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Navigation guide

Refugee populations in the UK:  
Algerians

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Navigation guide to refugee populations: Algerians  
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## About the author

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## Introduction

The Algerian population in Britain is poorly known and little understood in the wider British community. Until the early 1990s, there were relatively few Algerians in the UK. Over the last ten years, particularly since the escalation of the conflict in Algeria from 1992 onwards, the number of Algerians has grown significantly. Even though this population remains small compared to more established migrant and refugee groups in the UK, it is extremely diverse. Developing events in Algeria have provoked the departure of a number of very different groups of people, many of whom are represented in the population resident in the UK.

Although there are a number of Algerian associations in the UK, these are not necessarily representative of the population as a whole, and although bonds of solidarity between individuals are extremely strong, there is little sense of a unified 'community'. Indeed, some sections of the Algerian population are characterised more by mutual suspicion than by solidarity. This concern is not helped by the widespread ignorance of the situation in Algeria amongst the UK population as a whole. In general Algerians in Britain, particularly recent arrivals, are extremely isolated since many of them lack both a cohesive community and a sympathetic host population.

## About this guide

This navigation guide is focused on Algerian refugees and asylum seekers in the UK, though the scope of the guide is not restricted to those people who have requested or been granted asylum. There is also a considerable group of undocumented Algerians resident in the UK who have either been refused asylum or who, for a variety of reasons, have never applied for international protection. In a legal sense, these people are obviously not refugees, but the guide will also consider their situation. There is considerable agreement that the sociological understanding of refugee populations must be separated from the legal definition, in order to include the category of 'genuine but unrecognised refugees'.<sup>1</sup>

Comments in this guide on the Algerian population will therefore be concerned with those Algerians who left Algeria after the state of emergency was declared in February 1992. Although the author recognises that not all these people are refugees, in either a legal or a sociological sense, the situation of generalised violence that has persisted during the state of emergency is likely to have played a role in their decision to leave the country. In order to keep terminology free from confusion, the guide will refer to those people who are not awaiting the result of an asylum claim, or who have not been recognised as a refugee or granted Exceptional Leave to Remain (ELR), as 'migrants'.<sup>2</sup> This should not be taken as a judgement on the legitimacy of any claim they may have to refugee status. The guide also includes some information on the small population of Algerians who were already resident in the UK when the state of emergency was declared.

This navigation guide aims to present a coherent account of the situation facing Algerians in the UK through the provision of basic information and links to other resources.

- **Section one** briefly examines the historical context of the movement of Algerians to the UK and aims to highlight the range of explanations of Algerian history and introduce the reader to the diversity of material available on this.

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Zolberg, A. R., Suhrke, A. and Aguayo, S. (1989) *Escape from violence: Conflict and the refugee crisis in the developing world*. Open University Press, New York.

<sup>2</sup> ELR status has now been replaced by a new 'humanitarian protection' status. More information about this change is available from the [Refugee Council's news briefing](#) and the [Home Office](#) [accessed 5 May 2004].

*the* INFORMATION CENTRE *about* asylum *and* refugees IN THE UK

- **Section two** provides basic information on the characteristics of the Algerian community, based on the data and information available.
- **Section three** discusses key legislation affecting this population and **section four** turns to statistical data and presents available quantitative information from national and international sources.
- **Section five** provides a brief outline of Algerian literature, music and film in order to give some cultural background to the resident population.
- **Section six** then considers a range of key issues facing this population; asylum, undocumented status, employment, isolation and contacts with Algeria.
- The final sections detail all references and websites cited and provide more information to follow up in each area.

The information in the guide is based on the author's own DPhil research, carried out between May 2000 and September 2001. This remains the most significant research undertaken with the Algerian population in the UK and it is supplemented, for this guide, with follow up work carried out in January and February 2003. This involved primary research with Algerian migrants and a range of key informants in addition to collating data from available NGO reports and secondary literature sources. This guide is updated at regular intervals to reflect key policy changes and incorporate new data.

## Historical context

There is a wide range of online<sup>3</sup> historical sources on Algeria and a growing body of work published in English, as well as a large number of publications in other languages, particularly French. This section provides a brief overview of early events in Algeria's history and the background to the current conflict.

### The turbulent history up to the current conflict

The original inhabitants of North Africa were Berber speaking people. There is a great diversity of Berber languages; the site [Ethnologue](#) cites 13 separate Berber groups currently resident in Algeria, although many of these are very small. By far the most significant are Kabyle, currently spoken by at least 2.5 million people and Chaouia, spoken by 1.4 million. These groups resident in what is now Algeria came under Roman, Vandal and Byzantine influence before the eighth century conquest of the Arabs which profoundly changed the character of the area. Under the influence of the Arabs, Berbers gradually converted to Islam and in the areas of Arabic settlement they intermarried. Berber communities remained relatively distinct in the mountainous areas and these are the areas of strong Berber nationalism today. The Spanish made a number of brief incursions in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries but they were repelled by Ottoman forces. Algeria became part of the Ottoman empire in the sixteenth century.

The area remained under Ottoman control until it was invaded by the French in 1830. For several decades the French remained relatively concentrated on the coast. From 1830 to 1847, the French fought a series of battles with the charismatic figure Abdel-Kader who galvanised Algerian resistance and remains a significant national hero. After they had put down the final 1871 rebellion, the French government began to promote European settlement more actively and the number of Europeans grew. In 1900, there were 500,000 Europeans living in Algeria and by the end of the Second World War this number had grown to more than a million.<sup>4</sup> These settlers were known as *pieds noirs* and took control of the most fertile land. They included not only French but significant groups of Italian and Spanish settlers. As new generations were born and raised away from Europe their own identity evolved, autonomous from Europe and associated very much with North Africa. The French administered Algeria not as a separate colonial territory but as an integral part of France. Uniquely among French colonies, it was subdivided into three *departments*.<sup>5</sup> The bond between France, Algeria and successive generations of *pieds noirs* settlers was captured in the notion of *l'Algérie Française*. The strength of this bond must be appreciated if the tremendous violence of the 1954-62 war, which resulted in Algerian independence, is to be understood.

The first mobilisation for Algerian independence occurred not in Algeria, where the French kept a very tight control over any political developments, but in France. There was a significant Algerian population in France by the 1920s and these emigrants were, and have remained, extremely politically active.<sup>6</sup> The war of 1954-62 was extremely traumatic for both sides and comparisons have inevitably been made between this and the current conflict. Algeria achieved independence on 5 July 1962, though it is a significant reflection of the symbolic importance of the liberation struggle that the most significant day in the Algerian calendar is not 5

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<sup>3</sup> Amongst the most comprehensive is the [book length study](#) at the Library of Congress [accessed 5 May 2004].

<sup>4</sup> Stora, B. (1991) *Histoire de l'Algérie coloniale (1830-1954)*. La Découverte, Paris.

<sup>5</sup> French colonies were administered in one of three ways: first as an Overseas Department (*Département Outre Mer*, DOM, such as Martinique today); secondly as an Overseas Territory (*Territoire Outre Mer*, TOM, such as New Caledonia today), or thirdly as a *Protectorat*, (as was the case for Morocco and Tunisia). Algeria was the only exception.

<sup>6</sup> Stora, B. (1992) *Ils venaient d'Algérie: l'immigration algérienne en France 1912-1992*. Fayard, Paris.

July but the date on which the first shots of the war were fired: 1 November 1954. Mythology and symbolism of the war continues to dominate Algerian political life and throughout the current conflict all sides have claimed to be the true inheritors of the aims of this war.

### The 1954-62 war

What is referred to as the war of Algeria in France, and the National War of Liberation or the Revolution in Algeria, is typically called the Algerian war of independence in English. However, conceiving of it solely as an independence struggle is to underestimate its significance. Though independence was obviously the aim and one of the results of this war, some may suggest that it has more in common with the ending of apartheid in South Africa; the war marked the end of a period of rule by a minority racial group over the majority of the population. The *pieds noirs* of Algeria did not consider themselves to be colonisers. Many of them had lived in Algeria for four or five generations and felt Algeria to be their home just as much as the home of the 'Algerian Muslims'. Algeria was declared to be part of France under the Second Republic, in 1848. More than 100 years later, the prime minister famously declared ' *Ici, c'est la France*' shortly after the opening shots of war on 1 November 1954.<sup>1</sup>

The deep attachment of the *pieds noirs* to Algeria and the continued conviction that Algeria, unique among colonies, was actually an integral part of France explains why the war lasted eight years and was fought to near destruction on both sides, even after it was clear that empires were coming to an end around the world. Both French and Algerian forces fought extremely brutally with widespread use of torture and extra-judicial killings and the total death toll is generally quoted as one million people. This has led some people to compare the current conflict with the previous one<sup>2</sup>, though more recently this has been rejected as obscuring more than it clarifies.<sup>3</sup> The end of the war and the declaration of Algerian independence provoked a tremendous exodus of *pieds noirs* from Algeria; more than half a million people arrived in Marseilles during a period of three months in the summer of 1962.<sup>4</sup> The intensity of this conflict, and the traumatic way in which it ended, soured Franco-Algerian relations for many years. President Bouteflika was the first Algerian head of state to make an official visit to France in 2000.

<sup>1</sup> Horne, A. (1996) *A savage war of peace: Algeria 1954-62*. Papermac, London.

<sup>2</sup> Provost, L. (1996) *La seconde guerre d'Algérie. Le quidproquo franco-algérien*. Flammarion, Paris.

<sup>3</sup> Stora, B. (2001) *La Guerre Invisible Algérie, années 90*. Presses de Science Po, Paris.

<sup>4</sup> Sayad, A., Jordi, J. and Temime, E. (1991) *Migrance: Histoire des Migrations à Marseille vol. 4*. Edisud, Aix-en-Provence.

On independence, the National Liberation Front (*Front de Libération Nationale*, FLN) formed the government, under the presidency of Ahmed Ben Bella. In 1965, Ben Bella was deposed in a coup d'état and an army officer, Houari Boumediène, took over the presidency. Boumediène was responsible for shaping and directing Algeria for the next 13 years. He was extremely influential in forging the institutions of the state and his presidency is viewed with great nostalgia by many Algerians as a time of peace and economic prosperity. Under Boumediène's leadership, Algeria came to be seen as the leader of the non-aligned movement and though it was influenced strongly by socialist policies, particularly from 1971 onwards, it did not express allegiance to either side during the Cold War.

Boumediène died suddenly in 1978 and Chadli Bendjedid became president. In contrast to the 1970s, the 1980s saw growing economic and political disturbance, some say as a result of over-reliance on heavy

industry and under-funding of agriculture during the 1970s.<sup>7</sup> In early 1980, the long-standing demands for cultural recognition from the Berber minority coalesced in the formation of the Berber Cultural Movement (*Mouvement Culturel Berbère*, MCB) and significant protests by Berber groups were violently repressed. This became known as the Berber Spring and took on a significant symbolic importance in all subsequent Berber activism. The Islamist movement also began to grow from the early 1980s, and in 1985 the Islamist leader Mustapha Bouyali carried out a range of violent attacks in the region around Algiers, evading capture (and death) until 1987 and providing an inspiration to more violent Islamist groups that formed in the early 1990s. Serious riots in Algiers and elsewhere in October 1988 prompted the president to abandon the one party system focused on the FLN and introduce a new constitution legalising the formation of political parties in 1989 with the aim of gradually implementing a more democratic system. This provided the trigger for the conflict from which Algeria has still not fully emerged.

## The Algerian conflict and the resulting emigration

### Chronology of events

Since 1992, more than 120,000 people have been killed,<sup>8</sup> tens of thousands have left the country (estimates range as high as 450,000)<sup>9</sup> and an estimated 200,000 people have been internally displaced.<sup>10</sup> The origins of this conflict can be traced back to at least the mid-1980s. Austerity measures, introduced by Chadli from the early 1980s to establish the foundation of a market economy, resulted in growing inequality and withdrawal of public services. This offended the egalitarian aspirations of the Algerian people and was a key factor provoking the riots around the country in October 1988. The introduction of a new political system in 1989 did not fully address the rioters' concerns and in the absence of an effective state response, before or since the riots, popular discontent was mobilised and partially addressed by Islamic groups who provided considerable social assistance.

The new 1989 constitution legalised political parties and a total of 60 were formed. These included the Islamic Salvation Front (*Front Islamique du Salut*, FIS), formed of a disparate collection of religious groups, which quickly mobilised millions of supporters<sup>11</sup> and produced an effective 'challenge' to the regime.<sup>12</sup> The FIS won the local elections of June 1990 very convincingly. The situation became more turbulent during the course of 1991 with a string of provocative statements from the leaders of the FIS that resulted in their arrest. The party nonetheless contested the general elections in December 1991 in which they again achieved a large majority. They looked set to take control of the National Assembly but the army cancelled the second round of the general elections in January 1992.

The situation deteriorated rapidly after the cancellation of the elections. President Chadli resigned and a

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<sup>7</sup> Adamson, K. (1998) *Algeria: a study in competing ideologies*. Casswell, London.

<sup>8</sup> Most historical sources cited here published from the mid-1990s onwards refer to 'at least 100,000', and this was confirmed by President Bouteflika on his election in 1999 (see Amnesty reports). It is now reckoned to be even higher. This figure is an estimate based on Algerian newspaper reports.

<sup>9</sup> The [US Committee for Refugees 2002 report on Algeria](#) refers to 'hundreds of thousands' [accessed 5 May 2004]. Ghiles, F. (1998) 'L'armée a-t-elle une politique économique: chronique de douze années de compromis incertains.' *Pouvoirs* 86 pp. 85-106, and Ait Amara, H., J. Gallot, B. Mediène and P. Sindic (2000) *Algérie, débats pour un issue: Assises pour un nouveau partenariat Algérie, France, Europe* – Marseille 27-28 novembre 1998; Publisud, Paris, cite figures of between 200,000 and 450,000 managers and professional people who have left Algeria during this time, though the source of these statistics is not clear.

<sup>10</sup> The [Global IDP project Algeria page](#) [accessed 5 May 2004].

<sup>11</sup> Addi, L. (1996) 'Réflexion politique sur la tragédie algérienne' *Confluences* 20 pp. 43-51.

<sup>12</sup> Willis, M. (1996) *The Islamist Challenge in Algeria*. Ithaca Press, Reading.

state of emergency was introduced on 9 February 1992 that remains in force. The FIS was declared illegal in March 1992. Mohammed Boudiaf, a respected veteran of the 1954-62 war was appointed by the army to lead the new Council of State. Under Boudiaf's orders, as many as 10,000 Islamist supporters were detained in huge camps in the desert. Boudiaf's assassination in June 1992 confirmed the severity of the situation and destroyed many people's hopes that the crisis would be over quickly. Liamine Zeroual was immediately appointed to replace Boudiaf. Detainees from the camps were progressively released from the summer of 1992 onwards.

The camps had actually provided an opportunity for networks to become established between Islamist activists and many left the camps to join existing armed groups or found others. These armed groups were not well directed or organised<sup>13</sup> but the government was neither prepared, nor the army trained, for dealing with this kind of enemy. From 1993 onwards certain armed groups began a policy of individual assassination, frequently targeting prominent intellectuals, journalists, artists or doctors; during May 1993 alone 200 individuals were assassinated.<sup>14</sup> During 1994, large areas of the country were under the de facto control of the armed groups and there were suggestions that the government could lose control entirely.<sup>15</sup>

In 1994 France stepped in to help the government and arranged or provided more than US\$6 billion of assistance, much of it in the form of military hardware.<sup>16</sup> New presidential elections were held in 1995 confirming Liamine Zeroual as the new president. The elections were welcomed and Zeroual's policies, backed up with substantial French support, were greeted as the beginning of the end of the conflict. He introduced a policy of clemency, involving partial pardons for members of armed groups, and initially there were signs that this was successful. By 1997, hopes that the end of the conflict was near were again destroyed as killings of individuals gradually escalated to a series of terrible massacres of tens and later hundreds of people.

