline AIS splinter group called the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) emerged and began to gain popularity. Unlike the AIS, the GIA sought to perpetrate attacks against not only government representatives, but Algerian civilians in its pursuit of a state ruled under sharia (Islamic law). (Sources: [Jihad: The Trial of Political Islam](#) [17], [Council on Foreign Relations](#) [18])

Throughout the 1990s, Algeria's "Black Decade," the Algerian government fought against GIA and a number of smaller jihadist faction in an armed conflict often referred to as *la sale guerre* ("the dirty war"). The GIA, infamous for its ruthlessness, massacred thousands of civilians in towns loosely suspected of cooperating with the Algerian government. A GIA leader once stated, "In our war, there is no neutrality. Except for those who are with us, all others are renegades." (Sources: [Inside the Jihad: My Life with Al Qaeda](#) [19], [Algeria-Watch](#) [20], [Human Rights Watch](#) [21], [Council on Foreign Relations](#) [18])

In May 1993, the GIA began assassinating journalists, with one spokesperson stating, "those who fight by the pen shall die by the sword." These attacks drove most international and domestic media into hiding or out of the country by 1995. The GIA also targeted foreigners, particularly nationals of France, which provided support to the Algerian government throughout the war. In August 1992, the GIA bombed the international airport in Algiers, killing nine people. A year later, in August 1993, the GIA issued an ultimatum, stating, "Foreigners, leave the country. We give you one month." In the months following the ultimatum's expiration in September 1993, the GIA led an assassination campaign targeting foreigners, killing 23 people by mid-December 1993. By May 1996, the group had killed an estimated 116 people, 39 of whom were French citizens. (Sources: [Federation of American Scientists](#) [22], [New York Times](#) [23], [World Terrorism](#) [24], [New York Times](#) [25])

At the height of the conflict, the GIA was reportedly recruiting upwards of 500 Algerians per week. However, by the late 1990s, the GIA had experienced a drastic decline in popularity due to its policy of indiscriminate violence. In 1998, a GIA splinter group called the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) was established. The GSPC formally denounced the GIA's targeting of civilians and quickly surpassed the GIA in popularity. By 2001, GSPC had an estimated 3,000 followers. (Sources: [Algeria-Watch](#) [26], [Council on Foreign Relations](#) [18], [University of Virginia](#) [5], [World Terrorism](#) [27])

After Abdelaziz Bouteflika was elected president in 1999, the insurgency largely came to an end. AIS quickly reached a peace agreement with the Algerian government, and the GIA—which was seriously weakened by the death of its leader in 2002—disbanded after a major police crackdown in 2004. By the end of Algeria's "Black Decade," an estimated 200,000 civilians had been killed. (Sources: [Jamestown Foundation](#) [28], [World Terrorism](#) [27], [University of Virginia](#) [5], [Council on Foreign Relations](#) [18], [NPR](#) [29])

Jihadist activity has decreased significantly since the end of the "Black Decade." As one Algerian lawyer observed: "Algerians had their dose of horror, and today they are vaccinated against Islamism." Accordingly, a number of Islamist groups that currently operate within Algeria have formed alliances with global terrorist networks like al-Qaeda and ISIS and have expanded their membership base in neighboring countries. (Sources: [Carnegie Endowment](#) [30], [Al-Monitor](#) [31], [Brookings](#) [32])

Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb

Algeria's GSPC insurgent group merged with [al-Qaeda](#) [33] in September 2006 and, in January 2007, rebranded itself as [Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb](#) [6] (AQIM). Having inherited membership from GSPC, AQIM was originally comprised overwhelmingly of Algerian members. However, in the years since its 2007 formation, the group has expanded into neighboring countries Mali, Mauritania, Senegal, and Niger, increasingly recruiting locals to execute attacks. As of 2016, Malians are believed to comprise the majority of AQIM fighters. Through establishing a presence in neighboring countries, AQIM has been able to generate significant revenue from transnational criminal operations, including drug and human trafficking. (Sources: [Brookings](#) [32], [Al Jazeera](#) [34], [AMDH-FIDH](#) [35])

AQIM has executed a series of deadly suicide bombings and other attacks in Algeria as part of its strategy to implement sharia in the region. For instance, in July 2007, AQIM carried out a suicide bombing at a military barracks in northern

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Algeria which claimed the lives of eight soldiers. A few months later, in September 2007, AQIM was responsible for two other suicide bombings in northern Algeria that killed 57 people. AQIM has also executed multiple attacks targeting foreigners in Algeria. In December 2007, two suicide car bombs exploded in the Algerian capital of Algiers near U.N. offices and government buildings. Reports estimated that more than 60 people were killed in the attacks. (Sources: [CNN](#) [36], [BBC News](#) [37], [Reuters](#) [38], [Time](#) [39], [New York Times](#) [40])

