

ALGERIA

Berbers (Kabyles)

Activity: 1963-2020

General notes

- While some sources (e.g. Minahan 1996: 51-53) consider the Tuaregs in Algeria to form a separate self-determination movement, we consider them to be part of the Berber ethnic group since they do not appear to have campaigned for self-determination apart from the Berbers.

Movement start and end dates

- In 1963 the Berber-dominated Socialist Forces Front (FFS) split off from the National Liberation Front (FLN), Algeria's dominant political party both during the revolution and for most of the country's history. The FFS has consistently called for official status for Tamazight (the Berber language); a secular, pluralist polity; greater autonomy for Berber-dominated regions and more Berber input in central policy decisions. We therefore peg the start date of the movement at 1963.
- The movement is ongoing (Metz 1994; Minahan 1996, 2002, 2016; MAR; Soroso 2011).
 - o According to Minahan (2016: 197): Arab-Berber tensions turned violent during the political protests of Berber Spring in 1980 and Black Spring in 2001 and many nationalists seek independence for Kabylia (currently located in Northern Algeria).
 - o The Movement for the Autonomy of Kabylie (MAK, Mouvement pour l'autonomie de la Kabylie) was founded by Kabyle singer Ferhat Mehenni who is now in exile in France (Schlee 2009 :48, 138; Zeraoui 2012: 142; Girardin 2021: 38). Mehenni explained his decision to launch a new movement as a result of his view that the Berber movements had failed to reform the Algerian state and bring freedom and security to Kabylia. Mehenni pointed to the failure of the Berber movement's two most popular parties, the Socialist Forces Front (FFS) and the Rally for Culture and Democracy (RCD) (Willis 2016: 85). In 2010, Ferhat Mehenni announced from Paris the establishment of a provisional government of Kabylia (GPK), and appointed himself as president and on 4 October 2013, the movement's objective evolved towards independence of the Kabyle people in Algeria (Merezak 2021). In 2021, the Algerian government labeled the MAK a terrorist organisation following the arrest of its members accused of planning car bombs during anti-government protests (Allen 2021).
- [start date: 1963; end date: ongoing]

Dominant claim

- The Socialist Forces Front, which was formed in 1963, makes claims more political autonomy for the Berber-dominated regions and official status for the Berber language (Tamazight) (Leggewie and Ouaisa 2021; Minorities at Risk Project).
- A second significant organization is MAK (see above). In 2013, the MAK leader, Ferhat Mehenni, announced from Paris that the movement's objective evolved from autonomy towards outright independence (Merezak 2021).
- The evidence we found suggest that the claim for autonomy has remained dominant (MRGI; Rachidi 2021). It is possible that this is about to change, however. The MAK movement continues to gain traction among Berbers in Algeria as well as in France, where a large Berber diaspora lives. Over the last few years, the MAK has been able to repeatedly organize large marches in Kabylie in which independence was claimed (North Africa Post 2021). [1963-2020: autonomy claim]

Independence claims

- The Movement for the Autonomy of Kabyle (MAK) was created by Ferhat Mehenni in 2003. In 2013, the MAK leader, Ferhat Mehenni, announced from Paris that the movement's objective evolved from autonomy towards outright independence (Merezak 2021). [start date: 2013; end date: ongoing]

Irredentist claims

NA

Claimed territory

- Some groups, such as MAK, make claims specifically regarding Kabylia, a relatively small historic region in northern Algeria which includes only some Berber regions but not others (MAK 2020; UNPO 2017). However, claims are often broader than the historical Kabylia region and more generally refer to Berber regions in Algeria (Roth 2015: 232). We code this claim based on the map in Roth (2015: 230), using data from GeoEPR for polygon definition. We ultimately code this claim as ambiguous as the exact distribution of the Berbers is unknown.

Sovereignty declarations

NA

Separatist armed conflict

- The FFS was a key player in the post-independence strife, but as the violence was predominantly over control of the central government, so we do not code a civil war over self-determination.
- Riots involving demands for language and cultural autonomy occurred in April 1980 and 32 persons; both Berbers and members of the security forces were reported to have been killed. We therefore code 1980 as LVIOLSD..
- In 2001, Agence France Presse reported rioting that killed between 56-100 people (AFP 6/25/2001) and thus 2001 is coded as LVIOLSD.
 - o Note: in both 1980 and 2001, the main claims were for linguistic and cultural rights and not territorial autonomy. However, the protests are often referenced in connection to discussions of claims for autonomy claims. Therefore, we presume a claim for increased territorial self-determination.
- 2002 onward is coded as NVIOLSD as the movement continued but no violence was found. [1963-1979: NVIOLSD; 1980: LVIOLSD; 1981-2000: NVIOLSD; 2001: LVIOLSD; 2002-2020: NVIOLSD]

Historical context

- Prior to colonialization, the Berbers had an autonomous status under a nominally independent Muslim state. The Berbers opposed French colonial rule, but the French had subdued the Berbers by 1850. Berber rebellions in 1876, 1882, and 1899 were crushed (Minahan 2002: 866). No concession or restriction during the ten years before movement activity was found.