In August and September 1997, hundreds of civilians were killed in the villages of Bentalha, Rais and Beni Messous, near Algiers and by the end of the year, the remote mountainous area of Relizane was targeted. These events terrified the local population and provoked huge internal population movements; some spoke of an 'exodus' from the area near Algiers, the *Mitidja*.<sup>17</sup> The *Groupe Islamique Armée* (Armed Islamic Group, GIA) later claimed responsibility for these massacres, though a series of high profile accounts in the press, and later in books, questioned the role of the army. Few serious commentators support the notion that the army actually committed these massacres, though this is the essence of some of the accusations, but the published accounts at least raise the question of why the government did so little to prevent them occurring.

In 1999, the election of President Bouteflika was again seen as heralding a real change in the war as he outlined a number of bold initiatives to bring an end to the violence. Over time it became clear that these ideas were being blocked due to conflict within the administration, and the hopes incited by his election have faded. By 2001 violent attacks were again increasing, and from April onwards a series of protests to mark the 21<sup>st</sup> anniversary of the Berber Spring were again violently repressed by the police, resulting in the death of at least 60 people and exacerbating the alienation felt by the Berber minority. These events provoked a series of innovative political mobilisations in Kabylia, known as the 'archs' or 'citizens' movement'. Initially this coalition of organisations, based on traditional political structures, appeared to offer a potential solution

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<sup>13</sup> Some commentators have identified as many as seven separate strands of organisation, each with different methods and goals, Khelassi, N. (1998) 'La Violence' *Pouvoirs* 86, pp. 107-116. The most notorious of these is undoubtedly the Groupe Islamique Armée (GIA) which has claimed responsibility for the majority of attacks on civilians.

<sup>14</sup> Reporteurs Sans Frontiers (1994) *Le Drame Algérien: un peuple en otage*. La Découverte, Paris.

<sup>15</sup> *Le Monde* 16.9.94.

<sup>16</sup> Leveau, R. (1994) 'Algérie: les pièges de l'aide internationale' *Politique internationale* 65 automne, pp. 171-192.

<sup>17</sup> Stora, B. (2001) *La Guerre Invisible Algérie, années 90*. Presses de Science Po, Paris.

to the problems of the area through the production of the El Kseur platform.<sup>18</sup> The government has responded to some of these changes, perhaps most significantly by recognising *Tamazight* as a national (though not yet official) language. The citizens' movement has become increasingly intransigent in its demands and has split. There have also been suggestions that it is no longer effectively representing its most significant constituency.<sup>19</sup> The Year of Algeria in France in 2003 provided a positive, though highly controversial (see below) means for the Algerian government to change the terms of the international debate on Algeria and this seems to have been broadly successful. The positive publicity and the lack of any major atrocities in Algeria during 2003 have produced a new feeling of optimism about the end of the crisis in the country. A degree of violence continues however; during 2003 1,500 people were killed in 'terrorist related incidents'. In many other countries this would be considered catastrophic but in Algeria, compared to the last decade, the figure was greeted as an indication of a period of relative calm.

Bouteflika won the recent presidential elections in April 2004, in part due to the continued feeling that under his leadership, Algeria has begun to emerge from the crisis.<sup>20</sup> However, he did not leave much to chance and the candidacy of one of his most significant challengers, the former minister Taleb Ibrahim, was refused before campaigning began without explanation.<sup>21</sup> At present it seems that the gradual improvement in the situation in Algeria is likely to continue, though without any meaningful reform of the political system it is unclear how stable this will be, and some observers emphasise the fragility of the recovery.<sup>22</sup>

## Linking fluctuating numbers of asylum seekers and developing events in Algeria<sup>23</sup>

Empirically it seems that the overall numbers of Algerians requesting asylum relates far more closely to events in Algeria than to any developments in asylum policy in the receiving states. The graph separates requests made in Germany from all other applications since in the early years of conflict Germany was by far the most significant destination for Algerian asylum seekers.

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<sup>18</sup> Available in English at <http://www.amnesty-volunteer.org/uk/algeria/ElKseurPlatform.php> [accessed 21 April 2004].

<sup>19</sup> See the report of the International Crisis Group (report 15 2003) 'Algeria: Unrest and impasse in Kabylia' available at [http://www.crisisweb.org/projects/middleeast/egypt\\_northafrica/reports/A400996\\_10062003.pdf](http://www.crisisweb.org/projects/middleeast/egypt_northafrica/reports/A400996_10062003.pdf) [accessed 21 April 2004].

<sup>20</sup> *Jeune Afrique l'Intelligent* no. 2249 15-21.2.2004 'Bouteflika Le Bilan'.

<sup>21</sup> *Le Monde* (3.3.2004) 'Taleb Ibrahim écarté de la présidentielle algérienne'.

<sup>22</sup> For example, Lyes Si Zoubir (2004) 'Algérie: transition difficile pour une société meurtri' *Le Monde Diplomatique*, March 2004.

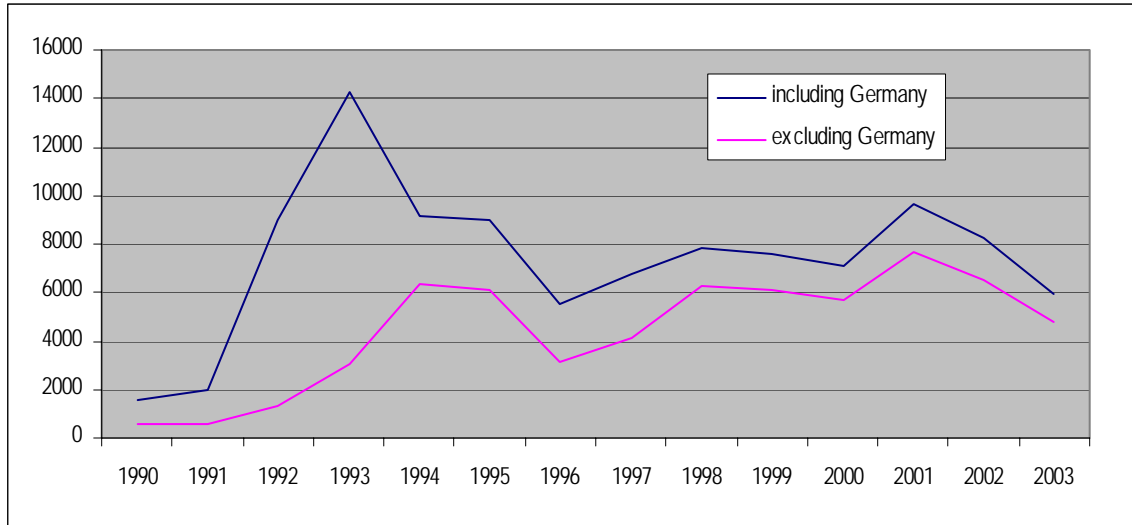
<sup>23</sup> UNHCR (November 2001) *Asylum Applications in Industrialised Countries: 1980 – 1999*. Geneva: UNHCR. Available at

<http://www.unhcr.ch/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home/openssl.pdf?tbl=STATISTICS&id=3c3eb40f4&page=statistics>; UNHCR (March 2002) *Asylum Trends in Europe, North America, Australia, and New Zealand: 1999 – 2001*. Geneva: UNHCR; UNHCR (February 2003) *Asylum applications lodged in industrialized countries: Levels and trends 2000-2002*.

Geneva: UNHCR. Available at [http://www.unhcr.ch/cgi-](http://www.unhcr.ch/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/statistics/+5wwBmejuhqKwwwwwwwwwwwwmFqAIRERfIRfglhFqAIRERfIRfgltFqA5BwBo5Boq5zFqAIRE)

[bin/texis/vtx/statistics/+5wwBmejuhqKwwwwwwwwwwwwmFqAIRERfIRfglhFqAIRERfIRfgltFqA5BwBo5Boq5zFqAIRERfIRfglAFqAIRERfIRfglDzmxwwwwww5Fqw1FqAIRERfIRfgl/openssl.pdf](http://www.unhcr.ch/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/statistics/+5wwBmejuhqKwwwwwwwwwwwwmFqAIRERfIRfglhFqAIRERfIRfgltFqA5BwBo5Boq5zFqAIRERfIRfglAFqAIRERfIRfglDzmxwwwwww5Fqw1FqAIRERfIRfgl/openssl.pdf); UNHCR (February 2004) *Asylum levels and Trends: Europe and non-European Industrialised Countries, 2003*. Available at [http://www.unhcr.ch/cgi-](http://www.unhcr.ch/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home/openssl.pdf?tbl=STATISTICS&id=403b1d7e4&page=statistics)

[bin/texis/vtx/home/openssl.pdf?tbl=STATISTICS&id=403b1d7e4&page=statistics](http://www.unhcr.ch/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home/openssl.pdf?tbl=STATISTICS&id=403b1d7e4&page=statistics). All accessed 11 May 2004.



The total number of Algerian asylum seekers (above) related to events in Algeria (below)

Timeline	
2003	Declining violence
2002	Legislative elections
2001	Attacks in Kabylia
2000	Violence escalates
1999	Bouteflika elected
1998	Massacres spread
1997	Massacres in Algiers area
1995	Zeroual elected; new constitution; policy of clemency
1994	Significant French military aid begins
1993	Assassinations of prominent intellectuals
1992	Elections cancelled; FIS declared illegal; Boudiaf assassinated
1990	FIS win local elections

Even in 1990 the number of Algerian asylum seekers was not inconsiderable, reflecting the continued concern resulting from the 1988 riots. The deteriorating situation provoked by the cancellation of the elections in 1992 forced many more people to leave. This initial movement of asylum seekers included moderate Islamist politicians who left once their membership of the FIS was criminalised, and was directed significantly to Germany. Germany's use of the authorisation principle (see legal issues section) meant that they were far more likely to recognise refugees fleeing the government (therefore Islamists) than refugees fleeing armed groups.

The second movement of refugees from Algeria fled as a result of the assassinations of intellectuals. This group was very different from the first. Both groups of refugees left during 1993 producing the peak of asylum requests during this year.

In 1994, although the overall requests fell due to the dramatic fall in Germany, the numbers of asylum applicants in all other states continued to rise considerably as the violence in Algeria escalated.

Zeroual's election as president in 1995 was greeted with widespread optimism, reflected in the graph of asylum requests with the dramatic fall in 1996. The wave of massacres in 1997 in villages on the outskirts of Algiers shocked the country and forced more people into exile. By the end of the year, the massacres extended to the more remote mountain area of Relizane, again affecting the profile of people leaving the area, and eventually the country, and explaining the continued growth in asylum numbers in 1998.

The election of Bouteflika was again greeted as a promising sign and asylum applications fell slightly, but it was soon clear that this optimism was misplaced. Renewed violence in 2000 was marked by a further increase in applications in 2001, and following the disturbances in Kabylia in 2001, there was another change in profile to include the growing number of refugees from the Berber regions. The continued, gradual fall since 2001 reflects the falling number of attacks during this period, though there were still over 6,000 requests for asylum from Algerians in 2003.<sup>24</sup> Recent reports highlight the fact that, despite improvements in the human rights situation in Algeria, reasons for flight remain.<sup>25</sup>

## Experiences of exile

The unfolding of these events can usefully be related to changes in the numbers of asylum seekers from Algeria (see above). There have been at least five distinct movements of people out of Algeria relating to the unfolding of events over the last decade and each group has a different profile and different needs. These groups consist of moderate Islamists from 1992 onwards, typically from areas that were previously FIS controlled such as around Oran; intellectuals and artists from 1993 onwards, mostly from the capital; army deserters from 1994; more remote rural residents from 1997; and more recently, since the events in Kabylia of 2001, a greater number of Berber migrants. Individuals have left Algeria due to both individual and generalised threats. An individual who had been regularly warned by armed groups during 1993 and 1994 and eventually left, described how he lived with the knowledge that he was a constant target:

It's not the fear of a day, or a week, of an event, a movement, an insurrection that only lasts a day, it really goes on. And you don't know how to live with it, how to be vigilant, how to preserve yourself because a bomb can explode at any time, they can come to your house, they can kill you in the street, on your way to work, they can kill you, and your children.<sup>26</sup>

However, a much greater number of people have been given refugee status due to their fear of the government, and many refugees in Europe face a death threat in Algeria even though their activities have been considered to be political by European courts. There has also been a much larger movement of people who have great difficulty demonstrating the individual persecution that is required for them to receive refugee status and who, in some cases, have no interest in receiving refugee status. However, even for those individuals who have not been individually targeted by either side in the conflict, the generalised state of violence that has prevailed in many parts of Algeria for the last decade is likely to have been the most

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<sup>24</sup> UNHCR (February 2004) *Asylum applications lodged in industrialized countries: Levels and trends 2003*. Available at <http://www.unhcr.ch/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home/openssl.pdf?tbl=STATISTICS&id=403b1d7e4&page=statistics> [accessed 4 May 2004].

<sup>25</sup> Amnesty International (2003a) 'Algeria: Amnesty International concludes visit: promise of change but human rights issues remain unresolved'. MDE 28/004/2003. Available at <http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGMD280042003?open&of=ENG-DZA> [accessed at 4 May 2004]. Amnesty International (2003b) 'Algeria: Asylum seekers fleeing a continuing human rights crisis'. MDE 28/007/2003. Available at <http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGMD280072003?open&of=ENG-DZA> [accessed 4 May 2004].

<sup>26</sup> Collyer, M. (2002) 'Explaining change in established migration systems: the movement of Algerians to France and the UK' University of Sussex, DPhil thesis, bound and recorded at the British Library.

significant factor in their decision to leave. A young student described the sort of occurrence that was relatively widespread, at least in the region around Algiers, for much of the 1990s:

'To go to the university there are two buses and one day I took the first bus. We heard a huge explosion behind us, it was the second bus that had blown up. The windows of the bus had all smashed. We saw these people run towards us, some of them wounded, but we couldn't move. There were twenty or so dead and a lot of injured. I'll never forget it, when you see that you think "and if that was me, in the second bus...if I'd been a bit slower this morning."'27

## Explaining the conflict

Even the most basic facts of the current conflict in Algeria are contested. The initial controversy centred on the army's motives for cancelling the 1992 elections. The army argued that it was acting to protect the democratic process from a party that did not respect democracy.<sup>28</sup> Others refer to a coup d'état and see the cancellation of the election as the result of the efforts of a particular section of the political elite to cling to power.<sup>29</sup> The controversy surrounding the role of the Algerian government in the conflict has continued ever since with a range of accusations of army involvement in killing civilians, particularly in the massacres of 1997 and 1998. There can be no doubt that the government has been complicit in a series of human rights abuses<sup>30</sup> but some observers argue that this is an inevitable consequence of the 'transition to democracy' that began in 1989.<sup>31</sup> The suggestion that the army actively took part in massacres of civilians is obviously a far more serious charge. It was first raised in books by a survivor from one of the massacres<sup>32</sup> and later by an army officer<sup>33</sup> and, though some commentators have found no further evidence to support their claims<sup>34</sup>, others argue that they still cast serious doubt on the issue and the army must at least answer the charge of why it failed to intervene in these massacres.<sup>35</sup>

These allegations have not gone away and further publications, making similar allegations have continued to appear, written by former members of the Algerian armed forces.<sup>36</sup> Attempts by members of the Algerian government to respond to these allegations in the French courts have so far been unsuccessful<sup>37</sup> and in February 2004 the trial of 'X' opened in Paris, relating to a prosecution brought by family members of seven monks who were killed in Algeria in 1996. The deaths of the monks are officially attributed to GIA, though

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<sup>27</sup> Collyer, M. (2002) 'Explaining change in established migration systems: the movement of Algerians to France and the UK' University of Sussex, DPhil thesis, bound and recorded at the British Library.

