

MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD IN ALGERIA

Name: Muslim Brotherhood in Algeria

Year of Origin: 1953 (Muslim Brotherhood in Algeria);¹ 1989 or 1990 (Hamas/MSP)²

Founder(s): Abdellatif Soltani and Ahmed Sahnoun (Muslim Brotherhood in Algeria);³ Mahfoud Nahnah (Movement of Society for Peace)⁴

Place(s) of Operation: Algeria

Key Leaders:

- Abderrazak Makri: leader⁵
- Bouguerra Soltani: former leader
- Mahfoud Nahnah: former leader, founder

Associated Organization(s):

- Hamas (in Algeria)⁶
- Harakat al Mujtama As-Silm⁷
- Harakat li-Mujtama' Islami (MSI)⁸
- Mouvement de la Société pour la Paix (HMS)⁹
- Movement of Society for Peace (MSP)¹⁰
- Movement for a Society of Peace (MSP)¹¹
- Movement for the Islamic Society (MIS)¹²

¹ David B. Ottaway, "Algeria: Bloody Past and Fractious Factions," Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, August 27, 2015, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/algeria-bloody-past-and-fractious-factions>.

² Amel Boubekeur, *Political Islam in Algeria* (Brussels: Centre for European Policy Studies, 2007); Dalia Ghanem Yazbeck, "The Future of Algeria's Main Islamist Party," Carnegie Middle East Center, April 14, 2015, <http://carnegie-mec.org/publications/?fa=59769>.

³ Martin Evans and John Phillips, *Algeria: Anger of the Dispossessed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 77; David B. Ottaway, "Algeria: Bloody Past and Fractious Factions," Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, August 27, 2015, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/algeria-bloody-past-and-fractious-factions>.

⁴ Amel Boubekeur, *Political Islam in Algeria* (Brussels: Centre for European Policy Studies, 2007).

⁵ Malik Tahir, "Bataille au MSP: après son ultimatum à Makri, Soltani fait marche arrière," HuffPost Algeria, May 9, 2015, http://www.huffpostmaghreb.com/2015/05/09/story_n_7246934.html.

⁶ Amel Boubekeur, *Political Islam in Algeria* (Brussels: Centre for European Policy Studies, 2007).

⁷ Michael J. Willis, *Politics and Power in the Maghreb: Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco from Independence to the Arab Spring* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 189.

⁸ Amel Boubekeur, *Political Islam in Algeria* (Brussels: Centre for European Policy Studies, 2007).

⁹ Mouvement de la Société pour la Paix, accessed May 12, 2016, <http://hmsalgeria.net/fr/>.

¹⁰ Kaci Racelma, "Algeria's Islamists Seek to Form a Political Union," Al-Monitor, April 29, 2013, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/04/algeria-islamist-parties-seek-political-alliance.html>.

¹¹ Michael J. Willis, *Politics and Power in the Maghreb: Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco from Independence to the Arab Spring* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 189.

¹² Lise Garon, *Dangerous Alliances: Civil Society, the Media & Democratic Transition in North Africa* (London: Zed Books, 2003), viii.

MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD IN ALGERIA

The [Muslim Brotherhood](#) (i.e., the Brotherhood) first emerged in Algeria in the 1950s as a religious association. In the 1990s, the Algerian Brotherhood launched a political party, the Movement of Society for Peace (“Harakat mujtama’ as-silm” or MSP). Since its formation, the MSP has worked from within Algeria’s political system to advocate for the national adoption of Islamic ideals in Algeria, including the establishment of sharia (Islamic law). The MSP today functions as part of the Green Algeria Alliance (GAA), an Islamist coalition that has often stood in opposition to the Algerian government, boycotting the 2014 elections and the 2016 constitutional reform process. According to the MSP’s website, the party seeks to establish a “sovereign Algerian state...within the framework of Islamic principles” and the “adoption of Islamic sharia principles [as the] primary source of legislation in Algeria.”¹³