Al-Mourabitoun

[Al-Mourabitoun](#) [41] (“The Sentinels”) is a violent, jihadist group that seeks to implement sharia throughout West Africa. The group—led by Algerian-born [Mokhtar Belmokhtar](#) [42]—was formed out of an August 2013 merger between two AQIM splinter groups: al-Mulathamun Battalion (AMB) and the Malian-based Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO). After the merger, the newly formed group announced that the region’s jihadist movement was “stronger than ever” and that it would “rout” France and its allies in the region. In December 2015, al-Mourabitoun announced that it had re-established a partnership with AQIM. (Sources: [Australian National Security](#) [43], [U.S. State Department](#) [44], [BBC News](#) [45], [New York Times](#) [46])

Al-Mourabitoun has inherited many former AMB members, but has also recruited new members in northern and western Africa, including in Mauritania, Mali, and Niger. Months before Belmokhtar formally announced the merger to create al-Mourabitoun, Belmokhtar had orchestrated the deadly January 2013 attack on a gas facility near In Amenas, Algeria, an attack which left 38 civilians dead, most of whom were foreigners, and three of whom were U.S. citizens. (Sources: [BBC News](#) [47], [U.S. State Department](#) [48])

Jund al-Khilafah and ISIS

On September 13, 2014, AQIM commander and former GIA combatant Abdelmalek Gouri (a.k.a. Khaled Abu Suleiman), broke off his Jund al-Khilafah brigade from al-Qaeda’s North African affiliate to swear allegiance to ISIS’s leader, [Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi](#) [49]. Gouri claimed that AQIM was “deviating from the true path” of violent jihadist Islam. (Sources: [BBC News](#) [50], [International Business Times](#) [51], [France24](#) [52])

Less than two weeks later, Jund al-Khilafah operatives kidnapped 55-year-old French mountaineer Herve Gourdel. In executing the attack, the assailants claimed that they were fulfilling the wishes of ISIS spokesman [Abu Muhammad al-Adnani](#) [53], who called for attacks on Western citizens. As part of the attack, Jund al-Khilafah militants issued a 24-hour ultimatum to the government of France to cease its strikes in Iraq. The militants beheaded Gourdel when the ultimatum expired. (Sources: [International Business Times](#) [54], [SITE](#) [55])

In November 2014, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi formally recognized Jund al-Khilafah as its affiliate in Algeria, referring to the group as Wilayat al-Jazair. The strength of ISIS’s Algerian outfit, however, has since appeared to wane. Reports from October 2014 estimate that the group amounted to only 30 fighters. In December 2014, Algerian troops killed Gouri during a military operation in the town of Sidi Daoud, approximately 50 miles outside of Algiers. On October 21, 2015, Wilayat al-Jazair released an audio statement attempting to reassure its supporters that ISIS’s presence in Algeria was secure. During the same statement, however, an ISIS militant urged fighters not to risk their lives unnecessarily, appearing to indicate the underlying vulnerability of ISIS’s Algerian province. In October 2016, Algerian soldiers carried out counterterrorism operations killing senior ISIS-affiliated jihadists in the Skikda region, east of Algiers. (Sources: [Jeune Afrique](#) [56], [Washington Institute for Near East Policy](#) [57], [BBC News](#) [50], [Reuters](#) [58], [Jamestown Foundation](#) [59], [Newsweek](#) [60])

Foreign Fighters

According to the New York-based Soufan Group, in May 2015, official estimates placed the number of Algerians fighting alongside the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria at 170. By contrast, an estimated 6,000-7,000 fighters had traveled to Iraq and Syria from neighboring Tunisia. The contrast between Algeria and its neighbors has led Algerian Interior Ministry representative Mohamed Talbi to claim that Algeria is the “least affected” by international terrorist recruitment compared to its neighbors. Talbi has credited Algeria’s success to smooth information-sharing between national counterterrorism parties, as well as government-led efforts to thwart terrorist recruitment online and in mosques. (Sources: [Soufan Group](#) [15], [Algeria Press Service](#) [61])

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Major Extremist and Terrorist Incidents

January 2013 In Amenas Gun and Hostage Crisis

On the morning of January 16, 2013, approximately 30 heavily armed gunmen stormed the entrance of the Tigantourine natural gas plant near In Amenas, Algeria. Before breaching the plant's premises, the terrorists first attacked two buses ferrying employees to a nearby airport, killing four foreigners and one Algerian. (Source: [Guardian](#) [62])