<sup>28</sup> Taheri, A. (1998) 'Entretien avec le général X: Algérie: Les grands cimenterres sous la lune.' *Politique Internationale* 79, pp. 11-32.

<sup>29</sup> Addi, L. (1999) 'L'armée, la nation et l'Etat en Algérie' *Confluences* 29, pp. 39-47.

<sup>30</sup> Criticisms of the Algerian government's human rights record are extensively documented in a range of reports from [Amnesty International](#) and [Human Rights Watch](#) and are raised in two [UN reports on Algeria](#) in 1998 [all accessed 5 May 2004].

<sup>31</sup> Djerbal, D. (1998) 'Algérie: La Communauté Internationale et les Droits de l'Homme: Entre Souveraineté et Droit d'Ingerence.' *Monde Arabe Maghreb Machrek* 162 pp. 119-124.

<sup>32</sup> Yous, N. (2000) *Qui a tué à Benthalha? Chronique d'un massacre annoncé*. La Découverte, Paris.

<sup>33</sup> Souaidia, H. (2001) *La Sale Guerre*. La Découverte, Paris.

<sup>34</sup> Stora, B. (2001) *La Guerre Invisible Algérie, années 90*, Presses de Science Po, Paris.

<sup>35</sup> Roberts, H. (2003) *Algeria the battlefield 1998-2002: studies in a broken polity*. Verso, London.

<sup>36</sup> Aboud, H. (2002) *La Mafia des Généraux* Lattes, Paris; Samraoui, M. (2003) *Chronique des Années de Sang*. Denoël, Paris.

<sup>37</sup> General Khaled Nezzar sued the author of *La Sale Guerre*, Habib Souadia, in 2002. The judge was careful not to make the test the truth of the interpretation of events given by each side but the verdict nonetheless found in Souadia's favour and was interpreted as an embarrassment for the Algerian government. The proceedings of the trial have been published as *Le Procès de la 'sale guerre' Algérie: Le General-Major Khaled Nezzar contre le Lieutenant Habib Souadia*. La Découverte, Paris (2002).

the Paris court significantly found that there was sufficient doubt in the case to allow the prosecution to proceed.<sup>38</sup> The trial is likely to last several years and although it is unlikely to find much conclusive evidence, it will certainly prove embarrassing to the Algerian government and could be interpreted as a further test in the 'who is killing who' debate.

The government maintains increasingly stringent controls on information so it is often difficult to follow the twists and turns of events in Algeria, and more difficult still to understand the power struggles behind them. This has encouraged the growth of independent sources of information, frequently produced by emigrants and diffused through the internet (see below). As with the 1954-62 conflict, it is likely that the 'facts' behind the events of this conflict will take many decades to surface.

### Algeria on the web

There is now a huge range of websites devoted to Algerian issues. These range from official sites of Algerian national newspapers, government departments<sup>1</sup> and [embassies](#), political parties,<sup>2</sup> pressure groups of many kinds, solidarity or development organisations,<sup>3</sup> cultural pages,<sup>4</sup> economic advice columns,<sup>5</sup> [directories](#) and bulletin boards encouraging discussion on a wide range of subjects. Many of these are produced by and/or for the emigrant community.<sup>6</sup> Algeria is obviously not exceptional in this. What is, perhaps, more unusual is the high level of control that the government maintains over national and international media and the low level of confidence in official explanations felt by many Algerians. This combination of factors has produced a huge range of alternative information sources on the internet concerning the history of the current conflict and offering a range of explanations.

[Algeria Interface](#) (in English and French) offers a wealth of detail and extracts of local Algerian newspapers and official reports with little apparent selectivity of coverage. Algeria Interface is one of the few Algerian sites in English, though there is also a bimonthly update hosted by the UK Amnesty Volunteer page that provides detailed and comprehensive coverage. The site of [Algeria Watch](#) (in French and German) is also extremely comprehensive and regularly updated. One of the journalists on Algeria Watch co-wrote Nesroulah Yous' polemic account of the massacre at Bentlha and Algeria Watch has paid particular attention to these debates. This degree of focus on the issue of 'who is *really* killing?', which is unlikely to ever be effectively proved or disproved, led Paul Silverstein to comment on the prevalence of conspiracy theories in these transnational fora.<sup>7</sup> The question of responsibility for the massacres perhaps receives more attention than any other issue. Sites such as [POUR!](#) are devoted to undermining suggestions that the army is responsible for the massacres since its authors feel that this removes guilt from the Islamist groups where they feel the real danger lies. POUR! has a long, comprehensive dossier of evidence of Islamist activity in France. Their links are also strongly critical of the Algerian government and they produce an extensive almost daily round up of news on Algerian issues.

The [Mouvement Algérien des Officiers Libres \(MAOL\)](#) is another interesting and controversial organisation, made up of dissident officers from the Algerian army. Their website (in Arabic, French and English) focuses on publishing detailed reports on the activities of the most important generals in government. POUR! has linked MAOL with Islamist groups,<sup>8</sup> but MAOL challenge this evidence and maintain their independence from political parties.<sup>9</sup> Avowed Islamist sites have also been keen to publicise any information that will discredit the government, and both the [FIS](#) (in English, French and

<sup>38</sup> *Le Monde* 20.2.04

Arabic) and the Islamic focused site [Hijra](#) (in French and Arabic)<sup>10</sup> have covered details of the accusations against the government. Finally the Berber minority also has a very significant community across the world. A number of these sites are focused on Berber issues generally but [Kabyle.com](#) (in English, French and Tamazityt) presents an Algerian focused view of Berber issues.

<sup>1</sup> See the [National Statistic Office](#) [accessed 4 May 2004].

<sup>2</sup> See the [RCD](#) [accessed 4 May 2004].

<sup>3</sup> See [Algériens du Monde](#) [accessed 4 May 2004].

<sup>4</sup> [Algeriades](#) or Planet DZ [accessed 4 May 2004].

<sup>5</sup> Such as [Algeria Focus](#) [accessed 4 May 2004].

<sup>6</sup> Collyer, M. (2003) 'Are there national borders in cyberspace? Evidence from the Algerian transnational community' *Geography* (forthcoming).

<sup>7</sup> Silverstein, P.A. (2000) 'Regimes of (un)truth: conspiracy theory and the transnationalization of the Algerian civil war' *Middle East Report* 214, pp. 6-10.

<sup>8</sup> POUR! letter 29 (2000).

<sup>9</sup> See the French *Libération* 17.5.01.

<sup>10</sup> Hijra means migration in Arabic and has strong religious connotations. This site has not been updated for some time.

## Profile of the Algerian population in UK

This section turns to the Algerian population in the UK, presenting an overall profile. It is unfortunately only a partial picture as there has been very little research on the Algerian population in the UK. The total number of Algerians present in the UK is currently estimated at between 25,000 and 30,000 people. Even the most significant study that exists only interviewed 30 individuals<sup>39</sup> and other studies focused on Algerians have spoken to even fewer people.<sup>40</sup> Algerians figure in more general work but typically in even fewer numbers.<sup>41</sup> Refugee support groups and other NGOs are of course in touch with many more individuals but few keep detailed records of their client group, and some do not even record the nationality of their clients.

Even where records exist, these are not much larger than the studies undertaken; the largest data source the author was able to consult recorded only nationality, gender and qualifications for 242 individuals. The information that follows is based on the small pool of research that exists, material gleaned from broader studies of the UK population, information obtained from NGOs and interviews with service providers, lawyers, NGO workers, refugee community organisations and key members of the Algerian community.<sup>42</sup> It is by no means a complete picture, and may contain considerable inaccuracies, but can be considered the most accurate profile that is currently available.

### Gender

Available evidence suggests that the Algerian population in the UK is overwhelmingly male.

- Of those recorded as being born in Algeria by the 2001 census, 70.5% were male.
- Support services and lawyers in London working with Algerians reported that the Algerian client group was comprised of between zero and eight per cent women.<sup>43</sup>

Possible explanations may be that:

- Algerian women are present in larger numbers but do not use services;
- Algerian women are more likely to live with relatives and since Algerians are concentrated in France their family is more likely to be located there;
- the UK is generally reached by undocumented migration and women are less prepared to resort to undocumented migration than men.

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<sup>39</sup> Collyer, M. (2002) 'Explaining change in established migration systems: the movement of Algerians to France and the UK' University of Sussex, DPhil thesis, bound and recorded at the British Library. A summary of this research is available as Collyer, M. (2003) 'Explaining change in established migration systems: the movement of Algerians to France and the UK' *Sussex Migration Working Paper* 15, Sussex Centre for Migration Research, Brighton. Available at [http://www.sussex.ac.uk/migration/publications/working\\_papers/mwp16.pdf](http://www.sussex.ac.uk/migration/publications/working_papers/mwp16.pdf).

<sup>40</sup> Rocheron, Y. (2002) 'Paradoxes of Hijrah (Exile): Tales from Algerian Men in Britain' in S. Ouditt ed. *Displaced persons: Conditions of exile in European culture*. Ashgate, Aldershot.

<sup>41</sup> Nagel, C. (2001) 'Hidden minorities and the politics of 'race': the case of British Arab activists in London' *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 27.

<sup>42</sup> The bulk of this formed part of the author's DPhil research, although a number of organisations and individuals were contacted as part of the research for this guide in January and February 2003 to confirm that the issues are still relevant.

<sup>43</sup> Collyer, M. (2002) 'Explaining change in established migration systems: the movement of Algerians to France and the UK' University of Sussex, DPhil thesis, bound and recorded at the British Library.

## Ethnic background

- Algerians are mainly Arabs but there is a significant Berber presence (approximately 10% of the population in Algeria). Although Berbers fall into a number of distinct sub-groups (the four most significant are Kabyle, Choauia, Toureg and Mozabite), they are typically categorised as a single ethnic minority in Algeria.
- Berbers, particularly Kabyles, are over represented within the Algerian community in France (approximately 20% of Algerians in France are of Berber origin).
- There is also a significant Berber presence in the UK, though the exact proportion is unknown.
  - The Member of the Algerian National Assembly representing emigrants in Northern Europe elected in 1997 is a member of the RCD (*Rassemblement pour la Culture et la Democratie*), a party with a strong Berber constituency.
  - There was a small but significant protest in Trafalgar Square, London, against the violence of the police in the Berber region of Kabylia in 2001.
  - However, no services reported receiving a large number of Berber clients and they are likely to remain a minority<sup>44</sup> within the wider Algerian population.

## Languages spoken

- The nationally recognised languages in Algeria are Arabic and, since 2002, the Berber language Tamaziyt; which of them is spoken will depend on ethnic background. The Arabic spoken is an Algerian dialect that is different from standard Arabic.
- Any Algerian educated to secondary level will also speak some French.
- English is growing in popularity and becoming more widely spoken, especially among those educated to a higher level.

## Religion

- Islam is one of the founding principles of the Algerian state and the official religion of Algeria. The majority of Algerians are Sunnis and the Malki judicial school is the most common. South Asian Muslims, the most significant Muslim group in Britain, are Sunni and typically from the Hanafi judicial school, which is considered by Malkis to be far less conservative. There is no barrier between judicial schools and Algerians worship in a whole range of mosques in the UK.
- Though Algeria is far from being an Islamic state, as Islamic law (*shari'a*) is not in force, there is a strong Islamic influence on private or family law. The *Code de la Famille* (Family Code), introduced in 1984 and still in force, clearly relates to *shari'a* and is strongly opposed by feminist groups.
- Many Algerian Islamist groups and political parties draw their influence most strongly from groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood, founded in Egypt in 1928.

## Age

- A wide diversity of ages is represented, though there are many more young people.
- Those who have arrived since 1992 are much younger. This is unsurprising since 75% of the Algerian population is now under the age of 30.

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<sup>44</sup> Collyer, M. (2002) 'Explaining change in established migration systems: the movement of Algerians to France and the UK' University of Sussex, DPhil thesis, bound and recorded at the British Library.

- Algerians who have been in the UK for longer are considerably older but much fewer in number.

## Academic qualifications

- The small number of Algerians who arrived in the 1970s and 1980s are very highly qualified, in contrast to the more working class migration to France during this period.
- Studies suggest that Algerian emigrants since 1990 have generally been very well qualified, and that those with degree level education are over-represented compared to the UK population and compared to those who remained in Algeria.<sup>45</sup>

## Profession

- The large proportion of the Algerian population who are undocumented means that the majority are working well below their high level of qualification.
- Even those with documented status are frequently working in unskilled jobs. This is particularly the case with doctors who are considered sufficiently qualified to work in France without retraining but stand little chance of passing the strict language requirements for recognition in the UK.

## Length of residence

- Those individuals born in Algeria who were present for the 1991 census now make up approximately 20% of Algerians born in Britain (30% of those registered in the 2001 census).
- The large majority of Algerians have therefore arrived within the last 10 years. It is likely that this will be skewed even more to the last five years since Algerians did not begin to request asylum in significant numbers until 1995.

## Political affiliation

- Those Algerians in Britain who voted in the 1997 Algerian general elections formed part of the section of the emigrant community (Northern Europe) who voted a member of the RCD to represent them at the National Assembly. The RCD is a strongly anti-Islamist, Berber party. Unfortunately the vote is not broken down further so this provides only an indication of the political affiliations of Algerians resident in Britain.
- One of the six members of the moderate wing of the *Front de Libération Nationale* (FIS), Djaffar Al Houari, is based in London. His role is to represent the FIS to the International Arab press based in London, not to organise the community politically.
- There is some evidence of a more extremist position, such as the organisation 'The Algerian Community of Great Britain', who were active in 1994 and 1995 but have apparently disappeared.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Collyer, M. (2002) 'Explaining change in established migration systems: the movement of Algerians to France and the UK' University of Sussex, DPhil thesis, bound and recorded at the British Library; Rocheron, Y. (2002) 'Paradoxes of Hijrah (Exile): Tales from Algerian Men in Britain' in S. Ouditt ed. *Displaced persons: Conditions of exile in European culture*. Ashgate, Aldershot.

<sup>46</sup> This group distributed leaflets in London in 1994 and published a summary of news reports on Algeria in 1995 but have had no public profile since. Anecdotal evidence (see Collyer, M. 2002 'Explaining change in established migration systems: the movement of Algerians to France and the UK', University of Sussex) suggests that a number of them left for Afghanistan in 1996 or 1997.

- There is some evidence that younger Algerians develop political interests<sup>47</sup>, but research suggests that this may be a minority position in the UK<sup>48</sup>. Younger Algerians, who have now experienced war in Algeria for more than half of their lives are most often deliberately apolitical, rejecting all sides in the conflict.<sup>49</sup>

## Geographic distribution

- Algerians are overwhelmingly concentrated in London.
- Within London there are concentrations around Finsbury Park, where the Algerian Refugee Council is located and in Waltham Forest where the Algerian Welfare Association is based.
- Dispersal statistics collated at the end of January 2003 showed that the largest numbers of Algerian asylum seekers in dispersal accommodation were based in Glasgow, Sheffield, Birmingham and Manchester. Outside London, it has also been suggested that there are also significant Algerian communities in Bournemouth and Leicester partly due to the government's policy of dispersing asylum seekers to particular locations, but also due to the development of social networks.