Concessions and restrictions

- The Kabyles had been promised autonomy upon independence, but the Arab government withdrew this promise in 1963 (Minahan 2002: 866-867). We found no evidence that there were steps towards implementation, thus we do not code this.
- Beginning with independence, the Algerian government began to target Berber education, language and media to spread its policy of Arabization. Government control of the press excluded any written production in Tamazight, the Berber language. The Kabyles lost the cultural and linguistic rights they had enjoyed under French rule (Minahan 2002: 867; Minorities at Risk Project). [1963: cultural rights restriction]
- The 1990 Arabization law projected the complete Arabization of official activities by 1992 and of higher education by 1997. Arabic would be the only official language after 1997, with substantial penalties for users of Berber languages or French (Minority Rights Group International 1997: 394). [1990: cultural rights restriction]
- In 1995, the central government allowed the limited use of the Berber language in education (Minahan 2002: 868; Minorities at Risk Project). [1995: cultural rights concession]
 - o Related to this: “The National Charter of 1996 recognises the Berber culture and language as one of the components of Algerian identity. It is not possible to study for a degree in Berber culture and Amazigh. The state controlled television broadcasts programmes in Amazigh. Although Amazigh is not currently taught routinely in schools, a pilot has been set up to teach the Berber language in some schools. A commission has also been set up to promote Berber culture and introduce the Berber language into education and communication systems” (United Kingdom Home Office: B.10). We do not code a separate concession.
- In July 1998, “[d]espite widespread opposition, Algeria’s government is celebrated its independence yesterday by banning the official use of all languages except Arabic” (The Ottawa Citizen 7/6/1998, Lexis Nexis). We do not code this as a restriction because it simply reaffirms the status quo – Tamazight has never been an official language.
- In 2001, an agreement was made to make Tamazight a national language (Cunningham 2014: 199). The agreement was implemented in 2002, when the Algerian government amended the Constitution so that Berber became a national language (Keesing’s Record of World Events: March 2002). However, it was still not granted the status of an official language (ANSAmend 8/20/2009, Lexis Nexis). This amendment came after partly violent demonstrations that took place between April 2001 and March 2002 to protest a high school student’s death at a police station (AFP 6/19/2007, Lexis Nexis). [2001: cultural rights concession]
 - o Note: this is not considered a repeal of the Arabization Laws since, despite being a national language, Tamazight still cannot be used in any official activities without official status.
 - o Note as well: This concession occurred after the onset of separatist violence in 2001.
- In January 2002, after ongoing talks with the moderate Berbers, the Algerian government adopted “a series of resolutions” that proposed “the establishment of a special ministerial council to implement the creation of decentralized government councils in the Kabyle at *wilaya* level” (Europa World Yearbook 2003: 446-447). We do not code this as an autonomy concession since it was confined to the local level.
- In July 2003, the Algerian government “agreed to reintroduce the use of Tamazight into Algeria’s educational system, thereby fulfilling one of the demands of the el-Kseur Platform” (Europa World Yearbook 2004: 466). [2003: cultural rights concession]
- The Berber group Aarch demanded that the Algerian government accept all six of its preliminary demands in the 15-point El Kseur Platform before it would begin negotiations. The Algerian government had accepted five of the six preliminary Berber demands in January 2004 (Minorities at Risk Project; also see the 2003 concession). This led to the start of negotiations between the two sides (Europa World Yearbook 2004: 466). During the negotiations, the Algerian government accepted the sixth preliminary demand in the El Kseur Platform. In January 2004, the two sides signed an agreement noting that “unduly elected officials’ voted into office in regional, local and parliamentary elections in Kabylie in 2002” would be removed from office (AFP 2004; in October 2002, local-level elections had experienced low voter turnout as the Berbers boycotted

elections. Subsequently, officials were installed into local office against Berber wishes. The removal of these officials was the sixth preliminary demand in the El Kseur platform). We do not code an autonomy concession since the grant of new elections refers to the local level. However, we code a cultural rights concession in 2005: in 2005 Algeria's government signed a deal with Berber leaders, promising economic aid for the restive region and more recognition for its language (BBC 2005). There appear to have been some steps towards implementation. For instance, in June 2007, the Algerian government approved two new language authorities – the Amazigh Language Academy and the High Council for the Amazigh language – both of which aim to promote and standardize Tamazight (Magharebia 2007). [2005: cultural rights concession]