The gunmen then stormed the gas plant and adjacent living facilities, seizing hostages in what appeared to be a "frenzied hunt for foreigners." One witness told reporters that an assailant said, "We have nothing against you Algerians, you can take your things and leave" and that the assailants "wanted expats and that they would find them." The assailants rounded up foreign hostages, taping their mouths, tying their hands behind their backs with cable ties, and strapping their necks and waists with Semtex bombs. Hostages who sought to flee were reportedly shot. As the attack progressed, an Algerian security guard triggered the plant-wide alarm, shutting down areas of the plant and allowing some employees to hide under beds, desks, or tables, while others stowed away in false ceilings. The attackers then canvassed the facility, seeking additional hostages and killing those who attempted to escape. (Source: [Guardian](#) [62])

The Algerian army launched its counterattack more than 24 hours later, at 2 p.m. on Thursday, January 17. The government deployed helicopters to tail and shell assailants, who had begun to use vehicles to cart off hostages outside of the plant. Many of the hostages were killed during the counterassault, either executed by the terrorists in vehicles or inadvertently killed by the Algerian army. At 8 p.m. on January 17, after four of the assailants' five vehicles were destroyed, the army advanced into the plant's core gas facility area, where the last remaining hostages were held and some foreigners remained in hiding. As the army advanced on the assailants in the early hours of January 18, the militants executed their remaining seven hostages. The Algerian army secured the plant on January 18, clearing the central gas facility and killing the remaining militants. (Source: [Guardian](#) [62])

A total of 38 people were killed in the attacks, 37 of whom were foreign nationals. Among the deceased were workers from Japan, Norway, the United Kingdom, the United States, France, Colombia, the Philippines, Romania, and Malaysia. One Algerian was also killed. (Sources: [Reuters](#) [9], [Guardian](#) [63], [Guardian](#) [64])

December 2007 U.N. and Constitutional Council Bombing

On the morning of December 11, 2007, a suicide bomber detonated a truck near the Constitutional Council and Supreme Court buildings in Algiers. Moments later, a second truck bomb exploded outside of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) offices and U.N. headquarters in the country's capital city, leveling the UNHCR offices. Seventeen U.N. employees were killed in the attacks. Overall death toll estimates range between the government figure of 26 people and the hospital estimate of 76. The majority of those killed died in the first explosion. The GSPC, which had recently rebranded itself as al-Qaeda's affiliate in the region, claimed responsibility for the attacks. (Sources: [CNN](#) [36], [BBC News](#) [65])

Spring 2003 European Hostage Crisis

Between February and April 2003, GSPC militants kidnaped a total of 32 European tourists traveling in separate groups across the Algerian Sahara. The tourists—from Germany, Switzerland, Austria, and the Netherlands—were split into two groups and hidden in the desert as to avoid Algerian government capture. In May 2003, the Algerian army freed one group of hostages following a shootout with the militants. The GSPC later released the second half of the hostages in August in neighboring Mali. Some reports allege that a € 5 million ransom was paid by either the German or Malian government. (Sources: [CNN](#) [66], [BBC News](#) [67])

1995 Paris and Lyon Bombings

From July 1995 to October 1995, GIA operatives carried out eight bombings and attempts in France, six of which took place in Paris and its environs. The slew of attacks—including gas and powder canister bombs filled with nails, one pressure cooker bomb, and one car bomb—were linked to the GIA both through the group's October 1995 claim of

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responsibility, as well as through fingerprints discovered on unexploded bombs. The attacks together left eight people dead and more than 200 wounded:

- **July 25, 1995:** A gas canister filled with nails explodes aboard a train at Paris’s Saint-Michel station, leaving eight people dead and 150 wounded. GIA claims responsibility. A French court later convicts Algerian GIA operative Boualem Bensaïd for complicity in the attack. (Sources: [New York Times](#) [68], [Los Angeles Times](#) [69])
- **August 16, 1995:** Authorities discover a bomb filled with powder explosives and nails on a high-speed train track north of Lyons. Authorities discover the fingerprints of Algerian GIA operative Khaled Kelkal taped to the bomb canister. (Sources: [Los Angeles Times](#) [70], [New York Times](#) [68])
- **August 17, 1995:** A gas canister filled with nails explodes in a trash can near Paris’s Arc de Triomphe, leaving 17 people wounded. GIA claims responsibility. (Sources: [New York Times](#) [71], [Los Angeles Times](#) [69])
- **September 3, 1995:** A pressure cooker partially explodes in Paris’s Bastille market, leaving four people wounded. GIA claims responsibility. (Sources: [New York Times](#) [72], [Los Angeles Times](#) [69])
- **September 4, 1995:** Authorities discover an unexploded bomb in a public restroom in Paris’s 15th arrondissement. (Source: [Guardian](#) [73])
- **September 7, 1995:** A car bomb explodes outside a Jewish school in the Lyon suburb of Villeurbanne, leaving 14 people wounded, including schoolchildren. It is the first car bomb attack in France since 1982. GIA claims responsibility. (Source: [Los Angeles Times](#) [74])
- **October 6, 1995:** A gas canister filled with nails explodes in a trash can near Paris’s Maison-Blanche metro station, leaving 12 people wounded. GIA claims responsibility. A French court later convicts Algerian GIA operative Boualem Bensaïd for planting the bomb. (Sources: [New York Times](#) [75], [New York Times](#) [72], [New York Times](#) [68])
- **October 17, 1995:** A bomb explodes aboard a train near Paris’s Musee d’Orsay station, leaving 29 people wounded. GIA claims responsibility. A French court later convicts Algerian GIA operatives Smaïn Ali Belkacem for planting the attack and Boualem Bensaïd for complicity in the attack. (Sources: [CNN](#) [76], [New York Times](#) [68])