## Other characteristics

The Algerian community in the UK has a growing reputation as an artistic community. There are certainly a large number of singers, poets and artists for a relatively small population. This may be attributed to the profile of emigrants during the 1990s. These migrants may be more likely to be interested in artistic pursuits due to the circumstances of their flight from Algeria (see historical context on the flight of intellectuals and the cultural background section on targeting of writers and musicians).

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<sup>47</sup> Denaud, P. (1997) *Le FIS : Sa direction parle...* Harmattan, Paris.

<sup>48</sup> Collyer, M. (2002) 'Explaining change in established migration systems: the movement of Algerians to France and the UK' University of Sussex, DPhil thesis, bound and recorded at the British Library.

<sup>49</sup> Collyer, M. (2002) 'Explaining change in established migration systems: the movement of Algerians to France and the UK' University of Sussex, DPhil thesis, bound and recorded at the British Library.

## Legal aspects

The most significant legal issues affecting Algerians' journey to and residence in Britain relate to visa restrictions, asylum applications and detention.

### Visa restrictions

Visas for Algerians were introduced later than for other asylum-seeking nationalities, but restrictions have been, and remain, tight.

- Algerians were required to hold a visa for the UK from March 1989.<sup>50</sup>
- Since [May 2003](#), Algerians have needed a transit visa to pass through any British airport.

There is general agreement amongst the Algerian population and service providers that it is extremely difficult to get a visa to come to the UK. A 29-year old man commented:

'If you want to make a list of all the countries to get a visa, Britain comes at the top. It is the most difficult. The US is maybe fifth or sixth. France is tenth, it's easy to get a visa for France, but Britain! It's easier to get a visa for Paradise than for Britain!'

Throughout much of the conflict in Algeria, British visas were not available in Algeria. In 1994, the visa section of the British embassy in Algiers closed and all applications had to be submitted to the British embassies in Tunis or Paris. A 35 year-old man who spoke excellent English and was employed in well paid, full-time work in Algiers described his experiences at the British embassy in Tunis:

'I stayed the night in Tunis. There were only a few people in front of me in the queue, at seven in the morning. I was told that in 1995 there were huge queues from very early in the morning, but now people know there's no point. They told me 'I'm sorry, we can't give you a visa until your country is safe again'. They didn't give me any more information than that. [...] It's very expensive and you have to pay even if you're not successful.'<sup>51</sup>

This was the end of 1997, when the shocking massacres very near this man's house were front-page news around the world. The story he relates, if accurate, illustrates the difficulty of obtaining a visa, even for someone in his privileged position at an extremely dangerous time.

The visa section in the British embassy in Algiers remained closed until the summer of 2002. In research studies undertaken with the Algerian population, this difficulty of obtaining a visa for the UK was frequently given as the reason for undocumented entry.<sup>52</sup>

## Asylum

In the past, Algerians could emigrate easily but since the introduction of visa restrictions, asylum is now one of the only options for those wishing to migrate. The ongoing conflict in Algeria has produced a significant

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<sup>50</sup> Personal communication with Mr Yamba, Pro-Consul, British Embassy, Algiers.

<sup>51</sup> Collyer, M. (2002) 'Explaining change in established migration systems: the movement of Algerians to France and the UK' University of Sussex, DPhil thesis, bound and recorded at the British Library.

<sup>52</sup> Collyer, M. (2002) 'Explaining change in established migration systems: the movement of Algerians to France and the UK' University of Sussex, DPhil thesis, bound and recorded at the British Library.

emigration of refugees and more Algerians request asylum in Europe than enter Europe for any other reason.

The results of claims registered by Algerians have fluctuated considerably in the UK. Asylum claims from Algerians were especially successful in 1998 and 1999 but in the early 1990s and since 1999, Algerians have been less likely to be granted asylum than all nationalities taken together.<sup>53</sup> From 1990 onwards, Algerians have also been far less likely to receive Exceptional Leave to Remain (ELR) than the average for all nationalities combined.<sup>54</sup>

Several observations have been advanced to suggest that asylum policy does not impact positively on Algerians' decisions to choose the UK as an asylum destination.

- In common with most asylum seekers in the UK, Algerians have very little information on the asylum system before they arrive. Even those interviewed in the former Red Cross Centre at Sangatte could give no precise information on the British asylum system.<sup>55</sup>
- The rise in the number of Algerian asylum seekers in certain years does not correspond to the years when they were most likely to receive asylum, suggesting that the likelihood of receiving a positive decision on their claim was not a factor.<sup>56</sup>
- Despite the fact that the interpretation of the issue of agents of persecution in the British courts is favourable to Algerians (see box 1), the UK still does not receive large numbers of Algerian asylum seekers.

#### Agents of persecution

Article 1A(2) of the 1951 Geneva Convention on the Status of Refugees defines who is a refugee. One of the essential elements in this definition is 'a well founded fear of being persecuted'. The Geneva Convention is not specific as to the source of this persecution but it is generally accepted that it may arise under three sets of circumstances.<sup>1</sup>

- I. The persecution is derived from the state.
- II. The persecution is derived from an agent other than the state but the state encourages or tolerates this persecution.
- III. The persecution is derived from an agent other than the state but the state is powerless to offer any protection.

Situations (I) and (II) are uncontroversial and asylum is usually granted. Controversy arises in the third case and there is disagreement between European judicial systems over whether the third case counts as persecution or not. Any Algerian fleeing persecution from an armed group will fall into this category since this persecution is occurring because the government is powerless to prevent it. The French and German judicial systems both argue that type (III) is not persecution and have rejected a great many asylum claims from Algerians as a result. The Franco-German position is referred to as the

<sup>53</sup> Based on the number of Algerians who were granted asylum (after the first decision and on appeal) as a percentage of all Algerians who requested asylum, compared with the same indicator for all nationalities.

<sup>54</sup> All based on Home Office statistics.

<sup>55</sup> Collyer, M. (2002) 'Explaining change in established migration systems: the movement of Algerians to France and the UK' University of Sussex, DPhil thesis, bound and recorded at the British Library.

<sup>56</sup> Collyer, M. (2002) 'Explaining change in established migration systems: the movement of Algerians to France and the UK' University of Sussex, DPhil thesis, bound and recorded at the British Library.

'authorisation principle' since the state must authorise the persecution. This interpretation has been criticised as incorrect by a range of NGOs,<sup>2</sup> UNHCR<sup>3</sup> and a number of lawyers.<sup>4</sup> The British system does not apply the authorisation principle and so tends to recognise Algerians fleeing persecution from 'non-state agents'.

The European Commission Directive on a common refugee definition was finally agreed on 30 April 2004. This directive recognises persecution arising from a 'non-state actor where the state is unable or unwilling to provide effective protection'<sup>5</sup> which effectively covers situation (III). The most recent French law on asylum also recognises persecution from non-state sources, a significant change to previous French practice.<sup>6</sup>

One of the most famous cases and an important test case for this principle is Aitsegeur, an Algerian man who had entered Britain from France and claimed asylum. The Secretary of State had ruled that he should be returned to France under the Dublin Convention (see below) but the House of Lords disagreed, arguing that due to the likelihood of him being returned to Algeria from France, France, effectively, was not a safe country and he should remain.<sup>7</sup> This case reveals the difficulty of harmonising asylum law in Europe, as well as the precarious nature of the position of many Algerian asylum seekers.

<sup>1</sup> Creach, X. and Schreiner. C. (1996) 'Regards sur la Jurisprudence Française en matière d'agents de persécution' *Migrations Société* 8(48), pp. 45-56

<sup>2</sup> Cimade, LDH, MRAP (1997), 'Les lois en discussion sur la nationalité, l'entrée et le séjour des étrangers' *Confluences* no.24 pp. 121-127 ; USCR (1999) *Gross Negligence Dressed up in Legalese: restrictive interpretations on 'Agents of Persecution' and their impact on Algerian asylum seekers in Germany and France*, US Committee for Refugees, Washington.

<sup>3</sup> UNHCR (1995) *Lignes directrices du HCR concernant l'éligibilité au statut des demandeurs d'asile algériens*. UNHCR, Geneva.

<sup>4</sup> Creach, X. and Schreiner. C. (1996) 'Regards sur la Jurisprudence Française en matière d'agents de persécution' *Migrations Société* 8(48), pp. 45-56.

<sup>5</sup> Directive on minimum standards for the qualification and status of third country nationals and stateless persons as refugees or as persons who otherwise need international protection COM (2001) 510 final Article 9(1)c.

<sup>6</sup> The law of 10.12.2003. Though this must be seen as a positive development, GISTI provides a very negative overall assessment of the law (GISTI communiqué 30.4.2003).

<sup>7</sup> R. v. Sec of State ex parte Adan and Aitsegeur House of Lords [2000].

Due to the difficulty of obtaining a visa to get to the UK, Algerian asylum seekers typically arrive without documents directly from France. Under the Dublin Convention, Algerian asylum seekers arriving in this way would normally be sent back directly. Important legal precedents have been established to prevent this occurring but it is possible that now that Dublin II has been approved these will be overruled.

### The Dublin Convention

The Dublin Convention was signed between member states of the European Union in 1990 and finally came into force in September 1997. It sets out to determine which member state is responsible for assessing an asylum claim. The Convention was widely criticised as ineffective and unjust<sup>1</sup> and not much used.<sup>2</sup> In 2001, the European Commission proposed a regulation to replace the Dublin Convention which has become known as 'Dublin II'. The proposal was not very different but introduced a new aim of preventing 'secondary movement' of asylum seekers from one member state to another.

This proposal was finally approved by the European Council in December 2003. The final text resembles the original Dublin Convention even more closely than the proposal and may well be implemented more effectively than the original regulation.<sup>4</sup>

The Dublin Convention replaced an existing bilateral agreement on return of asylum seekers between the UK and France (often called the 'gentleman's agreement') signed in 1995. There has been [considerable debate in parliament](#) on whether this agreement was replaced by Dublin, or was allowed to lapse by the Labour government. Once it became clear that the Dublin Convention was not performing as well as had been hoped, the UK government attempted to renegotiate the bilateral agreement<sup>3</sup>. However, the situation of the Red Cross centre at Sangatte complicated the issue and this bilateral agreement has still not been signed.

<sup>1</sup> ECRE (2001) *Comments from the European Council on Refugees and Exiles on the Proposal for a Council Regulation establishing the criteria and mechanisms for determining the Member State responsible for examining an asylum application lodged in one of the Member States by a third country national*, ECRE, London; European Commission (2000) *Commission Staff Working Paper Revisiting the Dublin Convention* SEC (2000) 522.

<sup>2</sup> The Convention came into force in September 1997 and its use for Algerians was shaken by the case of Aitsegneur. Following the House of Lords judgement in this case the Convention virtually ceased to apply to Algerians. The Danish Refugee Council undertook the only comprehensive empirical analysis of the workings of the Dublin Convention from 1997 to 2000 (Danish Refugee Council, 2001, [Analysis of the Dublin Convention](#), available at <http://www.flygtning.dk/publikationer/rapporter/dublin/dublin.pdf> [accessed 4 May 2004]). This study gives no indication of separate nationality groups but reveals that in 1998 and 1999, approximately 20% of all asylum applications to the UK were investigated under the Dublin Convention.

<sup>3</sup> The question of renegotiation was first discussed at the Anglo-French summit in Cahors on 9 February 2001 (*Guardian* 6.2.01) but this was unsuccessful.

<sup>4</sup> Collyer (2004 forthcoming).

## Anti-terrorism legislation

From 2000 onwards, Algerians have been disproportionately affected by anti-terrorism legislation and its implementation.

There have been two important acts:

- [The Terrorism Act \(2000\)](#) defined terrorism as an international issue for the first time and proscribed a number of organisations including the Algerian *Groupe Islamique Armée* (GIA), (added to Schedule 2).
- [The Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act \(2001\)](#) related terrorism explicitly to immigration and asylum (in part 4) and allowed for indefinite detention without charge for individuals 'suspected' by the Home Secretary of being linked to terrorism.

The French government has been openly critical of the British and German positions on granting asylum to members of the Algerian Islamist opposition since soon after the beginning of the conflict in Algeria.<sup>58</sup> The Terrorism Act (2000) was an acknowledgement of their criticism. The Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act (2001) was a direct response to the events of 11 September 2001 and went further in granting the Home Secretary considerable powers. The majority of individuals detained under both of these acts have

<sup>57</sup> Home Office statistical bulletins (1990 – 2001).

<sup>58</sup> In October 1994, the French Minister of the Interior, Charles Pasqua was openly critical of the British and German governments for not acting on his request to ban the FIS (*Le Monde* 4.10.94).

been Algerian, though many of those people arrested have been released without charge (see key issues section).

Only one Algerian has been conclusively linked with 'serious non-political crimes' in the British courts (see below). This occurred in 1996, well before either of these acts was passed, and suggests that previous legislation may have been sufficient to protect Britain from violent individuals.

#### The case of T

T claimed asylum in the UK in 1994. He admitted involvement in a bomb attack on Algiers airport in which 10 people had died but argued that this was a political act and should not bar him from refugee status in the UK. His case eventually went to the House of Lords in 1996, and has become an important test case for the exclusion clause (Article 1F) of the Geneva Convention. In his judgement, Lord Mustill argued:

'Those who use violence and fear to struggle against oppression may themselves be oppressors, causing as much suffering to the defenceless as those whom they seek to displace. When they flee to a foreign country the impulse to protect them from persecution remains, but it is muted. The community as a whole has a moral right to protection, which should not be compromised by offering too ready a refuge to those who, having embroiled the population in violence, find themselves on the losing side.'<sup>1</sup>

Although Lord Mustill accepted that, but for these violent acts, T would be considered a refugee, this violent activity was sufficient to exclude him under article 1F. This finding is important since on the only occasion when it has been demonstrated that an Algerian has been involved in violent activity, the legal framework that existed in 1996 was sufficient to exclude him from protection as a refugee.

<sup>1</sup> T v Secretary of State for the Home Department House of Lords [1996] 2 All ER 865, [1996] 2 WLR 766.

## Statistics

### Numbers present in the UK

The 1991 UK census recorded 3,453 Algerian-born residents in the UK. Ten years later, the 2001 UK census recorded 10,672 Algerian-born residents in the UK. However, it is important to note that this figure is based only on the number of people *born* in Algeria. This obviously includes people who may well not consider themselves to be Algerian (such as *pieds noirs*, for example) and, conversely, does not include others who may consider themselves to be Algerian, such as British or French-born children of Algerian migrants.

The 2001 census also reveals some interesting demographic trends relating to the Algerian-born population. The overwhelming majority of those recorded in the census were male (70.5% of the total) and were predominantly aged between 30 and 39 years (44.4% of the total). The immigration status of individuals is not recorded in the census, so it is impossible to determine how many of this number are recognised refugees and how many entered through other channels.

