

President Abdelmadjid Tebboune  
Embassy of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria  
2118 Kalorama Road NW  
Washington, D.C. 20008

MM/DD/YYYY

Dear President Tebboune,

We write to you as a diverse group of experts, activists, and NGO leaders committed to expanding and strengthening freedom of religion, thought, belief, and conscience around the world. We greatly appreciate Algeria's constitutional commitment to protecting its citizens from extremist elements that threaten democracy, liberty, and freedom. As you are aware, the Algerian Constitution states that "freedom of creed and opinion is inviolable." We celebrate this commitment and strongly appreciate the people of Algeria for the stand they have taken to defend religious freedom for all Algerians.

However, we have received multiple reports of churches being closed as recently as late 2019, and a total of thirteen churches remain closed by the government since November of 2017. The closures peaked in October of 2019, when the authorities moved to shut down the largest churches in the country, including the Protestant Church of the Full Gospel of Tizi-Ouzou.

We believe that these closures are part of an effort started under the previous leadership of Algeria to suppress the right of Christians to freely exercise their religion. The churches were closed on the basis of a 2006 law known as Ordinance 06-03. This law stipulates that Christian churches must obtain registration from a national committee in order to hold religious services. However, the committee established by Ordinance 06-03 has not yet convened and it has not, to our knowledge, reviewed or approved a single application. Still, the closed churches were operating legally because of their affiliation with the long-recognized Église Protestante d'Algérie.

During one of the church closures, eight police officers enforcing orders from the governor of Tizi-Ouzou Province sealed all access to a protestant church in Boghni under Ordinance 06-03. A notice was posted on the door explaining the actions taken by the officers. It read, "We, the police of Boghni, inform the whole population of Boghni that the premises illegally used by the named Tahar Chergui to celebrate non-Muslim worship was closed and sealed by order of the governor. Dated Sept. 18, 2019. Signed by the president of district security."

These are troubling reports as the Algerian Constitution clearly protects the freedom of religion for all faiths. The church closures and Ordinance of 06-03 clearly hinder free practice of religion in Algeria. We urge you to ensure that these freedoms will be guaranteed for all Algerians.

As a participant in the international community and a signatory to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which protects the right to freedom of religious belief, we urge the Algerian government to halt the discriminatory implementation of Ordinance 06-03 and re-examine the law in light of relevant provisions of the Constitution to ensure that all national laws are consistent with a commitment to protect the freedom of religion, belief, and conscience for individuals of all or no faiths.

We strongly encourage that further constitutional protections and other legal structures be created for all Algerian to practice the faith of their choosing. We urge your government to allow

the churches which were closed to reopen, and create a viable means by which churches may obtain full authorization to operate.

Thank you for your consideration and for your nation's commitment to religious freedom. The best defense against those who seek to undermine human rights is to protect each individual's freedom of religion, belief, and conscience.

Most sincerely,

*International Christian Concern*