Islamist clerics Abdellatif Soltani and Ahmed Sahnoun first founded the Algerian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood in 1953. Soltani and Sahnoun were purportedly inspired by the works of Egyptian Brotherhood ideologue [Sayyid Qutb](#).¹⁴ The history of the Brotherhood’s civic participation in Algeria dates back to 1990, when the country opened itself up to a multi-party system. That year, Algerian cleric and Brotherhood sympathizer Mahfoud Nahnah transformed his religious education and charity organization—Al-Irshad wa-l-Islah (Guidance and Reform)—into a political party, Harakat li-Mujtama’ Islami (“the Movement for an Islamic Society,” also known as MSI or Hamas).¹⁵ Nahnah advocated three major tenets in his effort to realizing an Islamic state in Algeria: *itidal* (moderation), *musharaka* (participation), and *marhaliya* (gradualism).¹⁶

The MSI was slow to rise to the forefront in Algerian politics. In the country’s 1991 legislative elections, the party garnered a mere 5.3 percent of the national vote.¹⁷ When civil war broke out in Algeria later that year, the regime clamped down on Islamist parties affiliated with insurgent groups. When the government barred the Islamic Salvation Front (ISF) from participating in the January 1992 elections, the MSI reportedly sympathized with the ISF, as well as the broader violent Islamist insurgency against the government.¹⁸ However, the MSI did not align itself with the Algerian rebel movement, instead preferring to achieve its Islamist objectives from within the existing Algerian political system.¹⁹ Beginning in the 1990s, the Algerian government began

¹³ “Public Policy,” HMSAlgeria.net, accessed May 30, 2016, <http://hmsalgeria.net/ar/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%8A%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%A7%D9%85%D8%A9>.

¹⁴ Martin Evans and John Phillips, *Algeria: Anger of the Dispossessed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 77.

¹⁵ Amel Boubekeur, *Political Islam in Algeria* (Brussels: Centre for European Policy Studies, 2007); Olivier Roy, Antoine Sfeir, and John King, *The Columbia world dictionary of Islamism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 50-51.

¹⁶ Dalia Ghanem Yazbeck, “The Future of Algeria’s Main Islamist Party,” Carnegie Middle East Center, April 14, 2015, <http://carnegie-mec.org/publications/?fa=59769>.

¹⁷ Amel Boubekeur, *Political Islam in Algeria* (Brussels: Centre for European Policy Studies, 2007).

¹⁸ Mathieu Guidère, *Historical Dictionary of Islamic Fundamentalism* (Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2012), 232.

¹⁹ Mathieu Guidère, *Historical Dictionary of Islamic Fundamentalism* (Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2012), 232.

MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD IN ALGERIA

appointing MSI members to several cabinet positions within the government, viewing the MSI as a more palatable alternative to violent Islamist organizations operating at the time.²⁰

By 1995, the MSI had made significant headway in nurturing both mainstream and official support for its cause. In the 1995 presidential elections, Nahnah garnered 25 percent of the national vote, coming second to the Algerian army's candidate, Liamine Zeroual.²¹ During this time, the MSI continued to serve as an ideological intermediary between the secular Algerian government and the rebel jihadist groups, urging reconciliation between the two columns and positioning itself as an alternative solution to both.²²

In 1997, following a government ban on the use of ideological Islam, the MSI reorganized under the name the Movement of Society for Peace (MSP)²³ and changed its slogan from "Islam is the solution" to "Peace is the solution."²⁴ For the next six years, Nahnah tempered his message and embedded his party further within the Algerian political elite, joining it with a variety of government-led coalitions.²⁵

Nahnah died in 2003, and was succeeded as leader of the MSP by Algerian professor Bouguerra Soltani. From 2003 to 2013, Soltani worked to cement the MSP further within the government elite, though allegedly at the expense of his party's mission. In a highly controversial move, Soltani unilaterally advocated for President Abdelaziz Bouteflika's 2009 bid for reelection, which created a rift within the MSP and resulted in the split of a breakaway faction, the Movement for Preaching and Change (MPC).²⁶

Since the Arab Spring in 2011, and the 2013 succession of party leadership from Soltani to the more "radical" leader Abderrazak Makri,²⁷ the party has increasingly distanced itself from the Algerian government and instead reestablished itself as a serious opposition party.²⁸ In 2014, Makri joined up with other Islamist parties and led the MSP in boycotting the presidential elections.²⁹

²⁰ David B. Ottaway, "Algeria: Bloody Past and Fractious Factions," Wilson Center, August 27, 2015, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/algeria-bloody-past-and-fractious-factions>.

