

**Refugee Review Tribunal
AUSTRALIA**

RRT RESEARCH RESPONSE

Research Response Number: DZA31590
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Keywords: Algeria – Terrorist groups – Extortion – Business owners – Arab Muslims – Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) – *Groupe Salafiste pour la Prédication et le Combat* – Algiers – Kabylia – State protection – Internal relocation

This response was prepared by the Country Research Section of the Refugee Review Tribunal (RRT) after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the RRT within time constraints. This response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum.

Questions

- 1. Are there any terrorist groups in Algeria that are known for seeking to extort money from construction contractors or small businesses on a routine basis?**
- 2. Do these groups operate in any particular cities/regions in Algeria?**
- 3. Are they still in operation in 2007?**
- 4. On what basis do they target individuals or small businesses?**
- 5. Are Arab Muslim small businessmen in Algeria more likely than other groups within the Algerian community to be subjected to such extortion?**
- 6. What protection, if any, is available from the Algerian authorities to someone resisting the activities of these terrorist groups?**
- 7. How difficult would it be for such people to relocate to elsewhere in Algeria?**

RESPONSE

- 1. Are there any terrorist groups in Algeria that are known for seeking to extort money from construction contractors or small businesses on a routine basis?**
- 2. Do these groups operate in any particular cities/regions in Algeria?**

The only terrorist group which is currently active in Algeria is based in the mountainous areas and in parts of the southern desert. The GSPC – Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat – is an Islamist fundamentalist group that derives its revenue from drug trafficking, kidnapping and extortions. However, there are no reports that it specifically targets construction contractors or small businesses. ('Algeria: Police announces crackdown on GSPC funds' 2007, www.adnki.com – Attachment 1; 'Salafist Group for Call and Combat' 2005, www.nationalsecurity.gov.au, 14 November 2002 – Attachment 2).

The GSPC (*Groupe Salafiste pour la Prédication et le Combat*) was reported in 2005 to have withdrawn in the mountain forests into north eastern Algeria and primarily in the Berber-speaking region of Kabylia. (Country of Origin Information Service, UK Home Office 2006, 'Country of Origin Information Report: Algeria', UK Home Office website, April http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs06/algeria_280406.doc – Attachment 3).

3. Are they still in operation in 2007?

It seems that GSPC did not exist under this name until after the end of February 2007. The group is now recognised as 'Al-Qaeda Organisation in the Islamic Maghreb' ('Algeria arrests eight bombing suspects' 2007, Reuters, 26 February <http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/L26664178.htm> – Accessed 18 April 2007 – Attachment 4).

The merger was approved in September 2006, although not announced until February this year (Group File. AL-QAEDA ORGANIZATION IN THE ISLAMIC MAGHREB' 2007, The Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism (MIPT) Website, last updated 30 March <http://www.tkb.org/Group.jsp?groupID=3777> – Accessed 18 April 2007 – Attachment 5).

The most recent GSPC attack was carried out this month on 11 April 2007 in Algiers, the capital city. Two suicide car bombs were detonated: one near the Prime Minister's office in the city centre and another was aimed at police station near the international airport in the eastern part of the city. According to analysts there is now a new regional alliance of jihadists which calls itself the 'Al Qaeda Organization in the Islamic Maghreb' and the GSPC is the largest component of this group. ('Suicide bombings in the Algerian capital' 2007, STRATFOR Strategic forecasting website, 11 April. http://www.stratfor.com/products/premium/read_article.php?id=287059 – Accessed 12 April 2007 – Attachment 6)

In recent weeks this new Al Qaeda branch claimed responsibility for an attack on 3 March 2007 on a bus carrying 21 workers for a Russian gas company – this killed one Russian oil worker and three Algerians near the town of Ain Defla, some 80 miles southwest of Algiers. On 4 March 2007 seven Algerian police officers were killed in an ambush near Beni Yeni, in the eastern Kabylie region. (Algeria: Trademark Attacks and a GSPC-Al Qaeda Blend' 2007, STRATFOR Strategic forecasting website, 5 March <http://www.stratfor.com/products/premium/print.php?storyId=285242> – Accessed 12 April 2007 – Attachment 7)