December 1994 Hijacking of Air France Flight 8969

On December 24, 1994, four GIA militants, disguised as security agents, hijacked Paris-bound Air France flight 8969 while it was on the ground in Algiers. The terrorists, armed with explosives and firearms, hoped to detonate their explosives and destroy the airplane while it flew over Paris. After the militants executed three passengers, Algerian authorities allowed the plane to take off. The plane subsequently stopped over in Marseilles, France, ostensibly to refuel. Hours later, elite French special operation forces stormed the aircraft, killing the four assailants and freeing the passengers on board. (Source: [Time](#) [77])

- **August 31, 2017:** A suicide bombing near a police post in Tiaret, Algeria kills two officers. ISIS claims responsibility for the attack later that day. Source: [France24](#) [1]
- **February 26, 2017:** ISIS claims responsibility for a failed suicide bombing in Constantine, in north-eastern Algeria. The attack is thwarted by a local policeman, who opens fire on the assailant after issuing several warnings. The shots reportedly trigger the bomb, setting it off and injuring two officers in the ensuing explosion. Source: [France 24](#) [78]
- **October 29, 2016:** A policeman is killed in Constantine, north-eastern Algeria, in an attack claimed by ISIS. Source: [U.S. Department of State](#) [13]
- **April 15, 2016:** Four soldiers are killed during a counterterrorism operation in Constantine, in north-eastern Algeria. Source: [U.S. Department of State](#) [13]
- **March 18, 2016:** Terrorists attack a gas plant in southern Algeria using rocket-propelled grenades, producing no casualties or damage. AQIM claims responsibility. Sources: [Wall Street Journal](#) [79], [Reuters](#) [80]
- **March 15, 2016:** An Algerian national—Mohamed Belkaid—fires on Belgian police as the officers raid an apartment in Forest, Belgium. The officers had been looking for suspects tied to the November 2015 ISIS attacks in Paris, in which 130 people were killed and 350 wounded. Also in the apartment during the raid is Salah Abdeslam, a suspect directly implicated in the November ISIS attacks. Source: [Wall Street Journal](#) [81]
- **March 2016:** Algerian security forces shoot dead a man wearing a suicide belt in a small town east of Algiers. Source: [Reuters](#) [82]
- **July 17, 2015:** An AQIM ambush in Ain Defla, southwest of Algiers, kills 14 soldiers. Source: [Al-Arabiya](#) [83]
- **March 23, 2015:** Taking “preventative action,” Algerian security forces evacuate approximately 100 Turkish workers from a road construction project in Kabiylie region, east of Algiers. Source: [Al-Arabiya](#) [84]