²¹ Amel Boubekeur, *Political Islam in Algeria* (Brussels: Centre for European Policy Studies, 2007).

²² Dalia Ghanem Yazbeck, "The Future of Algeria's Main Islamist Party," Carnegie Middle East Center, April 14, 2015, <http://carnegie-mec.org/publications/?fa=59769>.

²³ Amel Boubekeur, *Political Islam in Algeria* (Brussels: Centre for European Policy Studies, 2007).

²⁴ Amel Boubekeur, *Political Islam in Algeria* (Brussels: Centre for European Policy Studies, 2007).

²⁵ Amel Boubekeur, *Political Islam in Algeria* (Brussels: Centre for European Policy Studies, 2007).

²⁶ Dalia Ghanem Yazbeck, "The Future of Algeria's Main Islamist Party," Carnegie Middle East Center, April 14, 2015, <http://carnegie-mec.org/publications/?fa=59769>.

²⁷ Mélanie Matarese, "Algérie : l'Opposition, Nouvelle Religion des Islamistes" *Le Figaro* (Paris), May 11, 2013, <http://blog.lefigaro.fr/algerie/2013/05/faire-oublier-ses-cadres-mouilles.html>.

²⁸ Dalia Ghanem Yazbeck, "The Future of Algeria's Main Islamist Party," Carnegie Middle East Center, April 14, 2015, <http://carnegie-mec.org/publications/?fa=59769>.

²⁹ Lamine Chikhi, "Algerian Opposition Parties Urge Election Boycott," Reuters, February 25, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-algeria-election-idUSBREA100IU20140225>.

MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD IN ALGERIA

Makri also led the party in boycotting the 2016 constitutional process, claiming that “this constitution, which is neither consensual nor having the potential for great reforms, expresses only the views of the president and his entourage.”³⁰ After the MSP came in third in the 2017 parliamentary elections, Makri accused Bouteflika’s ruling coalition of electoral fraud.³¹ Makri intended to run for Algeria’s presidency in 2019 but withdrew after Bouteflika announced he would seek a fifth term.³²

Popular protests calling for Bouteflika’s resignation began in Algeria in February 2019 after the ailing president announced he would seek another term. MSP joined calls for Bouteflika’s resignation and called for the creation of a caretaker government.³³ Bouteflika resigned on April 2, 2019, after more than two decades in power.³⁴ MSP has continued to promote itself as the lead opposition as Algeria’s government transitions after Bouteflika’s resignation.³⁵

History:

- **1953:** Islamist clerics Abdellatif Soltani and Ahmed Sahnoun found the Algerian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood. Soltani and Sahnoun are purportedly inspired by the works of Egyptian ideologue Sayyid Qutb.³⁶
- **1964:** Soltani and Sahnoun—as well as Islamist cleric Abassi Madani—establish a reading group in Algeria known as al-Qiyam (“the Values”). Al-Qiyam calls for the cleansing of anti-Islamic practices in the country and advocates for the closing of shops during prayer hours.³⁷
- **Late 1980s:** Islamist preacher Mahfoud Nahnah creates Al-Irshad wa-l-Islah (Guidance and Reform), a Brotherhood-funded organization devoted to religious education, preaching, and charity work. The organization serves as a precursor to the political party Nahnah will found during the 1990s.³⁸

³⁰ Adlène Meddi, “Algeria’s New Constitution: the Illusion of Transparency,” Middle East Eye, January 13, 2016, <http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/algerias-new-constitution-illusion-transparency-1405080738#sthash.DXYwDJVV.dpuf>.