On 1 April an unnamed terrorist group carried out an act of sabotage and blew up the gas pipeline that supplies the residents of the Jijel Province, 300km to the east of Algiers. ('"Terrorists" blow up gas pipeline in eastern Algeria' 2007, *BBC Monitoring Middle East* – Attachment 8)

'Al Qaeda in the Maghreb' is claimed to represent the rebirth of the GSPC and is reported to have killed six people and injured 12 in seven explosions outside police stations in eastern Kabylia. It maintains its practice of drug trafficking, kidnapping and extortion. ('Profile: Al-Qaeda in the Maghreb' 2007, BBC website, 11 April – Accessed 12 April – Attachment 9)

Earlier this year it was estimated that the GSPC had a membership of some 500 men. It operates from remote mountain areas in Algeria and parts of the southern desert and continued to be involved in drug trafficking, kidnapping and extortion. ('Update 2 – Islamist group wants attacks on French in Algeria' 2007, *Reuters News*, 9 January – Attachment 10)

4. On what basis do they target individuals or small businesses?

Please refer to Question 1.

5. Are Arab Muslim small businessmen in Algeria more likely than other groups within the Algerian community to be subjected to such extortion?

A search of the sources available to the Tribunal does not indicate specific targeting of Arab Muslim small businessmen for extortion.

6. What protection, if any, is available from the Algerian authorities to someone resisting the activities of these terrorist groups?

7. How difficult would it be for such people to relocate to elsewhere in Algeria?

Algeria has been in a continuous “State of Emergency” since 9 February 1992 and this was renewed indefinitely in February 1993. At times the police, military and other security personnel fall short of their mandate and are themselves guilty of human rights violations:

- 6.22 The USSD report for 2005 states, regarding the implementation of anti-torture legislation in September 2004:

“Although the Penal Code prohibited torture, legislation enacted in September 2004 criminalized torture, and government agents now face prison sentences for up to three years for committing such acts. Impunity remained a problem.” **[6a] (p3) (Section 1c – Torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment)**

- 6.23 Amnesty International, in AI’s September 2003 report, states:

“Some of these measures are illegal according to Algerian legislation. The Criminal Procedure Code clearly states that all law enforcement officials, including Military Security personnel, must not only present an arrest warrant to the accused, but also give them a copy. [Footnote reference: (12) See, for example, Article 110 of the Criminal Procedure Code.] The Code also stipulates that statements such as interrogation reports must indicate that their authors are law enforcement officials authorized to carry out such duties, meaning that their rank and full name must be mentioned. [(13) See Article 18 of the Criminal Procedure Code.]” **[26c] (p14)**

“The way in which Military Security officers conduct their operations appears to be symptomatic of their lack of accountability. As law enforcement officials they operate, according to the Criminal Procedure Code, under the control of the judicial authorities. In practice, the judicial authorities are too intimidated by them to challenge their authority. Amnesty International is not aware of a single case of a Military Security operative ever having been investigated or brought to justice for committing human rights violations in the exercise of their functions in the service’s history, despite the overwhelming evidence pointing to the involvement of its agents in human rights violations, including those of a grave and systematic nature.” **[26c] (p14)**

- 6.24 The *Africa Research Bulletin* for December 2004 carries a report from the French newspaper “*Liberation*” as follows:

“A close collaborator of President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, Farouk Ksentini [Head of the Human Rights Commission of the Algerian Government], admitted on December 16th [2004] to Reuters news agency, that some members of the security forces were ‘individually’ responsible for the death of 5,200 civilians killed during the internal conflict.” [7i] (p.16042)

6.25 The USSD report for 2005 also reported that:

“The government stated in 2003 that, as a matter of policy, disciplinary action will be taken against soldiers or police found guilty of violating human rights, but impunity remained a problem. The government did not provide disaggregated public information on the numbers, infractions or punishments of police, military, or other security force personnel. In January, all security forces were provided for the first time with a copy of the code of conduct, establishing regulations for conduct and sanctions for abuses, as part of human rights training. According to human rights attorneys, police officials, and local NGOs, the largest single abuse of police authority occurred as a result of officers not following established guidelines for arrests.” [6a] (p3) (Section 1d – Role of the police and security apparatus)