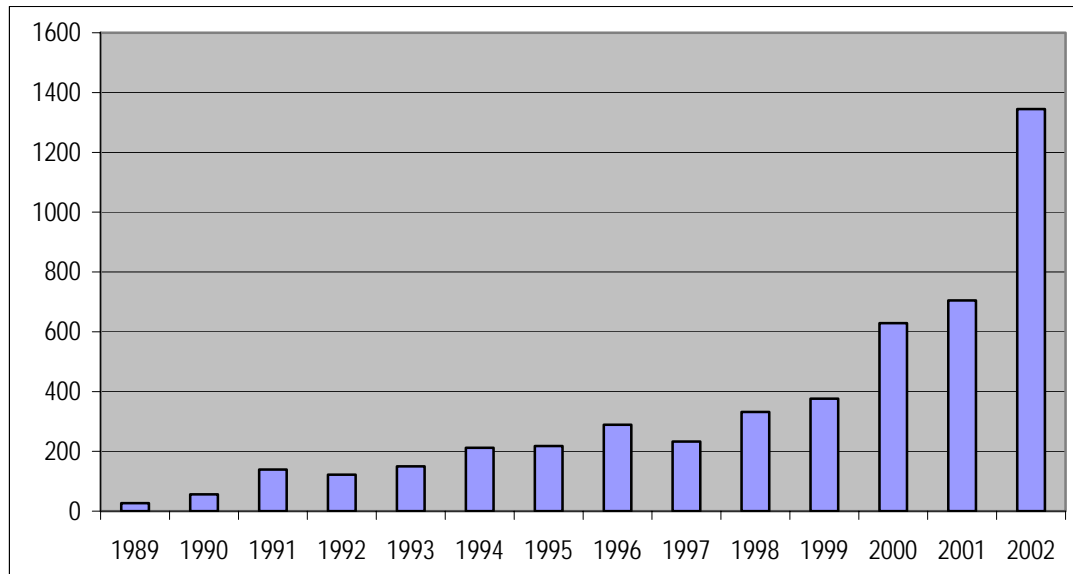
### Algerians acquiring British citizenship

Statistics for the number of Algerians acquiring British citizenship may indicate the extent to which Algerians are becoming committed to living in Britain. These naturalisations are split fairly equally between naturalisation by residency and by marriage. The number of Algerians acquiring British citizenship in 2002 was almost double the number in the previous year. This growth may reflect the fact that the first significant arrivals of Algerians in the UK took place in the 1990s, and those who were granted asylum in this period have now been resident long enough to be eligible for citizenship. Despite this significant proportional growth, it is clear that the number of British citizens of Algerian origin remains extremely small in comparison to other resident national communities in the UK.

Year	Number of Algerians granted British citizenship
1987	47
1988	37
1989	27
1990	56
1991	139
1992	122
1993	150
1994	212
1995	218
1996	289
1997	233
1998	332
1999	376
2000	629
2001	705
2002	1,345

Source: [Home Office](#) *Individuals Granted British Citizenship* (annually)<sup>59</sup>

### Number of Algerians granted British citizenship 1987 – 2002



Source: [Home Office](#) *Individuals Granted British Citizenship* (annually)<sup>60</sup>

## Results of asylum requests made by Algerians

Apart from the years 1998 and 1999, Algerians had an extremely small chance of being offered asylum in the UK, much smaller than the average for all nationalities.<sup>61</sup> The terrible massacres at the end of 1997 were very widely publicised in the UK and provoked a growing concern for the situation in Algeria. It is possible that these events highlighted the plight of Algerians in the minds of asylum adjudicators. It is also possible that the numbers granted refugee status were inflated in these years by the efforts of the new Labour government to reduce the backlog of cases, though decisions on applications from other nationalities were not so dramatically affected. It is important to note that these figures are for the number of main applicants only and do not include dependants.

### Results of asylum requests made by Algerians in the UK from 1990 to 2003<sup>62</sup>

Year	Number of applications	Number of decisions	Granted refugee status	Granted Exceptional Leave to Remain	Refused
1990	15	5	0	5	10

<sup>59</sup> Visit <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/immigration1.html> [accessed 4 May 2004].

<sup>60</sup> Visit <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/immigration1.html> [accessed 4 May 2004].

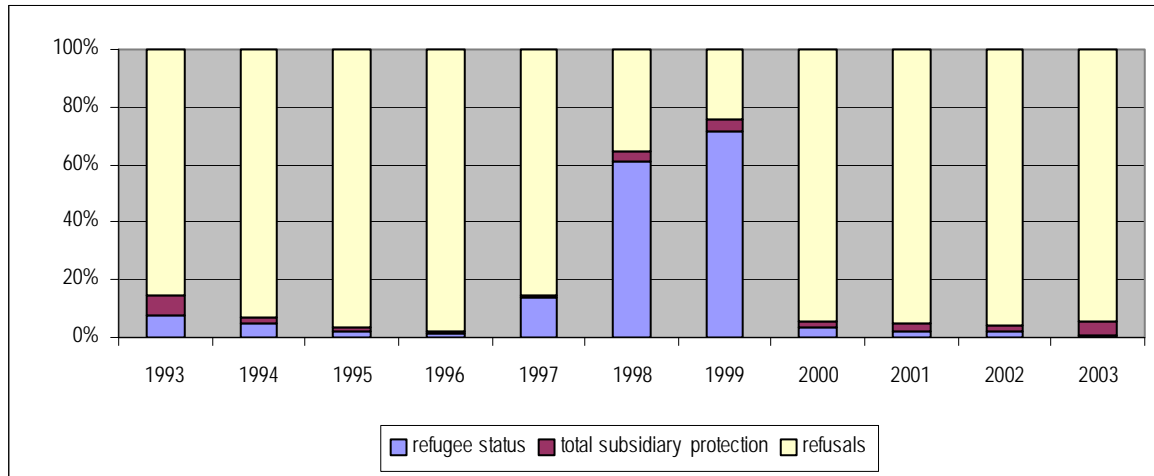
<sup>61</sup> Similar data for asylum seekers of all nationalities reveals very different results, particularly for 1998 and 1999.

<sup>62</sup> These figures do not always add up exactly as they are rounded to the nearest 5 by the Home Office and information on some decisions near the end of the period is not always available when statistics are compiled so this information is added to the following period.

1991	40	5	0	0	0
1992	0	0	0	0	0
1993	275	140	10	10	115
1994	995	440	20	10	410
1995	1,865	745	15	10	720
1996	715	1,880	30	15	1,835
1997	715	765	105	5	655
1998	1,260	500	310	15	180
1999	1,385	905	475	30	160
2000	1,545	1,627	54	40	1,553
2001	1,115	2,645	60	75	2,530
2002	1,060	1,115	20	30	1,065
2003	735	735	5	35	695

Source: [Home Office Asylum Statistics](#) (annually)<sup>63</sup>

### Results of asylum requests made by Algerians in the UK from 1993 – 2003



Source: [Home Office Asylum Statistics](#) (annually)<sup>64</sup>

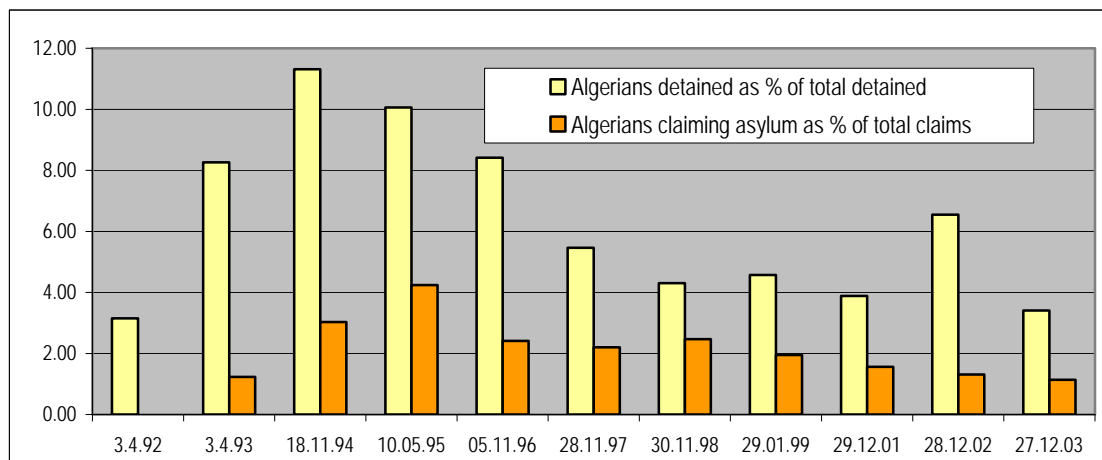
## Algerian asylum detainees in the UK

At any one time, there are relatively few Algerian asylum seekers in detention. The highest number for a single date is 78, from January to March 1997. However the graph shows that if this is expressed as a percentage of the total number of asylum seekers in detention and then compared to the proportion of Algerians in the total number of asylum seekers, we see that Algerians have been more likely to be detained than the average for all nationalities. The most recent available statistics on detention, show that this proportion is falling. These statistics do not include the high profile detentions of Algerians during 2002 (see key issues section) but suggest that, at least in the immediate aftermath of September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001, Algerian asylum seekers did not suffer any measurable negative results in terms of increased detention.

<sup>63</sup> Visit <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/immigration1.html> [accessed 4 May 2004].

<sup>64</sup> Visit <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/immigration1.html> [accessed 4 May 2004].

Algerians detained in the UK as a percentage of the total number of people detained, compared to the number of Algerians claiming asylum as a percentage of the total number claiming asylum 1994 – 2003<sup>65</sup>

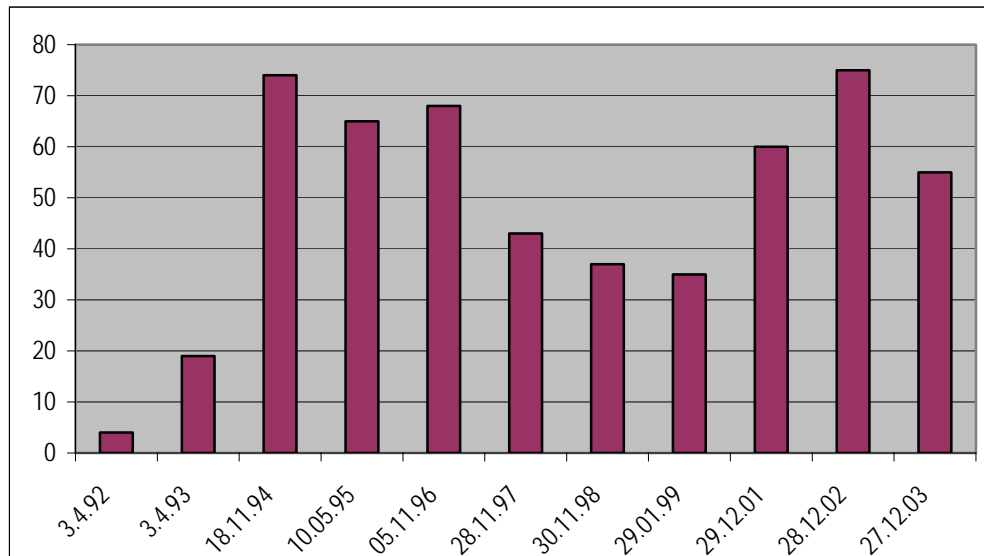


Source: [Home Office Asylum Statistics](#) (annually)<sup>66</sup>

<sup>65</sup> This data includes only those asylum seekers who have been detained during their application procedure and are included in the Home Office statistical bulletin 'Asylum Statistics' for the relevant year. Since 2000, these reports can be found on the web at <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/immigration1.html> [accessed 4 May 2004]. Data is for the number of individuals in detention on the specific date mentioned. Some dates are not shown for clarity. Unmarked dates are not always midway between marked dates.

<sup>66</sup> Visit <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/immigration1.html> [accessed 4 May 2004].

Total number of Algerians in detention in the UK 1992-2003<sup>67</sup>



Source: [Home Office Asylum Statistics](#) (annually)<sup>68</sup>

## How many Algerians request asylum elsewhere?

Although Algerians have requested asylum in increasing numbers in the UK, other destinations continue to be far more significant. Comparable data for movement other than asylum seeking are not available. The only organisation that collects these data, SOPEMI, only specifies the most significant national groups. Algerians only migrate in sufficiently large numbers to be considered separately to France, which received between 8,000 and 12,000 Algerians a year between 1990 and 2002. Comparable data do exist for asylum applications and are shown in the table below.

### Asylum applications made by Algerians 1990 – 2003 (For the eight countries to have received most applications)

Year	Belgium	Canada	France	Germany	Netherlands	Spain	Switzerland	UK	Total
1990	31	187	141	1,035	103	0	73	15	1,585
1991	61	123	185	1,388	80	0	109	40	1,986
1992	59	179	677	7,669	147	0	226	0	8,957
1993	236	255	1,098	11,262	343	87	751	275	14,307
1994	402	721	2,303	2,784	1,321	301	303	995	9,130

<sup>67</sup> These data include only those asylum seekers who have been detained during their application procedure and are included in the Home Office statistical bulletin 'Asylum Statistics' for the relevant year. Since 2000, these reports can be found on the web at <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/immigration1.html> [accessed 4 May 2004]. Data is for the number of individuals in detention on the specific date mentioned. Some dates are not shown for clarity. Unmarked dates are not always midway between marked dates.

<sup>68</sup> Visit <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/immigration1.html> [accessed 4 May 2004].

1995	316	801	1,790	2,940	650	270	388	1,870	9,025
1996	225	609	640	2,360	440	110	396	720	5,500
1997	281	857	900	2,620	530	270	564	720	6,742
1998	337	813	920	1,572	821	1,581	529	1,260	7,833
1999	351	569	1,306	1,491	635	1,342	491	1,385	7,570
2000	807	422	1,775	1,381	279	276	492	1,635	7,067
2001	1,709	543	2,924	1,981	328	225	830	1,115	9,655
2002	936	119	2,839	1,733	202	344	1,031	1,055	8,259
2003	400	71	2,125	1,139	109	680	866	537	5,927
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,151</b>	<b>6,269</b>	<b>19,623</b>	<b>41,355</b>	<b>5,988</b>	<b>5,486</b>	<b>7,049</b>	<b>11,622</b>	<b>103,543</b>

Source: UNHCR<sup>69</sup>

These figures relate to the graph in the historical context section. It is clear that the large majority of Algerian asylum seekers initially went to Germany, and Germany continues to be significant.<sup>70</sup> The UK received the second largest number of applications in 1995 and 2000 but other than those years, a smaller proportion of Algerians have come to the UK. In France, the application procedure for the 'B-status' of asylum, called *asile territorial*, is entirely separate and so not included in these figures. Estimates suggest that up to 7,000<sup>71</sup> Algerians may have applied for the French 'B-status' over this period. If these figures were included they would further inflate the numbers of Algerians going to France.

## Asylum support

Since April 2000, destitute asylum seekers have been able to apply for accommodation and subsistence support from the National Asylum Support Service (NASS).<sup>72</sup> At the end of 2000, 470 Algerians were being supported under NASS. Of these, 105 received subsistence only, and 355 also received accommodation. Those who received no accommodation were likely to be staying with friends or had simply rejected the accommodation offered to them. During 2001, 970 Algerians were supported: 240 for subsistence only and 625 for full support. At the end of 2001, a total of 1,010 Algerians were receiving support under NASS. These figures are slightly less than the number of Algerians who requested asylum in 2001 since some people obviously refused, or were refused, support. More recent figures suggest that in January 2003, 1,009 Algerians were receiving accommodation and subsistence support from NASS. From January 2003 onwards, the entry into force of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act withdrew support from all those

<sup>69</sup> UNHCR (November 2001) *Asylum Applications in Industrialised Countries: 1980 – 1999*. Geneva: UNHCR. Available at <http://www.unhcr.ch/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home/opendoc.pdf?tbl=STATISTICS&id=3c3eb40f4&page=statistics>; UNHCR (March 2002) *Asylum Trends in Europe, North America, Australia, and New Zealand: 1999 – 2001*. Geneva: UNHCR; UNHCR (February 2003) *Asylum applications lodged in industrialized countries: Levels and trends 2000-2002*. Geneva: UNHCR. Available at <http://www.unhcr.ch/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/statistics/+5wwBmejuhGKwwwwwwwwwwwwmFqAIRERfRfglhFqAIRERfRfgltFqA5BwBo5Boq5zFqAIRERfRfglAFqAIRERfRfglDzmxwwwwww5Fqw1FqAIRERfRfgl/opendoc.pdf>; UNHCR (February 2004) *Asylum levels and Trends: Europe and non-European Industrialised Countries, 2003*. Available at <http://www.unhcr.ch/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home/opendoc.pdf?tbl=STATISTICS&id=403b1d7e4&page=statistics>. All accessed 11 May 2004.