³¹ AFP, “Algeria Islamists allege fraud in parliamentary polls,” News24, May 6, 2017,

<https://www.news24.com/Africa/News/algeria-islamists-allege-fraud-in-parliamentary-polls-20170506>.

³² “Meet the seven main political actors shaping Algeria after Bouteflika,” Middle East Eye, April 10, 2019,

<https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/meet-seven-main-political-actors-algerias-post-bouteflika-era>.

³³ “Algeria’s Movement of Society for Peace proposes ‘6-month political transition,’” Middle East Monitor, March 27, 2019, <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20190327-algerias-movement-of-society-for-peace-proposes-6-month-political-transition/>.

³⁴ “Algerian Parliament to make president’s resignation official,” Associated Press, April 6, 2019,

<https://www.apnews.com/428b75b3779a4314ab8647f028742349>.

³⁵ “Meet the seven main political actors shaping Algeria after Bouteflika,” Middle East Eye, April 10, 2019,

<https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/meet-seven-main-political-actors-algerias-post-bouteflika-era>.

³⁶ Martin Evans and John Phillips, *Algeria: Anger of the Dispossessed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 77.

³⁷ Amel Boubekeur, *Political Islam in Algeria* (Brussels: Centre for European Policy Studies, 2007).

³⁸ Amel Boubekeur, *Political Islam in Algeria* (Brussels: Centre for European Policy Studies, 2007).

MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD IN ALGERIA

- **1990s:** Algeria accepts a multi-party system. The Muslim Brotherhood launches Harakat li-Mujtama' al-Islami (a.k.a. Hamas), or in English, the Movement for an Islamic Society (MSI).³⁹
- **1991:** The MSI garners 5.3 percent of the vote during the country's legislative elections. With the start of the Algerian civil war in 1991, Nahnah supports the Algerian government's decision to interrupt the 1992 electoral process.⁴⁰
- **1995:** In Algeria's presidential elections, Nahnah wins 25 percent of the vote, coming second to the Algerian army's candidate.⁴¹
- **1997:** Hamas reorganizes under the name the Movement Society for Peace (MSP),⁴² after the Algerian government issues a ban on the ideological use of Islam. The MSP comes in fourth in the country's legislative elections, earning 7 percent of the vote and 69 seats in parliament.⁴³
- **1999:** Nahnah is prevented by the Algerian government from running in the 1999 presidential elections.⁴⁴ He fails to meet the deadline proving that he fought against the French during Algeria's war for independence.⁴⁵ The MSP rallies behind Abdelaziz Bouteflika and subsequently joins up with other government coalitions.⁴⁶
- **2002:** As part of the Presidential Alliance coalition, the MSP wins 7 percent of the vote. Due to the MSP's power-sharing strategy following the 1997 ban on the MSP, however, the party gains only 38 seats in parliament.⁴⁷
- **2003:** Nahnah dies. He is replaced by Algerian professor Bouguerra Soltani.⁴⁸
- **2004:** Allies with two secular parties which have kept Bouteflika in power since 1999.⁴⁹

³⁹ Amel Boubekeur, *Political Islam in Algeria* (Brussels: Centre for European Policy Studies, 2007); Olivier Roy, Antoine Sfeir, and John King, *The Columbia world dictionary of Islamism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 50-51.

⁴⁰ Amel Boubekeur, *Political Islam in Algeria* (Brussels: Centre for European Policy Studies, 2007).

⁴¹ Amel Boubekeur, *Political Islam in Algeria* (Brussels: Centre for European Policy Studies, 2007).

⁴² Amel Boubekeur, *Political Islam in Algeria* (Brussels: Centre for European Policy Studies, 2007).

⁴³ Amel Boubekeur, *Political Islam in Algeria* (Brussels: Centre for European Policy Studies, 2007), <http://aei.pitt.edu/11727/1/1502.pdf>.