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- **September 21, 2014 - September 24, 2014:** Jund al-Khilafah militants kidnap French hiker Herve Gourdal in Djurdjura National Park, in northern Algeria.
On September 24, the group releases a video showing Gourdal's beheading, claiming that the attack is a response to France's carrying out airstrikes in Iraq. Sources: [France 24](#) [52], [Daily Mail](#) [85]
- **July 9, 2014:** French authorities thwart an AQIM plot to attack several targets in France, including the Louvre, Eiffel Tower, and a nuclear power plant.
Source: [Daily Telegraph](#) [86]
- **April 20, 2014:** AQIM militants ambush an Algerian military convoy in the north-central city of Tizi Ouzou, killing 14 people.
Source: [BBC News](#) [87]
- **January 16, 2013 - January 19, 2013:** Thirty-two AMB militants attack the Tigantourine natural gas plant near In Amenas, Algeria.
Over the course of a four-day siege, militants kill one Algerian citizen and 37 foreign workers. Among the killed are individuals with French, Japanese, Norwegian, Colombian, Philippine, Romanian, Malaysian, U.K., and U.S. citizenship. Sources: [Guardian](#) [64], [Long War Journal](#) [88], [BBC News](#) [89]
- **August 26, 2011:** A suicide bomber targets a military academy in the Algerian town of Cherchell, killing 16 Algerian soldiers and two civilians.
AQIM is suspected. Source: [Long War Journal](#) [90]
- **August 14, 2011:** An assailant attempts to drive a bomb-packed truck into a police station in Algiers, wounding 29 people.
Sources: [Reuters](#) [91], [Al Arabiya](#) [92]
- **April 2011:** AQIM militants kill 17 people in an attack on an army outpost in Tizi Ouzou.
Source: [CTC Sentinel](#) [93]
- **September 17, 2009:** AQIM militants ambush Algerian security forces near the town of Mansoura, killing 24 Algerian policemen.
Source: [BBC News](#) [94]
- **August 20, 2008:** Suicide bombers carry out twin attacks in Bouira.
One assailant strikes a military headquarters while the other targets a bus carrying employees of a water plant. Twelve are killed and 42 injured in an attack suspected to have been executed by AQIM. Source: [BBC News](#) [95]
- **August 19, 2008:** A suicide car bomb detonates at the entrance of a police college in Issers, 50 miles east of Algiers, where recruits were waiting to take an exam.
Forty-eight are killed in the attack, suspected to have been carried out by AQIM. Source: [BBC News](#) [95]
- **June 9, 2008:** Two bombs at a train station kill at least 12 people, including one French citizen, in the town of Beni Amrane, east of Algiers.
The second of the two explosions occurs as rescue workers arrived at the scene. Source: [BBC News](#) [96]
- **December 11, 2007:** Two AQIM suicide bombers detonate explosives in two attacks ten minutes apart in Algiers.
The first terrorist strikes a bus full of university students outside of the Constitutional Council and Supreme Court buildings. The second bomb explodes outside of the UNHCR offices. Seventeen U.N. employees are killed. The overall death toll ranges between the government estimate of 26 and the hospital estimate of 76. Sources: [CNN](#) [36], [BBC News](#) [65]
- **September 21, 2007:** An AQIM bombing in the city of Bouira, east of Algiers, injures six Algerians, five of whom were police officers, as well as two French citizens, and one Italian citizen.
The bombing comes a day after al-Qaeda's Ayman al-Zawahiri releases a video urging North African Muslims to "cleanse" their countries of the French and Spanish citizens. Source: [BBC News](#) [97]
- **September 7, 2007:** Two AQIM militants detonate a suicide truck bomb outside a coast guard barracks in the city of Dellys, killing 37 people and destroying the barracks.
Source: [Reuters](#) [98]
- **September 6, 2007:** In the first suicide bombing in Algerian history, an AQIM terrorist blows himself up amidst a crowd waiting for the arrival of Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika in Batna, killing 20 people.
Source: [Reuters](#) [98]
- **April 11, 2007:** Twin AQIM blasts rock Algiers.
The first explosion occurs at the prime minister's office, leaving 12 people dead and 118 injured. The second explosion occurs outside a police station, leaving 11 people dead and 44 injured. Source: [BBC News](#) [99]
- **May 14, 2007:** Since the start of the month, 18 soldiers are killed in clashes with AQIM militants as part of an offensive prior to parliamentary elections on May 17
Source: [BBC News](#) [100]
- **April 8, 2007:** At least nine Algerian soldiers are killed in an AQIM ambush in Ain Defla region, south of the capital Algiers.
Source: [BBC News](#) [101]
- **March 4, 2007:** Two AQIM roadside bombs strike a bus carrying workers for a Russian gas pipeline company south of Algiers.
The attack leaves three Algerians and one Russian dead, and wounds several other Russian and Ukrainian citizens.