- In early 2016, the Algerian government granted the Berber language official status (Minahan 2016: 197). [2016: cultural rights concession]
- In 2018, the Algerian government designated Yennayer (the first month of the Amazigh year) as a public holiday becoming the first North African country to do so (Harize 2021). [2018: cultural rights concession]
- During anti-government protest in 2019, protestors were banned from waving the Berber flag publicly. Many protestors defied this decree which resulted in arrests, possible sentencing of up to 10 years in prison and fines for “harming the integrity of the country” (Amnesty International 2019; Bouattia 2019). [2019: cultural rights restriction]

Regional autonomy

- While there were some autonomy concessions, one cannot speak of meaningful regional autonomy.

De facto independence

NA

Major territorial changes

- Algeria attained independence in 1962, which implies a host state change. However, this is before the start date and thus not coded.

EPR2SDM

<i>Movement</i>	Berbers (Kabyles)
<i>Scenario</i>	1:1
<i>EPR group(s)</i>	Berbers
<i>Gwgroupid(s)</i>	61502000

Power access

- We draw on EPR. [1963-2020: powerless]

Group size

- We draw on EPR. [0.28]

Regional concentration

- In the north-eastern provinces the Kabyles make up a majority (63%) and the Kabyles in these provinces in turn make up a majority of the entire Berber population in Algeria (Minahan 2002: 863). This is confirmed by Minority Rights Group International, which states that “about half of the Berber-speaking population is concentrated in the mountainous areas east of Algiers – Kabylia.” Other Berber communities, such as the Shawiya, the Mozabites or the Tuareg live scattered across the country’s southern and eastern parts (see GeoEPR). [regionally concentrated]

Kin

- The respective EPR group (scenario 1:1) is coded as having several kin groups throughout the movement’s period of activity. EPR lists the Tuareg in Mali, Niger and Libya and the Berbers in Morocco and Libya. All kin groups have a population of over 100,000. The Minorities at Risk data also provides evidence of “close kindred across a border”, mentioning the Berbers in Morocco and Tunisia as the two largest kin groups. According to Minahan (2002: 863) there is also a large Kabyle community in France (1.5 million). We thus code the presence of kin in neighboring countries. [kin in neighboring country]

Sources

- AFP (2004). “Algeria Edges Closer to Peace in Berber Region.” January 24. <http://www.arabnews.com/node/243443> [March 24, 2014].
- Allen, Sabrina (2021) “MAK’s Complex History Continues to Impact Moroccan-Algerian Relations”. 09 October. <https://www.morocoworldnews.com/2021/10/344859/maks-complex-history-continues-to-impact-moroccan-algerian-relations>. [29 June 2022].
- Amnesty International (2019) ‘Algeria: 41 arrested for carrying the Amazigh flag as authorities crack down on freedom of expression’, 05 July. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/07/algeria-41-arrested-for-carrying-the-amazigh-flag-as-authorities-crack-down-on-freedom-of-expression/> [17 July 2022].
- Baldauf, Richard B., and Robert B. Kaplan (eds.) (2007). *Language Planning and Policy in Africa*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- BBC (2004). “Algeria Peace Talks ‘Threatened.’” January 28, sec. Africa. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/3439481.stm> [March 24, 2014].
- BBC (2005). “Algeria Strikes Deal with Berbers.” January 17, sec. Africa. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/4180887.stm> [March 24, 2014].
- Bouattia, Malia (2019) ‘Banning Berber flags will only reinforce Algerian solidarity’, *The New Arab*. 15 July. <https://english.alaraby.co.uk/opinion/banning-berber-flags-will-only-reinforce-algerian-solidarity> [17 July 2022].
- Cederman, Lars-Erik, Andreas Wimmer, and Brian Min (2010). “Why Do Ethnic Groups Rebel: New Data and Analysis.” *World Politics* 62(1): 87-119.
- Cunningham, Kathleen Gallagher (2014). *Inside the Politics of Self-Determination*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Europa World Year Book (2003). London: Europa Publications.
- Europa World Year Book (2004). London: Europa Publications.
- GADM (2019). Database of Global Administrative Boundaries, Version 3.6. <https://gadm.org/> [November 19, 2021].
- Girardin, Luc (2021). *EPR Atlas*. ETH Zurich.