⁴⁴ Amel Boubekeur, *Political Islam in Algeria* (Brussels: Centre for European Policy Studies, 2007), <http://aei.pitt.edu/11727/1/1502.pdf>.

⁴⁵ Dalia Ghanem Yazbeck, "The Future of Algeria's Main Islamist Party," Carnegie Middle East Center, April 14, 2015, <http://carnegie-mec.org/publications/?fa=59769>.

⁴⁶ Dalia Ghanem Yazbeck, "The Future of Algeria's Main Islamist Party," Carnegie Middle East Center, April 14, 2015, <http://carnegie-mec.org/publications/?fa=59769>; Amel Boubekeur, *Political Islam in Algeria* (Brussels: Centre for European Policy Studies, 2007), <http://aei.pitt.edu/11727/1/1502.pdf>.

⁴⁷ Amel Boubekeur, *Political Islam in Algeria* (Brussels: Centre for European Policy Studies, 2007), <http://aei.pitt.edu/11727/1/1502.pdf>.

⁴⁸ Amel Boubekeur, *Political Islam in Algeria* (Brussels: Centre for European Policy Studies, 2007), <http://aei.pitt.edu/11727/1/1502.pdf>.

⁴⁹ David B. Ottaway, "Algeria: Bloody Past and Fractious Factions," Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, August 27, 2015, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/algeria-bloody-past-and-fractious-factions>.

MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD IN ALGERIA

- **2007:** The MSP wins 13.36 percent of the vote in Algeria’s legislative elections, earning 52 out of 389 parliamentary seats.⁵⁰
- **2008:** Abdelmadjid Menasra and other MSP members blame Soltani for supporting Bouteflika’s appeal for a third-term without obtaining consensus from the party.⁵¹
- **April 16, 2009:** Soltani’s support for Algerian president Abdelaziz Bouteflika leads to a rift within MSP and the founding of a breakaway party, the Movement for Preaching and Change.⁵²
- **2012:** The MSP withdraws from the presidential alliance and joins the Green Algerian Alliance (GAA), a coalition of several Algerian Islamist parties, including the MSP as well as El-Islah and the Islamic Renaissance Movement (IRM).⁵³
- **May 2012:** Running as part of the GAA in Algeria’s legislative elections, the MSP wins 48 out of 462 seats.⁵⁴
- **May 2013:** Abderrazak Makri takes over as president of the MSP. Under his stewardship, Makri seeks to portray the MSP as a serious opposition force to the Algerian government.⁵⁵
- **2014:** The MSP, alongside other Islamist parties, boycott the April 2014 elections, accusing the government of fixing the electoral process.⁵⁶
- **January 2015:** Makri announces that the MSP will conduct a fresh round of consultations with the Algerian government and opposition.⁵⁷
- **2016:** The MSP boycotts the 2016 constitutional process. Makri claims that “this constitution, which is neither consensual nor having the potential for great reforms, expresses only the views of the president and his entourage.”⁵⁸

⁵⁰ “MSP Garners 52 Seats in Algerian Legislative Elections,” Ikhwanweb, July 5, 2007, <http://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php/2013/12/article.php?id=905>.

⁵¹ Dalia Ghanem Yazbeck, “The Decline of Islamist Parties in Algeria,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, February 13, 2014, <http://carnegieendowment.org/sada/?fa=54510>; Dalia Ghanem Yazbeck, “The Future of Algeria’s Main Islamist Party,” Carnegie Middle East Center, April 14, 2015, <http://carnegie-mec.org/publications/?fa=59769>.

⁵² Dalia Ghanem Yazbeck, “The Future of Algeria’s Main Islamist Party,” Carnegie Middle East Center, April 14, 2015, <http://carnegie-mec.org/publications/?fa=59769>.