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- Source: [Reuters](#) [102]
- **February 13, 2007:**AQIM militants simultaneously bomb seven police stations in Kabylia region, killing at least six people and wounding 13.
Source: [BBC News](#) [103]
 - **January 30, 2007:**AQIM militants attack an army post in Batna region, killing five Algerian soldiers.
Source: [BBC News](#) [104]
 - **December 10, 2006:**The GSPC attacks two buses carrying employees for a U.S. oil firm with explosives and small arms.
Fighters kill one Algerian citizen and injure three Britons, a Canadian, an American, and a Lebanese national. Source: [BBC News](#) [105]
 - **June 2, 2004:**GSPC militants ambush an Algerian army convoy 160 miles east of Algiers, killing 10 people.
Source: [USA Today](#) [106]
 - **February 2003 - August 2003:**GSPC militants kidnap a total of 32 European tourists traveling in separate groups across the Algerian Sahara.
[Half the tourists are freed in May 2003 following a shootout with Algerian security forces. The others are released in August after a ransom was reportedly paid. Sources: CNN](#) [66],
May 6, 2002:In an ambush near Tizi Ouzou, GSPC fighters kill 15 government soldiers.
Source: [BBC News](#) [107]
34. **October 17, 1995:**A bomb explodes aboard a train near Paris's Musee d'Orsay station, leaving 29 people wounded. GIA claims responsibility. A French court later convicts Algerian GIA operatives Smaïn Ali Belkacem for planting the attack and Boualem Bensaïd for complicity in the attack. Sources: [CNN](#) [76], [New York Times](#) [68]
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 42. **December 24, 1994:**Four militants, disguised as security agents, hijack Air France flight 8969 while it is on the ground in Algiers.
Three passengers are executed on the ground, forcing authorities to allow the aircraft to take off for Paris. When the plane stops over in Marseilles, France, ostensibly to refuel, elite French special operation forces storm the aircraft, killing the four terrorists and freeing all passengers on board. The GIA claims responsibility for the hijacking. Source: [Time](#) [77]
 43. **1992:**The Algerian military cancels elections before the Islamist ISF party can wrest power from the ruling FLN party. Islamist militants revolt against the government, resulting in civil war. Fighting formally halts with the "Civil Concord" amnesty agreement in January 2000, but terrorist groups continue to wage attacks and rebrand under different names. Source: [Middle East Research and Information Project](#) [108]

Domestic Counter-Extremism

For years, Algeria has struggled with the presence of jihadist groups operating within its borders. In response to domestic Islamist movements, Algeria has maintained a counterterrorism regime that relies on intelligence and military operations in order to dismantle jihadist networks. In recent years, Algeria's government has worked to bolster its military and

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intelligence service in order to protect against resurgent terrorist networks, as well as new terrorist threats to Algeria coming from neighboring countries.

As Algeria works to strengthen its domestic counterterrorism apparatus, the country has also worked to prevent the rise of extremism at home, providing social services and family outreach to at-risk youths in the country. The government has also installed a development plan and a comprehensive national reconciliation policy as part of the effort to address homegrown threats of extremism and terrorism. To date, Algeria lacks a comprehensive strategy to counter terrorism, and the balance of power within military and counterterrorism institutions remain unclear. Nonetheless, the country employs a variety of known strategies—ranging from military to religious strategies—in order to dismantle and suppress terrorist movements within its borders. Additionally, Algeria has opened safe routes along its southern border to encourage Algerian militants who joined terrorist groups to lay down their arms in exchange for fair trials. (Sources: [U.S. Department of State](#) [109], [Netherlands Institute of International Relations](#) [12], [U.S. State Department](#) [110], [Xinhua](#) [111])

Military and Security Agencies

Algeria's approach to terrorism is to a great extent informed by its history with violent insurgent groups dating back to the 1990s. After the assassination of Algerian President Boudiaf in 1992, the government formed its military intelligence service, the Département du Renseignement et de la Sécurité (DRS). The DRS worked to infiltrate Algeria's Islamist insurgency networks and, with the help of the Directorate-General for National Security (DGSN), crush groups militarily. At this time, Algeria employed a near-exclusively military approach to terrorism that centered on the slogan, "making fear change[s] sides." (Source: [Netherlands Institute of International Relations](#) [12])

After dismantling the major insurgent groups of the 1990s, the Algerian government has continued to fend off AQIM using primarily this method. According to a report by the Netherlands Institute of International Relations, Algerian security forces have occasionally spread misinformation regarding the status of major AQIM leaders, ostensibly to lure other operatives out of Algerian cities and into hiding in the mountains. Once operatives are lured into the mountains, the government has launched targeted military operations in the country's hinterlands in order to dismantle existing leadership and undermine the network. This strategy is reportedly intended to "keep AQIM occupied with its own survival instead of allowing it time to plan new attacks." (Source: [Netherlands Institute of International Relations](#) [12])

Due to increased instability in northern Africa following the Arab Spring, Algeria has increasingly focused military attention on the country's borders, and worked to fortify its border security program. The government has expanded its military activity, including by adding new observer posts and deploying troops along the borders with Tunisia, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, and Morocco. (Source: [U.S. State Department](#) [110])

Algeria has also added reinforced protection for its energy facilities, created new military observer posts, and worked cooperatively with neighboring governments, including Tunisia, in an effort to streamline information sharing regarding international smuggling operations and transnational terrorist activity. Algeria has repeatedly noted the connection between terrorism and extremism with organized crime and narco-trafficking in the region. (Source: [U.S. State Department](#) [110])