<sup>70</sup> The high number of applications in Germany was common to all asylum applications at the time. In the early 1990s, 60% of asylum applications in Europe were made in Germany so Algerians were not exceptional in this.

<sup>71</sup> ECRE (1999) *Country Report: France*, ECRE, London; Delouvin, P. (2000) 'The evolution of asylum in France' *Journal of Refugee Studies* 13(1), pp. 61-73.

<sup>72</sup> Home Office (2002) *Asylum statistics United Kingdom 2001* [accessed 4 May 2004]. This provision has changed with the recent withdrawal of support from in-country applicants and the reconfiguration of this change due to court appeals. See the [Refugee Council briefing](#) for more information [accessed 4 May 2004].

failing to claim asylum 'as soon reasonably practicable'. Figures of individuals receiving support from NASS were not broken down by nationality in the 2003 asylum statistics, but they may therefore be considerably lower.

## Cultural background

The Algerian population in the UK has only begun to grow significantly over the last ten years and is still small compared to many more established national groups. The rich cultural heritage of Algeria is therefore not widely recognised in Britain. Algeria has well developed traditions of art, literature, music, film and cuisine. This section aims to give a brief introduction to these aspects of Algerian cultural practices for the non-specialist. Representing the cultural diversity of Algeria is not an easy task. The 'Year of Algeria' in France (2003) presented an extremely rich programme of Algerian cultural events but has raised controversy in a number of areas (see box).

### Djazair 2003<sup>1</sup> - the controversy of 'representing' a national culture

Even a reasonably objective assessment of the year of Algeria in France 2003 must judge it to have been a tremendous success for all concerned. The Algerian government have undoubtedly benefited from the positive associations it has created, and the success of the year is certainly not insignificant in Bouteflika's victory in the presidential elections of April 2004. The burst of media coverage, which began in mid-2002 and continued to March or April 2003, threw up considerable controversy and discontent from those individuals who foresaw that the positive effects on the Algerian government, which they saw as highly repressive and undemocratic, would be the only result of the year. High profile Algerian figures such as the singer Idir<sup>2</sup> and the comedian Fellag announced they would boycott events. A large group of significant political and civil society figures criticised the programme as a public relations exercise for the Algerian government.<sup>3</sup> Such voices of dissent were certainly raised with regard to other special events, notably during the 'Year of Morocco' in 1999, but the criticisms of the 'Year of Algeria' were rather more mainstream.

However the range of criticisms and discussion itself made it clear that events were providing an outstanding opportunity for publicising all points of view on Algeria that would not have existed otherwise. The Algerian political scientist, Lahouari Addi (certainly not a friend of the Algerian regime) spoke out *against* a boycott, arguing for this opportunity to examine the record of the Algerian regime in a range of public fora.<sup>4</sup> And this, to a large extent, seems to be the way things went. Reporters Without Borders (RSF) and the Algerian League for the Defence of Human Rights (LADDH) received considerable coverage of a striking poster of a pair of intricately decorated hands, dripping with blood, that announced 'During the celebrations, the massacres and the repression continues'. The FNAC (a large French chain of stores selling books, music and equipment) were the first to announce a separate programme called 'Another vision of Algeria', but others followed. Even Idir appeared in a series of events celebrating '*L'Année 'Off' D'Algérie*' (the fringe). The year provided the occasion for the publication of more than 500 books on Algeria, and the official programme was certainly impressive, involving €20 millions of public money supporting more than 3,000 events all over France. It is difficult to believe that this was all coordinated in support of the Algerian government and indeed the French minister of culture announced that there had been no censorship at all.<sup>5</sup> Cultural expression is, arguably, always a political act, and this is perhaps especially the case in a divided society such as Algeria, but the year of Algeria had the means to get beyond that. Once the opportunity had been provided, it seems that everyone was ready to focus on Algeria from their own perspective.

<sup>1</sup> The programme and press coverage is still available at <http://www.djazair2003.org>.

<sup>2</sup> Idir wrote an 'open letter to those who govern us' that was published in a number of French national newspapers (Idir 16.1.03) in which he refused to be associated with the government that remained associated with repression in Kabylia.

<sup>3</sup> 'L'Année de quelle Algérie?' *Le Monde* 6.2.03.

<sup>4</sup> Addi in *Liberation* 9.1.2003.

<sup>5</sup> *Quotidien d'Oran* 16.12.2003.

## Literature

Although there is a long tradition of written work in Algeria – from the fourth century work of Saint Augustine, in Latin, to the nineteenth century theological writings of Abdel-Kader, in Arabic – the novel only arrived with the French. Previous to this, fiction had been expressed as poetry and oral storytelling but by the beginning of the twentieth century, Algerian writers began producing long fiction. Initially this work was written very much in the French style for a French audience, but a powerful and often extremely political Algerian voice soon developed. This work considered major issues of Algerian history and independence, Berber cultural identity, the place of Islam in Algerian society and, more recently, the current conflict. Algerian literature in French and Arabic now constitutes a very rich body of work in world literature, but unfortunately comparatively little has been translated into English.<sup>73</sup>

From the beginning of the twentieth century, novels written in French began to appear by a French-educated Algerian elite. These typically reflected the negative view of the indigenous population that was dominant among French colonisers and idealised the French occupation of Algeria; occasionally they were even co-authored with French writers<sup>74</sup>. More realistic novels were initially rejected by French publishers; Mouloud Feraoun wrote the semi-autobiographical *Le Fils du pauvre* (the son of the poor man) in 1939 which was not published until 1950. It tells the story of a family from a small village in the Berber province of Kabylia where life is extremely hard and there are no visible signs of the French 'civilising mission' despite more than a century of French presence. Eventually the father of the family leaves to find work in France, as Feroun's father did and as was the case for a growing number of Kabyle men from the 1920s onwards. Feroun's second novel, *La Terre et le sang* (earth and blood) published in 1953, further explored the experience of emigrating to France. A number of other novels of the period also dealt with emigration, such as *La Colline oubliée* (the forgotten hill), written by Feroun's friend Mouloud Mammeri in 1952. *La Colline oubliée* was made into a film, directed by Abderrahmane Bouguermouh, in 1995.<sup>75</sup>

Mohammed Dib, one of the most prolific Algerian writers, published the first volume of his 'Algeria' trilogy in 1952, *La Grande Maison* (the large house), followed by *L'Incendie* (the fire) (1954) and *Le Métier à tisser* (the loom) (1957). These books present a picture of the highly exploitative relationship between the colonisers and the local population in the region of Tlemcen. The books are ostensibly set around the beginning of the Second World War but critics have demonstrated<sup>76</sup> that the events relate to a strike by agricultural workers that Dib covered for a national paper in 1951. The events of the strike are dealt with in *L'Incendie*, which was published a few months before the beginning of the 1954-62 war.

<sup>73</sup> See [http://goa.cet.middlebury.edu/mtoler/In\\_English\\_Translation/index.htm](http://goa.cet.middlebury.edu/mtoler/In_English_Translation/index.htm) for a full and continually updated listing of the work of Algerian writers available in English [accessed 5 May 2004].

<sup>74</sup> Such as Saad Ben Ali and René Pottier (1933) *La Tente noire, roman saharien*, Les Oeuvres Représentatives, Paris.

<sup>75</sup> Interestingly, the film was finished thanks to financial support from the emigrant community, particularly [La Colline Oubliée Fund](#) based in New Jersey [accessed 5 May 2004].

<sup>76</sup> Bonn, C. (1985) *Le Roman Algérien de langue française*, Editions L'Harmattan, Paris.

*Nedjma*, by Kateb Yacine (1956)<sup>77</sup> is another powerfully nationalist novel. *Nedjma* also considers revolt against the colonial presence in a similar way to Dib's trilogy but Kateb also rebelled against the French form of the novel, introducing a number of striking stylistic innovations, such as breaking up the accepted chronological pattern of story telling. Because of this dramatic departure from French tradition, *Nedjma* is widely considered to mark the beginning of a new wave of Algerian writing and established Kateb as one of the most respected Algerian writers. Assia Djebar is another very highly respected writer who began writing during this period with *La Soif* (the thirst) in 1957 and *Les Impatients* (impatient people) the following year. Djebar is interested in the position of women in Algeria immediately before the 1954-62 war. Her heroines are educated women who reflect on their situation and their relationship with French women and she is keen to show that education is the route to the emancipation of women.

It is, of course, difficult to do justice to Algerian literature in a few paragraphs, and new work is continuously being published.<sup>78</sup> Many people consider that a second wave of literary style was launched with the publication of *La Répudiation* (the repudiation) by Rachid Boudjedra (1969), which focused on the place of Islam in Algerian society. The *literature d'urgence* provoked by the current conflict is undoubtedly another new development. A number of writers, such as Kateb and Boudjedra, began to write in Arabic, while other significant Algerian writers, such as Tahar Ouettar, write exclusively in Arabic. Finally, there is the very significant contribution from *pieds noirs* writers, most famously Albert Camus but also Jean Senac, who chose Algerian nationality on independence rather than returning to France. He was killed soon after independence. Mouloud Feraoun was also murdered by departing *pieds noirs* following independence. These are further reminders how political the act of writing so often is in Algeria and an unpleasant avatar of threats and attacks on writers in the more recent conflict.

#### The 'literature d'urgence'

In May 1993, the writer and journalist Tahar Djaout was assassinated in Algiers. His death was the first in a long line of murders of prominent intellectuals and artists over the summer of 1993. This level of violence forced a large number of intellectual figures into exile; the second major movement out of Algeria after the first wave of Islamist politicians and activists in 1992. Djaout was a highly respected author best known for his novels<sup>1</sup>, a regular contributor to national newspapers and a prominent critic of both the government and the FIS. He has become a symbol for the resistance of writers to intimidation and violence in Algeria that has provoked a phenomenal flourishing of artistic production often referred to as the 'literature d'urgence'. This has seen established writers turn their attentions to the conflict and its effects, and inspired a tremendous growth in literary expression from people who may well never have written at all if not for their need to find an outlet for the distress they witnessed around them. Most of this writing remains firmly in the tradition of politically engaged fiction that has characterised the Algerian novel since before independence.

Among this new literature, the strongly anti-Islamist novels of Yasmina Khadra are one of the most widely read examples.<sup>2</sup> In 2000, Khadra revealed that, as many people had suspected, she was in fact a male officer in the special forces of the Algerian army, though she continues to write under the same name (and continues to be referred to as 'she' in the press). Khadra's novels are published in France. Other work is produced by less well-known Algerian publishers,<sup>3</sup> although exiled Algerian writers now live all over Europe. The association [Algérie Littérature/Action](#) has made one of the most significant contributions to publishing current Algerian fiction. Since 1996 they have produced a

<sup>77</sup> *Nedjma* is available in English translation, published in 1991 by the University Press of Virginia.

<sup>78</sup> For one of the best current and continually updated reviews of new Algerian writing in French see [http://www.algeriades.com/news/sommaire\\_themes.php3?id\\_mot=4](http://www.algeriades.com/news/sommaire_themes.php3?id_mot=4) [accessed 4 May 2004].

regular journal (in French) containing new, full-length novels or collections of short stories and poetry, motivated by the conviction that artistic production can contribute to the peaceful resolution of the conflict. In the UK, two Algerian writers contribute to the association [Exiled Writers Ink](#); the artist and poet [Nafissa Boudalia](#) and the poet and short story writer [Samia Dahnaan](#).

<sup>1</sup> Djaout is perhaps best known for *Les chercheurs d'os* (Searching for bones) (1984) and *Dernier été de la raison* (The last summer of reason) published posthumously in 1999.

<sup>2</sup> Khadra, Y. (1998) *Les agneaux du seigneur*. Julliard, Paris; Khadra, Y. (1999) *A quoi rêvent les loups*. Julliard, Paris.

<sup>3</sup> Such Arezki Mellal (2000) *Maintenant, Ils peuvent venir*, Editions barzakh, Algiers.

## Music

The tremendous diversity of musical styles and traditions in Algeria reflects the diverse ethnic origins of the population.<sup>79</sup> The most common form of classical music originates in Andalusia, Spain, and arrived in Algeria in the fifteenth century, following the expulsion of the Arabic population from Spain. This music is often called *maalouf* or *andalus* and is played on traditional instruments.<sup>80</sup>

There is also a tradition of folk music sung in Berber languages. Idir is currently one of the most popular Berber musicians; he gave a rare concert in the UK in 2002 and played to a huge crowd at the Barbican. Lounes Matoub, another Berber musician, was killed in mysterious circumstances in 1998. He was always an extremely popular singer and since his death he has become an extremely powerful symbol of Berber culture and his music is rarely absent from Berber demonstrations.

There is a further cultural influence from the *pieds noirs*; the tremendously popular Jewish-Algerian singer Enrico Macias retains his links with Algeria, though he now lives in France. Finally there is a long tradition of Arabic folk music or *chaabi*. *Chaabi* songs are concerned with classic popular themes of love and duty but also relate a particular vision of developments in Algerian society from emigration in the 1950s to despair at the current conflict today. Contemporary *raï* music has developed these concerns. In fact it is common for modern *raï* singers to update classic *chaabi* songs, such as 'Ya *Raya!*' (O, you who are leaving). Written in 1954 about emigration, it has become a standard and most *raï* singers perform their own version of its classic, easily recognisable melody.

### Raï

A combination of traditional Algerian rhythms and modern electric instruments, *raï* developed in the town of Oran in Western Algeria. It originated in the early 1980s and soon became associated with youth rebellion and anti-establishment behaviour. Early *raï* musicians were strongly disapproved of as socially deviant and morally corrupting by traditionally orientated mainstream society, similar to punk in Britain; indeed musicians such as French-Algerian Rachid Taha continue to make a conscious effort to develop the punk-*raï* connection. *Raï* was particularly disapproved of by Islamist groups. The local FIS administration banned the 1991 *raï* festival in Oran due to the glorification of over-drinking and sex in some *raï* songs. *Raï* singers such as Cheb Hasni were targeted in the wave of assassinations of 1993 and 1994 and many joined other artists in exile. *Raï* is sometimes seen as a form of resistance to

<sup>79</sup> This is clear from Algerian radio. A good range of Algerian radio stations is available online at <http://www.vtuner.com/vtunerweb/static/staticAlgeriaoverall1.html> [accessed 5 May 2004].

<sup>80</sup> *Musique andalouse d'Algérie* (Harmonia Mundi 2003) by Nassima is an excellent, recent example of this music.

Islamism, though the relationship between the two is undoubtedly more complex than this.<sup>1</sup>

Raï has become far more respectable and mainstream in recent years and many raï singers now wish to distance themselves from the associations of raï with more excessive behaviour. Raï spread to France in the mid-1980s and it was well known and commercially successful by the early 1990s. Today the most influential musicians, such as Khaled or Cheb Mami, are internationally known. There are currently two accomplished raï musicians living and performing regularly in the UK. Abdelkader Saadoun has an informative [website](#) with details of his upcoming concerts and his last album, *Saadia*. Abdel Ali Slimani has two albums: *Mraya* (2000) on Real World and *Espoir* (2003) on Harmonia Mundi.