⁵³ Dalia Ghanem Yazbeck, “The Decline of Islamist Parties in Algeria,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, February 13, 2014, <http://carnegieendowment.org/sada/?fa=54510>; Dalia Ghanem Yazbeck, “The Future of Algeria’s Main Islamist Party,” Carnegie Middle East Center, April 14, 2015, <http://carnegie-mec.org/publications/?fa=59769>.

⁵⁴ Dalia Ghanem Yazbeck, “The Future of Algeria’s Main Islamist Party,” Carnegie Middle East Center, April 14, 2015, <http://carnegie-mec.org/publications/?fa=59769>.

⁵⁵ Dalia Ghanem Yazbeck, “The Future of Algeria’s Main Islamist Party,” Carnegie Middle East Center, April 14, 2015, <http://carnegie-mec.org/publications/?fa=59769>.

⁵⁶ Lamine Chikhi, “Algerian Opposition Parties Urge Election Boycott,” Reuters, February 25, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-algeria-election-idUSBREA100IU20140225>.

⁵⁷ Dalia Ghanem Yazbeck, “The Future of Algeria’s Main Islamist Party,” Carnegie Middle East Center, April 14, 2015, <http://carnegie-mec.org/publications/?fa=59769>.

⁵⁸ Adlène Meddi, “Algeria’s New Constitution: the Illusion of Transparency,” Middle East Eye, January 13, 2016, <http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/algerias-new-constitution-illusion-transparency-1405080738#sthash.DXYwDJVV.dpuf>.

MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD IN ALGERIA

- **May 2017:** MSP comes in third in Algeria’s parliamentary elections, with 33 out of 462 total seats. Makri accuses the ruling coalition of electoral fraud. Bouteflika’s National Liberation Front wins 164 seats.⁵⁹
- **February 2019 – April 2019:** After Bouteflika announces in late February his intention to seek a fifth presidential term, popular protests erupt calling for his resignation in order to secure a transition of power amid concerns over his failing health. MSP calls on Bouteflika and his aides to step down. The party also calls for the creation of a caretaker government. Bouteflika appoints a caretaker government on March 31. He resigns on April 2.⁶⁰

Violent Activities:

In keeping with the global Brotherhood’s positions, the MSP has formally denounced the use of violence in pursuit of an Islamic state.⁶¹

Ties to Extremist Groups: Not determined.

Designations by Governments and Organizations: Not determined.

In Their Own Words:

Bouguerra Soltani, January 2015

Referring to the January 2015 Charlie Hebdo murders in Paris:

“[It is] a simple case of disgruntled individuals who decided to avenge [the prophet Muhammad].”⁶²

⁵⁹ “Algeria ruling coalition wins parliamentary elections,” Al Jazeera, May 5, 2017, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/05/algeria-ruling-coalition-wins-parliamentary-elections-170505142452661.html>; AFP, “Algeria Islamists allege fraud in parliamentary polls,” News24, May 6, 2017, <https://www.news24.com/Africa/News/algeria-islamists-allege-fraud-in-parliamentary-polls-20170506>.

⁶⁰ “Algerian Parliament to make president’s resignation official,” Associated Press, April 6, 2019, <https://www.apnews.com/428b75b3779a4314ab8647f028742349>; “Algeria’s Bouteflika names new government amid ongoing protests,” Al Jazeera, March 31, 2019, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/03/algeria-bouteflika-names-government-ongoing-protests-190331175139038.html>; “Algeria’s Movement of Society for Peace proposes ‘6-month political transition,’” Middle East Monitor, March 27, 2019, <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20190327-algerias-movement-of-society-for-peace-proposes-6-month-political-transition/>.

⁶¹ Amel Boubekeur, *Political Islam in Algeria* (Brussels: Centre for European Policy Studies, 2007).

⁶² Essaid Wakli, “Tueur Charlie Hebdo : une simple histoire de vengeance pour Bouguerra Soltani,” *Algerie-Focus*, January 19, 2015, <http://www.algerie-focus.com/2015/01/tueur-charlie-hebdo-une-simple-histoire-de-vengeance-pour-bouguerra-soltani/>.