Legislative Efforts

Algeria's Penal Code authorizes the government to suppress a broad range of movements that it categorizes as terrorist. According to Algerian law (amended in 1992), terrorism is synonymous with "subversive activities" and is regarded as "any offence targeting state security, territorial integrity or the stability or normal functioning of institutions... [by] spreading panic or creating a climate of insecurity... [and by] impeding the activities of public authorities." The Algerian Penal Code was again amended in 1995 to prohibit the "justification, encouragement, and financing" of terrorist (i.e. "subversive") activities. (Source: [Netherlands Institute of International Relations](#) [12])

After sending AQIM into retreat in the late 2000s, Algeria has experienced a resurgent Islamist threat starting in the early 2010s. To this end, Algeria began restructuring its military and security agencies in September 2013. In June 2014, Algeria expanded the powers vested in its security agencies, authorizing the DRS—Algeria's intelligence service—to take on roles previously reserved for the judicial police. The change was legalized due to a presidential decree, which also authorized the creation of a new security unit, the Judicial Investigation Service. The new security unit falls under the jurisdiction of

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both the DRS and the general prosecutor for the court of appeal's criminal division. (Source: [U.S. State Department](#) [110])

In June 2016, Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika signed new laws to the Algerian Penal Code that expanded punitive measures for crimes related to financing, supporting or acting as foreign fighters, and the use of technology for terrorist recruitment purposes. Algeria has also cracked down on Internet service providers who fail to comply with legal obligations to store information or withhold access to criminal material. (Source: [U.S. State Department](#) [13])

As Algeria continues to combat “residual terrorism” from the 1990s and 2000s as well as the recent threat of terrorism from ISIS and other terrorist organizations, the government remains authorized to confront “subversive activities” without much oversight. The DRS, for example, operates as an arm of the country's Ministry of Defense, as opposed to working under the country's Ministry of Interior or Justice, as is the norm in other countries. The ability of the president to announce a national state of emergency—which was in effect for 19 years from 1992 to 2011—has further enabled the government to engage in counterterrorism without much accountability. In 2016, Algeria reduced the use of pretrial detention, but pretrial detention was still being overused, according to the U.S. State Department. (Sources: [Netherlands Institute of International Relations](#) [12], [U.S. State Department](#) [13])

However, as Algeria works to confront the threat of terrorism unhindered, the government has begun to introduce some measures of transparency and restraint into the operations of the DRS. In 2013, President Bouteflika curbed the intelligence service's activities within public institutions, and has replaced the powerful head of the DRS, Mohamed Mediene in September 2015. The extent of these and future oversights on Algeria's military and intelligence agencies, however, continues to remain dependent on the decisions of Algeria's president, and his issuing of presidential decrees. Even so, Algeria has worked to marry its military approach to countering terrorism with a religious approach to countering extremism. (Sources: [U.S. State Department](#) [110], [Reuters](#) [112], [Reuters](#) [113])

Religious Counter-Narrative

Algeria has primarily focused on its military and intelligence apparatus in order to thwart domestic terrorism. In the 2000s, however, Algeria began to address terrorism at its earlier phases by confronting religious extremism. To this end, the Algerian government has employed a range of methods in order to undermine recruitment and radicalization to terrorist networks through religious venues.

First, the government has encouraged imams who have defected or “repented” from terrorist groups to share religious explanations for the illegitimacy of their former terrorist groups. Hassan Hattab—founder and former leader of the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC)—was urged to speak out against terrorism, as were AQIM leaders Othmane Touati (also known as Abou El-Abbes) and Samir Sai'oud. (Source: [Netherlands Institute of International Relations](#) [12])

The government has also actively promoted more “moderate” imams, and created a national television agency and radio station that promotes government-approved interpretations of Islam. The government has also exerted significant control within public and private mosques throughout the country. All imams in Algeria must be approved, trained, and employed by the country's Ministry of Religious Affairs and Endowments. The Algerian Penal Code outlines fines and prison sentences for anyone who preaches at a mosque that has not been approved by the government. Those imams and their religious institutions—including mosques and schools—authorized by the government are heavily monitored by the government. The government has also set up an “anti-suicide bomber” program, and has actively worked to promote non-violent strains of Salafism and Sufism. (Sources: [Netherlands Institute of International Relations](#) [12], [U.S. State Department](#) [13])