- Harize, Ouissal (2021) 'What you need to know about Amazigh new year, or Yennayer', *Middle East Eye*, 11 January. <https://www.middleeasteye.net/discover/what-you-need-know-about-amazigh-new-year-or-yennayer>. [15 July 2022].
- Keesing's Record of World Events. <http://www.keesings.com> [March 31, 2014].
- Leggewie, Claus and Ouaisa, Rachid (2021) 'Algeria's Gramscian situation', IPS, 06 November. <https://www.ips-journal.eu/topics/democracy-and-society/algeria-a-neglected-partner-5237/>. [17 July 2022].
- Lexis Nexis. <http://www.lexis-nexis.com> [March 23, 2014].
- Magharebia (2007), "Algeria to Create Amazigh Language Academy." June 21. http://magharebia.com/en_GB/articles/awi/features/2007/06/21/feature-01 [March 24, 2014].
- MAK – Mouvement pour l'Autodétermination de la Kabylie (2020). <https://www.makabylie.org/> [November 9, 2020].
- Merezek, Houda (2021) "The Movement for the Self-Determination of Kabylia (MAK)". 30 August. <https://www.morocoworldnews.com/2021/08/344150/the-movement-for-the-self-determination-of-kabylia-mak>. [29 June 2022].
- Metz, Helen C. (ed.) (1994). *Algeria: A Country Study*. Washington DC: Department of the Army.
- Migdalovitz, Carol (2011). *Algeria: Current Issues*. Darbe, PA: Diane Publishing.
- Minahan, James (1996). *Nations without States: A Historical Dictionary of Contemporary National Movements*. London: Greenwood Press, pp. 253-255.
- Minahan, James (2002). *Encyclopedia of the Stateless Nations*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, pp. 863-869.
- Minahan, James (2016). *Encyclopedia of Stateless Nations*. Second Edition. Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood Press.
- Minorities at Risk Project (MAR) (2009). College Park, MD: University of Maryland.
- Minority Rights Group International (1997). *World Directory of Minorities*. London: Minority Rights Group International.
- Minority Rights Group International. *World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Groups*. <http://www.minorityrights.org/4083/algeria/berbers.html> [July 21, 2014].
- North Africa Post (2021) 'Morocco urges Algeria to respect Kabylie region's right to self-determination', 16 July. <https://northafricapost.com/51127-morocco-urges-algeria-to-respect-kabylie-regions-right-to-self-determination.html>. [17 July 2022].
- Rachidi, Ilhem (2021) 'Repression in Algeria: Could It End The Hirak Movement?', Carnegie, 29 July. <https://carnegieendowment.org/sada/85060>. P17 July 2022].
- Schlee, Judith (2009). *Village Matters: Knowledge, Politics and Community in Kabylia, Algeria*. Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer.
- Sorosoro (2011). "October 10-11, 2011: News on the Amazigh Language (Kabyle), Algeria." <http://www.sorosoro.org/en/october-10-11-2011-news-on-the-amazigh-language-kabyle-algeria> [December 13, 2013].
- United Kingdom Home Office (1999). "Algeria." http://www.asylumlaw.org/docs/algeria/ind99b_algeria_ca.htm [March 24, 2014].
- UNPO – Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (2017). "Kabylia." <https://unpo.org/downloads/2367.pdf> [November 9, 2020].
- Vogt, Manuel, Nils-Christian Bormann, Seraina Rüegger, Lars-Erik Cederman, Philipp Hunziker, and Luc Girardin (2015). "Integrating Data on Ethnicity, Geography, and Conflict: The Ethnic Power Relations Data Set Family." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 59(7): 1327-1342.
- Willis, M.J. (2016) 'Berbers in an Arab Spring: The Politics of Amazight Identity and North African Uprisings', in Y.H. Zubair and G. White (eds) *North African Politics: Change and Continuity*. London & New York: Routledge, pp. 79-96.
- Zeraoui, Zidane (2012) Algeria: revolution, army and political power, *Language and Intercultural Communication*, 12 (2), pp.133-145, DOI: 10.1080/14708477.2012.671608