<sup>1</sup> Marc Schade-Poulsen has conducted an extremely interesting ethnography exploring the social significance of raï in his book *Men and popular music in Algeria* (1999), University of Texas Press. Extracts from this book can be found at <http://inic.utexas.edu/menic/raï/> [accessed 5 May 2004].

## Film

One of the most famous Algerian films, *The Battle of Algiers* (1966) was actually directed by an Italian, Gillo Pontecorvo. It tells the story of the fight for the capital between January and March 1957. It is astonishing to imagine the major events of this battle re-enacted in Algiers less than four years after the end of the war. Many of the major figures in the battle, including Saadi Yacef, the head of the FLN's Algiers network, actually play themselves in the film, making it an extremely important historical document, as well as a valuable recreation of one of the most famous episodes of the entire war.

Algerian directors soon became established overseas. In 1975, *Chronique des années de braise* (Chronicle of the years of embers) won the *Palme d'Or* at Cannes. The following year, the now celebrated director Merzak Allouache released his first film, *Omar Gatlato* (1976) which explored divisions and destitution in the suburb of Algiers where he lived, Bab el Oued. After producing a number of acclaimed documentaries for television, Allouache returned to Bab el Oued almost 20 years later to film the rise of the Islamist movement. The resulting *Bab el Oued City* won the International Critics Prize at Cannes in 1994. He recorded his experiences of making the film in an entertaining book of the same name (1995, Le Seuil, Paris). In 1995 Allouache turned to comedy with *Salut Cousin!*, a complex story of travel and trade between Algeria and Paris and his most recent film *Chouchou* (2003) is also very light hearted.

The novelist Assia Djebar has also made a number of powerful films addressing similar issues as her books; the history of Algeria and the place of women in constructing that history. Her first film, *La Zerda et les Chants de l'oubli* (1978) mixed documentary and narrative techniques to relate the story of a woman who returns to Algeria 15 years after independence and is caught up in her memories of the war. There is of course no reason why Algerian filmmakers should restrict themselves to the subject of Algeria, although many have done. A notable exception is Rachid Bouchareb's *Little Senegal* (2000) which tells the story of a young man's migration from Senegal to a neighbourhood of Harlem.

Filming in Algeria over the past decade has been extremely difficult and little was produced during the 1990s other than a small number of documentaries, such as *Femme Taxi à Sidi Bel-Abbés* (2000) in which director Belkacem Hadjadj constructed a portrait of the only female taxi driver in Sidi Bel-Abbés, a town in western Algeria. Algerian directors have filmed outside of Algeria, often retaining the theme of the war, such as Merzak Allouache's (1999) *Algiers Beirut*, filmed almost entirely in Beirut about an Algerian who has come to

Lebanon to try and escape war at home. A range of films by Algerian directors have also focused on other aspects of Algerian life, such as the history of migration, mainly to France. This is a theme which Yamina Benguigui made her own with *Memoire d'Immigrés* (Immigrants' memories) in 1997. Benguigui has recently returned to the history of emigration with *Inch'Allah Dimanche* (Sunday, if God wishes), 2001. Yamina Bachir-Chouikh's *Rachida* (2002) returns to the theme of the current conflict with a harrowing examination of a female teacher's struggle to overcome an attack. The announcement of French funding for ten full-length feature films as part of the 'Year of Algeria' (2003) in France<sup>81</sup> has been moderated a little – although funding is still available is it unlikely that it will run to ten films.

## Cuisine

Although cuisine is more of a craft than an art, it is worth mentioning since the introduction of Algerian cafés and restaurants is a visible result of the growth of the Algerian community in the UK. Cafés also seem to provide an important economic base for some of the community and there are now a number of Algerian cafés in Finsbury Park where it is possible to sample cakes and listen to Algerian television. Algerian food is very similar to the cuisine of neighbouring Morocco and Tunisia, including rich soups, couscous with a variety of sauces, sweet cakes and mint tea. Moroccan restaurants are increasingly common, at least in London, but it is still unusual to find an Algerian restaurant; the Souk, off St Martin's Lane, central London, is a rare exception.

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<sup>81</sup> This was reported in the February – March 2003 special issue of the Cahiers du Cinema entitled 'Ou va le cinema Algérien?'. This special issue provides an excellent overview of the history of Algerian cinema.

## Key issues

The most significant issues facing the Algerian community in the UK can be grouped into eight categories: asylum, undocumented status, detention and deportation, employment, isolation, the effects of anti-terrorist legislation, contact with Algeria and the growth of the Algerian population in the UK.

### Asylum

The large majority of the Algerian population in the UK (estimates range from 70% to 90%) has arrived over the last ten years, during the period of conflict. The conflict is likely to have affected everyone in Algeria. Most people are likely to know someone who has been killed or injured, many have witnessed the deaths of friends and family and many more recount scenes of astonishing barbarity. The most pressing need for this population is therefore for a secure period of residency elsewhere.

- Apart from the years 1998 and 1999, on average, Algerians were less likely to receive asylum in the UK than other national groups.
- Many Algerians would prefer a shorter period of protection since the symbolic break with the home country that is associated with refugee status deters many people from applying.<sup>82</sup>
- The French system of 'B-status' 'territorial asylum', which lasts for a limited time and carries fewer benefits than full Convention status was tailor made for the Algerian population.
- Both territorial asylum, in France and Exceptional Leave to Remain (ELR), in the UK have very rarely been applied to Algerians; figures vary between one per cent and four per cent, depending on the year.<sup>83</sup>
- In 2003, the introduction of two new forms of subsidiary protection in the UK (humanitarian protection and discretionary leave) to replace ELR has not affected the proportion of Algerians who are granted subsidiary protection.

This information points to a very significant 'protection gap' for the Algerian population. Many Algerians, if refused asylum, prefer to remain undocumented than risk returning to Algeria and more than half the Algerian population in the UK is thought to be undocumented. Asylum has a number of disadvantages for Algerians:

- The Algerian government has suggested that those people who are granted asylum in Europe are more likely to be terrorists or deserters.<sup>84</sup> This is often repeated by undocumented Algerians as a reason for not claiming asylum. Many are concerned what their family will think of them if they tell them that they have claimed asylum. The director of the Algerian Refugee Council commented:

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<sup>82</sup> Collyer, M. (2002) 'Explaining change in established migration systems: the movement of Algerians to France and the UK' University of Sussex, DPhil thesis, bound and recorded at the British Library; this point is also commonly made in French literature on Algerian asylum requests e.g. GISTI (1999) *Les droits des Algériens en France, Les cahiers juridiques*. GISTI, Paris.

<sup>83</sup> Home Office statistical bulletins; Amnesty International Section Française (1997) *l'Asile en France, Etat des lieux*, Paris; Delouvin (2000) 'The Evolution of Asylum In France' *Journal of Refugee Studies* 13(1), pp. 61-73.

<sup>84</sup> Benyamina, A. (1998) 'Foreign interference in the situation in Algeria: The Algerian government's position'. *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 1998 vol. XI no.2, pp. 184 – 195.

'Many people don't even tell their parents that they have claimed asylum [...] Some people have lived here for ten years and even though they have a life threatening situation in Algeria, they don't claim asylum.'<sup>85</sup>

- Those that do claim asylum find it extremely difficult to be cut off from their families in Algeria.
- Others associated claiming asylum with laziness since they wished to work and were unwilling to take benefits. A 42 year-old man who had been undocumented for two years, having rejected the possibility of claiming asylum, reported:

'They pay for your house – I didn't want that, I didn't want that, really, I didn't want that, because I can work, I'm not lazy. That's what I say, if you're not lazy, you don't need that.'<sup>86</sup>

- An Algerian refugee support worker reported that Algerians referred to the regular collection of vouchers under NASS as 'the shame'.<sup>87</sup>

## Undocumented status

- Estimates of the size of the Algerian population in the UK, based on 'best guesses' of NGOs and individuals, and existing statistical data<sup>88</sup> suggest that there are somewhere between 20,000 and 25,000 Algerians in the UK. Statistical information suggests that approximately 10,000 of these are legally resident.<sup>89</sup> Therefore somewhere around 60% of Algerians in the UK may have no legal status.
- Legal status is increasingly significant in the UK since without it access to many basic services is denied. In addition to services such as health and education, a number of other issues arise from legal status that have serious implications for the life of Algerians in the UK. The two most significant are that financial management is problematic as it is impossible to open a bank account and difficult to cash pay-cheques, and that residence is extremely precarious as detention and deportation can occur at any time.

## Detention and deportation

- Since the early 1990s, Algerian asylum seekers have been more likely to be detained than the average for all groups of asylum seekers in the UK. Asylum seekers are obviously not undocumented but there is a link, since undocumented Algerians are likely to request asylum if they are discovered by police or immigration services. If an individual claims asylum after arrest for

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<sup>85</sup> Collyer, M. (2002) 'Explaining change in established migration systems: the movement of Algerians to France and the UK' University of Sussex, DPhil thesis, bound and recorded at the British Library.

<sup>86</sup> Collyer, M. (2002) 'Explaining change in established migration systems: the movement of Algerians to France and the UK' University of Sussex, DPhil thesis, bound and recorded at the British Library.

<sup>87</sup> Collyer, M. (2002) 'Explaining change in established migration systems: the movement of Algerians to France and the UK' University of Sussex, DPhil thesis, bound and recorded at the British Library.

<sup>88</sup> 2001 British census, acquisitions of citizenship and number of asylum applicants. It is not possible to tell exactly what status these people have, though we know that since 1991, 1009 Algerians have been granted refugee status (see statistics section).

<sup>89</sup> This number cannot be exact as there is no basis for cross-referencing different sources of statistical information. For example it is likely that there is some overlap between Algerians granted refugee status and those granted British citizenship a few years later but the size of this overlap can only be estimated.

illegal immigration, their asylum claim will be treated with some suspicion and they are likely to be detained.<sup>90</sup> Refugee support groups reiterate that asylum claims should be judged on the substantive facts of the case and not on the circumstances surrounding the application,<sup>91</sup> but using detention in this way is still common.

- Although deportations to Algeria were suspended during the years of the worst violence from 1997 to 1999, they have now resumed.
- The level of cooperation between the Algerian and British governments is increasing and the Home Office minister Ben Bradshaw has made at least three visits to Algeria in recent years. The possibility of deporting Algerians more speedily was, according to the BBC, a topic of discussion on each occasion.

## Work

- By common consent it is not difficult to find work in the UK, even for those without documentation. 'Djamal'<sup>92</sup> a 35 year old man, speaking in French, explained:

'Djamal: I didn't want to make money. In this country you can find a job, and I found a job. I don't need to work five hours a day, sometimes I work five days, six days, just pay my rent, transport, some food and that's it.

Int.: *What sort of work did you do?*

Djamal: I worked cooking, in the kitchen. It's the only job you can find, with the language.

Int.: *Were you able to find that work fairly easily?*

Djamal: Easy, easy, I find a lot of jobs. [...] you can have two jobs, three jobs.'<sup>93</sup>

- However the Algerian population in the UK is particularly highly qualified and it is difficult for people to find work commensurate with their qualifications, even with documentation. Farid, also undocumented, described his work:

'You know, you have to fight for yourself if you work illegally with someone and he knows you're illegal. So the person, what does he think – "he's illegal, I can do whatever I like". Some people, (with me, no, it doesn't work) but some people, they're scared: "If I say something to him he's going to call immigration" you see? So I was surviving, just doing bits and pieces here, cleaning for someone in this shop, helping to carry stuff for him, doing things like that, just to get my money for the day, then tomorrow, another day, we'll see what's going to happen.'<sup>94</sup>

- The situation for doctors is particularly severe since many Algerian doctors did some of their training in France and are used to European health systems and allowed to work in France. This is not considered relevant for the process of transferring their qualifications in the UK and in addition, they must pass an extremely rigorous language test. Amin had been a doctor in the Algerian army

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<sup>90</sup> The notion of 'manifestly unfounded claims' from the Immigration and Asylum Act (1996) onwards is very clear on this point.

<sup>91</sup> Such as Refugee Council (2003) *In Exile*, January/February, Refugee Council, London.

<sup>92</sup> Not his real name.

<sup>93</sup> Collyer, M. (2002) 'Explaining change in established migration systems: the movement of Algerians to France and the UK' University of Sussex, DPhil thesis, bound and recorded at the British Library.

<sup>94</sup> Collyer, M. (2002) 'Explaining change in established migration systems: the movement of Algerians to France and the UK' University of Sussex, DPhil thesis, bound and recorded at the British Library.

but had not been prepared to follow some of the orders he received and had to leave the country. In England, he found that he had little chance of working as a doctor:

'Every day on the television I see "shortage of doctors, shortage of doctors" and I want to work, but they won't have me, I can't work in this country. [...] I'm not going to sweep or stack shelves.'<sup>95</sup>

- The World University Service and the British Medical Association are addressing the concerns around the qualifications of doctors but these are obviously issues that need much wider consideration if the skills of refugee populations, such as Algerians, are not to be wasted.
- The issue of employment for undocumented migrants or those whose asylum claim has been rejected is linked to a much larger set of issues that are beyond the scope of this guide.

## Isolation

- The uncertainty of the conflict has undermined Algerians' trust in each other and left many feeling extremely isolated.<sup>96</sup>
- Few of them have established the solidarity networks that exist within more established refugee populations.
- The fact that such a large proportion of the Algerian population in the UK have arrived so recently also leads to a widespread unfamiliarity with the dominant culture.
- In terms of religious observance, most Algerians questioned as part of the author's research were able to visit local mosques if they wished and, though there is certainly no mosque particularly linked to the Algerian community, they felt very welcome worshipping with the dominant South Asian Muslim group. One man who had been dispersed under the government scheme to Bournemouth was delighted at the diversity he found:

'We have a small mosque with about 200 people who attend regularly, from everywhere; Algerians, yes, but there are also Iraqis, Indonesians, Congolese, Tunisians, Moroccans, it is very diverse!'<sup>97</sup>

- Algerians who have been in the UK a significant amount of time speak English well or fluently, but it is still more common for those arriving to speak French better than English. This reduces the opportunities for contact with those who do not speak French or Arabic/Tamaziyt.
- Algerians are very highly represented among the client group of several refugee mental health services in London. It is possible that there is less of a stigma attached to mental health issues for

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<sup>95</sup> Collyer, M. (2002) 'Explaining change in established migration systems: the movement of Algerians to France and the UK' University of Sussex, DPhil thesis, bound and recorded at the British Library.

<sup>96</sup> All data in this section refer to the author's thesis unless otherwise stated: Collyer, M. (2002) 'Explaining change in established migration systems: the movement of Algerians to France and the UK' University of Sussex, DPhil thesis, bound and recorded at the British Library.

<sup>97</sup> Collyer, M. (2002) 'Explaining change in established migration systems: the movement of Algerians to France and the UK' University of Sussex, DPhil thesis, bound and recorded at the British Library.

Algerians than other refugee groups,<sup>98</sup> but this may also be due to the combination of a history of trauma and the isolation from any significant community life that many report once they arrive in the UK.

- Algerians fall outside of commonly used ethnic categories in the UK. Caroline Nagel has highlighted the effects of belonging to the 'Other Other' category in the UK census as a feeling of marginalisation in the UK discourse on the politics of race.<sup>99</sup>
- The [Algerian consulate](#) in London provides a range of practical services for the Algerian community but they have an ambiguous relationship with the asylum-seeking population who have, in their eyes, distanced themselves from the Algerian state. The previous Algerian ambassador in London was sharply critical of Algerian asylum seekers, even to the extent of undermining their asylum claims.<sup>100</sup>
- Overall, Algerians in the UK are often in a difficult position with no organised community to which they may belong or feel they belong.

