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## Algeria (1991 - 2004)

Algeria won independence from France after a four-year civil war led by the National Liberation Front (FLN). The FLN ruled from 1962 until 1991 in a series of military-backed presidencies that grew increasingly intolerant of opposition. After the ban on political parties was lifted in 1989, the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) grew in popularity. After victories in local and provincial elections in 1990 and 1991, the FIS was ordered to disband and a state of emergency was declared. In 1992 the assassination of the president sparked a full-scale civil war that lasted a decade and is estimated to have killed approximately 150,000 people.

By 1962, between 600,000 and 1.5 million people had been killed in Algeria's war for independence. After the first president was overthrown in 1965, the government responded to growing opposition by decreasing political freedoms. As a result of a stagnant economy, unemployment and general discontent increased. Youth riots in 1988 left over 500 people dead, but provoked the government to offer a revised constitution that legalized political parties. The growing popularity of the FIS threatened both the government and the military. In 1991 the military dissolved the parliament, and the following year it imposed the state of emergency, leading to all-out civil war between hardliners in the FIS and the military.

The FIS split into various groups as the civil war continued, one of which - the Armed Islamic Group (GAI) - has been labeled a terrorist organization. Moderate groups attempted to mediate a ceasefire in 1995, but the government rejected the agreement and violence grew with attacks in France as well as Algeria. Elections in December 1995 confirmed the presidency of the government-backed military leader, Liamine Zeroual, for a five-year term. However in 1998, after parliamentary elections the year before showed mass support for a peaceful resolution to the conflict, Zeroual decided to hold presidential elections early. In a highly disputed election, Abdelaziz Bouteflika became president and began peace talks with the hardline FIS groups. Within the year, he had created a "Civil Harmony Law" that pardoned thousands of members of armed groups and ended the large-scale violence. Sporadic clashes continued to kill hundreds of people into 2001. Parliamentary elections in 2002 were characterized by further violence, and were boycotted by two of the four major parties. FIS leaders were released from prison in 2003, and President Bouteflika was re-elected in a landslide victory in 2004.

### *Print Resources*

Brogan, Patrick (1998) *World Conflicts*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.

Roberts, Hugh (2002) *Embattled Algeria, 1988-2001: Studies of a broken polity*. London: Verso.

Stone, Martin (1997) *The Agony of Algeria*. New York: Columbia University Press.

### *Online Resources*

BBC News. *Country Profile and Timeline*.

Reuters Alertnet. *Country Profile: Algeria*.

Human Rights Watch (2005) *Algeria: Amnesty Law Risks Legalizing Impunity for Crimes Against Humanity*

*Timeline*

- 1962 - Algeria gains independence from France
- 1963 - Ahmed Ben Bella elected president
- 1965 - Bella assassinated, Houari Boumedienne becomes president
- 1976 - All political parties aside from the National Liberation Front (FLN) banned
- 1978 - Boumedienne dies, Chadli Bendjedid succeeds him
- 1988 - Mass youth riots against economic conditions
- 1989 - Opposition parties legalized; Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) founded
- 1990 - FIS wins majority of local elections
- 1991 - Strong showing by FIS in first round of parliamentary elections; state of emergency declared
- 1992 - Military forces Bendjedid to step-down and Mohamed Boudiaf becomes leader; violent clashes between military and FIS; Boudiaf assassinated
- 1994 - Liamine Zeroual appointed head of government
- 1995 - Zeroual elected president
- 1997 - Parliamentary elections won by political parties in favor of peace
- 1999 - General elections boycotted by opposition parties, Abdelaziz Bouteflika wins; referendum approves civil concord law, pardoning thousands of militants
- 2002 - Prime Minister Ali Benflis's National Liberation Front wins general elections
- 2003 - FIS leaders freed after 12 years in prison
- 2004 - President Bouteflika re-elected for the second term in a landslide victory
- 2005 - GIA leader Nourredine Boudiafi arrested, group declared dismantled; voters support amnesty plan for those involved in post-1992 killings