Algeria's Ministry of Religious Affairs and Endowments has expanded its scope of authority over the past few decades, working alongside the country's education system and other state agencies in order to address national issues related to “Islamic culture and religious guidance.” In 2015, Algeria's Minister of Religious Affairs Mohamed Aissa worked to address the recent threat of terrorism on the Internet, discredit violent terrorist discourse online by appealing to religious texts, and denounce ISIS's broad reach on Twitter. Aissa said in June 2015 that his ministry has “no authority to control or combat” the phenomenon of ISIS on Twitter, however, the branch works to “immunize and intellectually secure Algerian society” by publicly “dismantle[ing] the foundation of [ISIS's] ideology.” The Minister also announced the creation of a new governmental body called the National Observatory of the Struggle against Religious Extremism (“l'Observatoire national de lutte contre l'extrémisme religieux”). The body, still in its proposal stage, is set to be comprised of officials from

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Algeria's Ministries of Culture, Communications, of National Education, Higher Education, Vocational Training, Religious Affairs, the Interior, and security agencies, as well as members of mass media, who work together in order to cooperatively confront the threat of ISIS online. In response to the question, "Does [the Ministry of Religious Affairs have] total control over mosques and Koranic schools?" the Minister responded, "Yes, I think we have it." (Sources: [Ministry of Religious Affairs and Endowments](#) [11], [Speech by the Minister of Religious Affairs and Endowments](#) [114], [Tout sur l'Algérie](#) [115], [U.S. State Department](#) [13])

International Counter-Extremism

Algeria regularly participates in regional counter-extremism efforts. In April 2015, Algeria participated in the 7th meeting of intelligence and security heads in the Sahel-Sahara region, organized by the African Union (AU). As noted by analyst and author Yahia H. Zoubir, Algeria has long been part of the AU, and has served as a "central player" in the AU's various counterterrorism initiatives. (Source: [Nordic Africa Institute](#) [116])

Algeria also participates in the Global Counter Terrorism Forum (GCTF), an international association launched in September 2011 that aims "to reduce the vulnerability of people everywhere to terrorism" by providing a venue for international counterterrorism experts to meet and share counterterrorism strategies and challenges. Algeria has also served as co-chair of the GCTF's Sahel Region Capacity Building Working Group (SWG). Through the GCTF, Algeria has worked to raise awareness among other governments of the dangers of paying ransoms to terrorist groups. In June 2014, Algeria—alongside regional partners and international organizations—co-founded the International Institute for Justice and Rule of Law (IJ). In October of that year, Algeria, Canada, and the United States co-sponsored technical workshops in the IJ that worked to combat the practice of kidnapping for ransom. Algeria is also a part of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the Arab League, and the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP). (Sources: [Global Counterterrorism Forum](#) [117], [U.S. State Department](#) [110], [U.S. State Department](#) [13])

In July 2015, Algeria launched and hosted the International Conference on the Fight Against Extremism and Radicalization. Endorsed by the United Nations, Algeria's conference aimed to "identify common challenges in the field of radicalization and the fight against violent extremism." The conference also hoped to identify points of cooperation within the U.N. system and the GCTF. More than 50 countries and international organizations participated in the conference's first meeting. (Source: [Algeria Press Service](#) [118])

Public Opinion

Algeria is a self-reported religious country, with nearly 100 percent of its population identifying as Muslim. According to the Doha Institute's "Arab Opinion Index 2015" report, nearly 70 percent of Algerians carry a decidedly negative perception of ISIS. Five percent of Algeria's population, however, has a "very positive" perception of ISIS. Out of the 12 countries polled by the Doha Institute, only Mauritania had a higher percentage of its population holding such a favorable view of ISIS (10 percent). (Source: [Arab Opinion Index 2015](#) [119])

Algeria is seemingly split on the origins of ISIS. A slight majority of Algerians (52 percent) believe that ISIS is a product of its own environment, while 41 percent of Algerians believe that ISIS was created by foreign actors. Fifty-nine percent of Algerians believe that ISIS "is a product of religious extremism and fanaticism in Arab societies" while 30 percent believe that ISIS is "a product of the policies of the Arab regimes." A majority of Algerians (63 percent) preference regime change in Syria. (Source: [Arab Opinion Index 2015](#) [119])

Algeria is also split on the issue of excommunication, although more Algerians have appeared to endorse excommunication than condemn it. According to the Doha Institute's 2016 report, 41 percent of Algerians polled agree or strongly agree with the belief that no person or group has the right to declare followers of other religions to be infidels, while 49 percent disagree or strongly disagree. (Sources: [Arab Opinion Index 2015](#) [119], [Arab Opinion Index 2016](#) [120])

Algeria has shown suspicion towards the United States and Israel similar to sentiments found in other MENA countries. When asked which country posed the greatest threat to peace in the world, Algerians polled at the end of 2013 named the United States (37 percent) and Israel (22 percent) as the leading threats. In March 2015, Algerians continued to name the United States as the number one threat to international security. (Sources: [WIN/Gallup International Survey](#) [121], [Algeria](#)

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