## Effects of anti-terrorism legislation

Algerians have been seriously affected by the Terrorism Act (2000) and the Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act (2001). The majority of individuals detained under these acts have been Algerian. More importantly however, the resulting press coverage has portrayed an extremely unfavourable picture of Algerians and since the Algerian population is poorly known in the UK, this has had the effect of encouraging the association of Algerians with terrorism. This association has unsurprisingly had negative effects on the resident Algerian population as a whole.

The direct impact of these acts on Algerians include the following:

- Six of the initial nine people detained under the Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act in January 2002 were Algerian.
- The events of January 2003 predominantly involved Algerians and were all linked to the first arrests.
  - On 5 January 2003, four Algerians in London were charged under the Terrorism Act following the discovery of chemicals linked to the nerve agent ricin in their flat.
  - On 15 January 2003, three Algerians (and a fourth the following day) in Manchester were charged with offences under the Terrorism Act. During the arrest one of the men stabbed the police officer, Steven Oakes, who later died.
  - On 20 January 2003, seven people were arrested following the raid on the Finsbury Park mosque, six of them were Algerian. Only one was charged under the Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act.

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<sup>98</sup> This possibility was suggested by the founder of a refugee mental health group in Waltham Forest to explain the huge numbers of Algerians she assisted. Algerians have been exposed to a modern health care system for a great many years, even if they did not always have access to it.

<sup>99</sup> Nagel, C. (2001) 'Hidden minorities and the politics of 'race': the case of British Arab activists in London' *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 27.

<sup>100</sup> Benyamina, A. (1998) 'Foreign interference in the situation in Algeria: The Algerian government's position' *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 1998 vol. XI no.2 pp. 184 – 195.

- On 29 January 2003, four further Algerians were arrested in Manchester and were charged with offences under the Terrorism Act.
- Following the failure of the initial challenge to the legality of the government's derogation from Article 5 of the European Convention to Human Rights, in May 2003 ten of those detained indefinitely began individual procedures challenging the legality of their imprisonment. The government has refused to give details of these individuals, but *The Guardian* reported that three of them were thought to be Algerian.<sup>101</sup> In October 2003, these challenges were turned down by the Special Immigration Appeals Commission. Appeals of this decision were ongoing in March 2004.

Results of these developments:

- It is obviously essential that violent acts are controlled and the activities of the individuals arrested certainly raise concerns. However, we should be prepared to draw a clear distinction between being charged with an offence and being found guilty of that offence. The media has not always been willing to respect this difference. For example, the arrest of seven individuals at Finsbury Park mosque was given far more media coverage than the subsequent release without charge of six of the seven initially arrested.
- The Geneva Convention (1951) includes two exclusion clauses (articles 1f and 33[2]) which have been shown to work effectively (see section on legal issues). The only Algerian asylum seeker to be found to fall within these exclusion clauses was not offered legal residence in the UK.
- Many Algerians in the UK report feeling increasingly uncomfortable in the current climate<sup>102</sup>, although the most recent data on detentions of asylum seekers (December 2003) actually suggests that the number of Algerians detained is falling as a percentage of all detainees.

## Contacts with Algeria

- The need to return or maintain some contact with Algeria is growing in importance as the Algerian population becomes more settled.
- They have arrived so recently that there is really no infrastructure to support exchanges, return to, or even contact with Algeria.
- Information on Algeria can only be obtained through specialist news sources since the dominant media rarely covers Algerian issues.
- The official exchange rate to return money to Algeria is extremely disadvantageous. Where there are well-established Algerian communities, there are also established alternative channels. There is little indication that this is the case in relation to the UK.

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<sup>101</sup> *The Guardian* 30.10.03

<sup>102</sup> Based on personal communication with Algerians in London during January and February 2003.

## The growth of the Algerian population in the UK

One of the key questions on the Algerian population in the UK is why has it grown at all; why are Algerians keen to claim asylum in the UK and not in France? There are a number of possibilities that contribute towards an explanation of this question.<sup>103</sup>

- The reasons why many other asylum seekers are keen to come to the UK are also relevant for Algerians; family (for Algerians this is a growing consideration), the English language, the ease of finding work.
- The perception that Algerians will not be the focus of the same degree of racism that occurs in France. Many individuals have stated that this is not because Britain is not a racist country (they believed it is, in a different way), it's just that Algerians form a sufficiently small group to escape targeting.
- The desire to get to the USA. The UK is sometimes seen as a bridge to the USA due to the perceived cultural links between the countries and the possibility of learning English in preparation.
- Concerns about the close relationship between the French and Algerian governments and the effects this could have on their position in France.

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<sup>103</sup> This was the focus of the author's thesis and all information in this section comes from Collyer, M. (2002) 'Explaining change in established migration systems: the movement of Algerians to France and the UK' University of Sussex, DPhil thesis, bound and recorded at the British Library.

## Resources

This section contains references for useful resources on this population. If you would like to suggest a resource to be included in the list, please contact [esme.peach@kcl.ac.uk](mailto:esme.peach@kcl.ac.uk).

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*R. v. Secretary of State ex parte Adan and Aitsegeur* [2000] (House of Lords).

## Music

*Nassima Musique andalouse d'Algérie* (2003). Harmonia Mundi.

*Abdelkader Saadoun Saadia* (2000).

*Abdel Ali Slimani Espoir* (2003). Harmonia Mundi.

*Abdel Ali Slimani Mraya* (2000). Real World.

## Films

*Algiers Beirut* (1999)  
Directed by Merzak Allouache  
90 minutes

*Bab el Oued City* (1994)  
Directed by Merzak Allouache  
93 minutes

*The Battle of Algiers* (1965)  
Directed by Gillo Pontecorvo  
136 minutes

*Chronique des années de braise* (1975)  
Directed by Lakhdar Mohamed Hamina

*Chouchou* (2003)  
Directed by Merzak Allouache

*Femme Taxi à Sidi Bel-Abbés* (2000)  
Directed by Belkacem Hadjadj

*Inch'Allah Dimanche* (2001)  
Written and directed by Yamina Benguigui,  
distributed by Film Movement

*Little Senegal* (2000)  
Directed by Rachid Bouchareb  
98 minutes

*Memoire d'Immigrés* (1997)  
Directed by Yamina Benguigui

*Omar Gatlato* (1976)  
Directed by Merzak Allouache  
90 minutes

*Rachida* (2002)  
Directed by Yamina Bachir-Chouikh  
100 minutes

*Salut Cousin!* (1996)  
Directed by Merzak Allouache  
104 minutes

*La Zerda et les Chants de l'oubli* (1978)  
Written and directed by [Assia Djebar](#).

## Online resources

All the website urls listed below were correct at 4 May 2004.

## Historical context

### Algerian Consulate

Country profile

<http://www.consalglond.u-net.com/CounrtyProfile.htm>

### Algeriafocus

Business orientated news and information

<http://www.algeriafocus.com>

### Algerian National Statistics Office

<http://www.ons.dz/index.htm>

### AlgerieOnline.com

Short historical overview

<http://www.rcd-dz.org/index.htm>

### Amnesty International

Reports on Algeria

<http://web.amnesty.org/library/eng-dza/index>

### Arabji.com

List of online Algerian newspapers

<http://www.arabji.com/algeria/Media.htm>

### Ethnologue

Languages in Algeria

[http://www.ethnologue.com/show\\_country.asp?name=Algeria](http://www.ethnologue.com/show_country.asp?name=Algeria)

### Forced Migration Online

Algeria research guide (January 2004)

<http://www.forcedmigration.org/guides/fmo023/>

### Global IDP project

Algeria information menu

<http://www.db.idpproject.org/Sites/IdpProjectDb/IdpSurvey.nsf/wCountries/Algeria>

### Human Rights Watch

Reports on Algeria

<http://www.hrw.org/mideast/algeria.php>

### Library of Congress

*Algeria, a country study*

<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/dztoc.html>

### US Committee for Refugees

Information by country: Algeria

<http://www.refugees.org/world/countryrpt/africa/2002/algeria.cfm>

## Algerian pressure groups/political parties

### Algeria interface

Excellent middle of the road general news source (in English and French).

<http://www.algeria-interface.com/>

### Algeria Watch

Focusing on highlighting problems with the Algerian regime (in French and German).

<http://www.algeria-watch.org/francais.htm>

### Algeriens du Monde

French-based development focused/solidarity organisation (in French).

<http://www.algeriensdumonde.org/>

### Arabji.com

Links guide to directory or information about Algeria (in English and Arabic).

<http://www.arabji.com/algeria/>

### Front Islamique du Salut (FIS)

<http://www.fis-info.net/index.php>

### Hijra International Online

<http://home.worldcom.ch/~hijra/>

### Kabyle.com

Berber site covering politics, history and culture (in English and Tamaziyt).

<http://www.kabyle.com/>

### MAOL (Mouvement Algerien des Officiers Libres)

<http://www.anp.org/>

### Planet DZ

Range of listings, mostly focused on Paris and Algiers but details on the UK scene where appropriate (in French).

<http://www.planet-dz.com/>

## POUR!

Almost daily review of Algerian press and large dossier on Islamist organisations in Europe.

Strongly anti-Islamist.

<http://pourinfo.ouvaton.org/go.htm>

## Rachda (Rassemblement contre la hogra et pour les droits des algeriennes)

Women's pressure group (in French, Spanish and Italian).

<http://www.nodo50.org/mujeresred/RACHDA.html>

## Rassemblement pour la Culture et la Democratie (RCD)

Home site of this Berber-focused political party.

<http://www.rcd-algerie.org/>

## Legal issues

### Danish Refugee Council (2001)

*Analysis of the Dublin Convention*

<http://www.flygtning.dk/publikationer/rapporter/dublin>

## Statistics

### Algerian National Statistics Office

<http://www.ons.dz/index.htm>

### Home Office

UK asylum statistics.

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/immigration1.html>

### UNHCR

Asylum statistics worldwide.

<http://www.unhcr.ch>

## Cultural background

### Abdelkader Saadoun

Musician's website.

<http://www.saadoun.com/>

### Algeriades.com

Reviews of recently published Algerian literature (in French).

[http://www.algeriades.com/news/sommaire\\_themes.php?id\\_mot=4](http://www.algeriades.com/news/sommaire_themes.php?id_mot=4)

### Algeriades.com

Details of Algerian films.

[http://www.algeriades.com/news/sommaire\\_themes.php?id\\_mot=6](http://www.algeriades.com/news/sommaire_themes.php?id_mot=6)

### DZ Foot

Home site of the Algerian national football team.

[http://www.dzfoot.com/fiches/fiche.php?fiche\\_id=134](http://www.dzfoot.com/fiches/fiche.php?fiche_id=134)

### Emusic

Downloadable MP3s on Middle Eastern music.

[http://www.emusic.com/genres\\_popular/390/](http://www.emusic.com/genres_popular/390/)

### Exiled Writers Ink

Network of refugee writers in the UK.

<http://www.exiledwriters.co.uk/index.shtml>

### French Year of Algeria (2003) website

[http://www.djazair2003.org/?Une\\_Anee\\_de\\_l\\_Algerie\\_en\\_France](http://www.djazair2003.org/?Une_Anee_de_l_Algerie_en_France)

### Introduction to the literature of the Maghreb

Site providing an overview of Algerian literature.

<http://goa.cet.middlebury.edu/mtoler/literature-intro.htm>

### Introduction to rai music

Glossary on rai, extracts from Schade-Poulsen (1999).

<http://inic.utexas.edu/menic/rai/>

### Littératures du Maghreb

French site on Algerian literature

<http://www.limag.com>

### Maghrebi literature in translation

Details of English translations

[http://goa.cet.middlebury.edu/mtoler/In\\_English\\_Translation/index.htm](http://goa.cet.middlebury.edu/mtoler/In_English_Translation/index.htm)

### V.Tuner

Lists range of Algerian radio stations.

<http://www.vtuner.com/vtunerweb/static/Algeriaoverall1.html>

[www.Maroc.net](http://www.Maroc.net)

Information on Algerian music.

[http://www.maroc.net/maghreb\\_music/algeria.htm](http://www.maroc.net/maghreb_music/algeria.htm)

## Projects and initiatives

There is currently no ongoing publicly available research on the Algerian community in the UK, nor any projects relating to service provision or integration that are solely aimed at the Algerian community.

## Contacts and links

This section aims to provide contact details for organisations whose work relates to Algerian refugee and asylum seeker issues.

This list will be updated as other useful links and contacts are identified. If you would like to add details of your organisation to these pages then please email [esme.peach@kcl.ac.uk](mailto:esme.peach@kcl.ac.uk).

Links to publications are incorporated in the [resources](#) section.

### **Abdelkader Saadoun**

Musician's website.

<http://www.saadoun.com/>

### **Algeriades.com**

Details of Algerian cultural events and activities.

<http://www.algeriades.com>

### **Algeriafocus**

Business orientated news and information

<http://www.algeriafocus.com>

### **Algeria interface**

Excellent middle of the road general news source (in English and French).

<http://www.algeria-interface.com/>

### **Algerian Consulate**

<http://www.consalglond.u-net.com/Embassy.htm>

### **Algerian National Statistics Office**

<http://www.ons.dz/index.htm>

### **Algerian Refugee Council UK**

No contact available for the instant.

### **Algeria Watch**

Focusing on highlighting problems with the Algerian regime (in French and German).

<http://www.algeria-watch.org/francais.htm>

### **Algeriens du Monde**

French-based development focused/solidarity organisation (in French).

<http://www.algeriensdumonde.org/>

### **AlgerieOnline.com**

<http://www.rcd-dz.org/index.htm>

### **Arabji.com, Algerian section**

<http://www.arabji.com/algeria/index.htm>

### **DZ Foot**

Home site of the Algerian national football team.

[http://www.dzfoot.com/fiches/fiche.php?fiche\\_id=134](http://www.dzfoot.com/fiches/fiche.php?fiche_id=134)

### **French Year of Algeria (2003) website**

[http://www.djazair2003.org/?Une\\_Année\\_de\\_l'Algerie\\_en\\_France](http://www.djazair2003.org/?Une_Année_de_l'Algerie_en_France)

### **Front Islamique du Salut (FIS)**

<http://www.fis-info.net/index.php>

### **Hijra International Online**

<http://home.worldcom.ch/~hijra/>

### **Introduction to the literature of the Maghreb**

Site providing an overview of Algerian literature.

<http://goa.cet.middlebury.edu/mtoler/literature-intro.htm>

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Glossary on raï, extracts from Schade-Poulsen (1999).

<http://inic.utexas.edu/menic/raï/>

### **Kabyle.com**

Berber site covering politics, history and culture (in English and Tamaziyt).

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**MAOL (Mouvement Algerien des Officiers Libres)**

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**Rachda (Rassemblement contre la hogra et pour les droits des algeriennes)**

Women's pressure group (in French, Spanish and Italian).

<http://www.nodo50.org/mujeresred/RACHDA.html>

**Rassemblement pour la Culture et la Democratie (RCD)**

Home site of this Berber focused political party.

<http://www.rcd-algerie.org/>

**Society for Algerian Studies (affiliated to the Centre for Near and Middle Eastern Studies)**

Contact John King (president), email

[coolpressjk@hotmail.com](mailto:coolpressjk@hotmail.com)

**[www.Maroc.net](http://www.Maroc.net)**

Information on Algerian music.

[http://www.maroc.net/maghreb\\_music/algeria.htm](http://www.maroc.net/maghreb_music/algeria.htm)