(‘Country of Origin Information Report: Algeria’

Citation: Country of Origin Information Service, UK Home Office 2006, ‘Country of Origin Information Report: Algeria’, UK Home Office website, April

http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs06/algeria_280406.doc – Attachment 3)

Regarding the possibility of relocation and freedom of movement with Algeria, there are no government restrictions on these rights; however:

d. Freedom of Movement Within the Country, Foreign Travel, Emigration, and Repatriation

Article 44 of the constitution provides for these rights; however, the government restricted the exercise of them. The government did not permit young men eligible for the draft and who had not yet completed their military service to leave the country without special authorization; however, such authorization was granted to students and to those persons with special family circumstances.

Under the emergency decree, the interior minister and the provincial governors may deny residency in certain districts to persons regarded as threats to public order. The government also maintained restrictions for security reasons on travel into the four southern provinces of Ouargla, El-Oued, Laghouat, and Ain-Salah, where much of the hydrocarbon industry and many foreign workers were located.

Armed bandits and terrorists intercepted citizens at roadblocks, often using stolen police uniforms and equipment to rob them of their cash and vehicles. On occasion, armed groups killed groups of military and civilian passengers at these roadblocks (see section 1.a.).

(US Department of State 2007, *Country Reports on Human –Algeria*, 6 March – Attachment 11)

List of Sources Consulted

Internet Sources:

Government Information & Reports

UK Home Office website <http://www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk>

US Department of State website <http://www.state.gov>

United Nations (UN)

Non-Government Organisations

Amnesty International website <http://www.amnesty.org/>
Human Rights Watch (HRW) website <http://www.hrw.org/>

International News & Politics

BBC News website <http://news.bbc.co.uk/>

Search Engines

Google search engine <http://www.google.com.au/>

Yahoo search engine <http://search.yahoo.com>

Copernic search engine

Online Subscription Services

Jane's Intelligence Review website <http://jir.janes.com/>

STRATFOR Strategic forecasting website <http://www.stratfor.biz/>

Databases:

FACTIVA (news database)

BACIS (DIMA Country Information database)

REFINFO (IRBDC (Canada) Country Information database)

ISYS (RRT Country Research database, including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, US Department of State Reports)

RRT Library Catalogue

List of Attachments

1. Algeria: Police announces crackdown on GSPC funds, 2007, www.adnki.com. (CISNET Algeria CX170990)
2. 'Salafist Group for Call and Combat' 2005, www.nationalsecurity.gov.au, 14 November 2002. (CISNET Algeria CX147054)
3. Country of Origin Information Service, UK Home Office 2006, 'Country of Origin Information Report: Algeria', UK Home Office website, April. (http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs06/algeria_280406.doc – Accessed 1 May 2006)
4. Algeria arrests eight bombing suspects' 2007, Reuters, 26 February <http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/L26664178.htm> – Accessed 18 April 2007.
5. Group File. AL-QAEDA ORGANIZATION IN THE ISLAMIC MAGHREB' 2007, The Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism (MIPT) Website, last updated 30 March <http://www.tkb.org/Group.jsp?groupID=3777> – Accessed 18 April 2007.
6. Suicide bombings in the Algerian capital' 2007, STRATFOR Strategic forecasting website, 11 April, http://www.stratfor.com/products/premium/read_article.php?id=287059 – Accessed 12 April 2007.
7. Algeria: Trademark Attacks and a GSPC-Al Qaeda Blend' 2007, STRATFOR Strategic forecasting website, 5 March <http://www.stratfor.com/products/premium/print.php?storyId=285242> – Accessed 12 April 2007.

8. “‘Terrorists’ blow up gas pipeline in eastern Algeria’ 2007, *BBC Monitoring Middle East*. (FACTIVA)
9. ‘Profile: Al-Qaeda in the Maghreb’ 2007, *BBC website*, 11 April – Accessed 12 April.
10. ‘Update 2 – Islamist group wants attacks on French in Algeria’ 2007, *Reuters News*, 9 January. (FACTIVA)
11. US Department of State 2007, *Country Reports on Human – Algeria*, 6 March.