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PUBLIC VERSION

February 26, 2025

Pastor Paula White-Cain
Director and Senior Advisor
The White House Faith Office
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Re: Urgent Appeal for U.S. Action Against Algeria's Repression of Religious Freedom

Dear Pastor White-Cain,

We, the undersigned coalition of pastors, rights defenders, NGOs, and congregants write to express our deep concern over the worsening repression of religious freedom in Algeria, especially among Christian Kabyles (Berbers). The Algerian government, under its notorious Article 87 bis, continues to criminalize peaceful religious activities, including Christian worship. This draconian provision, originally justified in 2021 as a “counterterrorism” measure, has been systematically weaponized to silence dissent and target minority faith communities. Today, every Evangelical church but one in Kabylia has been forcibly closed, leaving believers without places of worship and subject to harassment, intimidation, and legal persecution for practicing their faith.

The situation has reached a critical point. Churches that once served as vital centers for worship and community support have been shuttered under government orders, with no legal recourse for reopening. Pastors and congregants have faced arrests and prosecutions simply for gathering in private homes to pray. Converts from Islam, in particular, face severe discrimination, threats, and even imprisonment under vague accusations of “undermining state security.” This blatant violation of religious freedom directly contravenes Algeria’s obligations under international human rights treaties, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which it is a signatory.

The U.S State Department has included Algeria on its Special Watch List since 2020.¹ In 2024, Open Doors listed Algeria as one of the [worst offenders](#) for Christian persecution, citing government surveillance, church closures, and legal threats against converts from Islam.

The U.S. State Department’s [2023 Country Report on International Religious Freedom](#) for Algeria focused on the case of Christian convert and human rights defender Slimane Bouhafs, president of the Saint Augustin steering committee that defends Christians and minorities in Algeria. He spent three years in prison after armed Algerian operatives kidnapped him from Tunisia in 2022 in violation of international law as he awaited refugee status there. Although released in September 2024, Bouhafs continues to be persecuted for his Christian faith, and on Friday, February 14, he launched an [urgent appeal](#) for help.

Given these alarming developments, we urge the Trump administration to take decisive action in defense of religious liberty. Specifically, we request that the U.S. government consider imposing targeted sanctions

¹ Under the International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA) of 1998, the President is required annually to review the status of religious freedom in every country in the world and designate each country the government of which has engaged in or tolerated “particularly severe violations of religious freedom” as a Country of Particular Concern (CPC). Such designations normally appear on the [Religious Freedom Designations](#) page on the State Department website, but that page is currently unavailable.

under the Global Magnitsky Act on Algerian officials responsible for these violations. Furthermore, we urge the State Department to designate Algeria as a Country of Particular Concern (CPC) under the International Religious Freedom Act and to press for immediate reforms that restore religious rights and reopen shuttered churches.

In addition to diplomatic and economic measures, we ask that the administration work with Congress to ensure that U.S. aid and trade agreements with Algeria are conditioned upon demonstrable improvements in religious freedom. Algeria's repression of its Christian minority is part of a broader pattern of escalating human rights abuses under its Zero Kabyle policy that cannot be ignored. If the Algerian government continues its campaign of persecution unchecked, it will embolden other regimes to suppress religious minorities with impunity.

The United States has long stood as a global advocate for religious freedom, and we believe it is imperative to uphold this commitment by holding Algeria accountable.

We appreciate the administration's defense of religious freedom and urge you to give priority to the dire situation that especially impacts the Kabyle people. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this matter further and provide additional documentation of the persecution Evangelical Christians face under Algeria's repressive laws. Thank you for your leadership on this critical issue, and we look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

THE CHRISTIAN KABYLE COALITION



By Elisabeth R. Myers

On behalf of The Christian Kabyle Coalition

NGOs:

The Kabyle League for Human Rights (LKDH) (in exile in Paris)

Kabylie, Racines et Ailes ("Kabylia, Roots and Wings") (KRA) association (France)

The Red Aza (Kabyle equivalent to the Red Cross)

Christian Pastors, Missionaries, and Congregants:

Identifying information has been REDACTED here to protect the safety of the individuals involved and their families.



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May 27, 2025

The Honorable Marco Rubio
Secretary
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

RE: Second Urgent Appeal for U.S. Action Against Algeria's Repression of Christian Kabyles

Dear Secretary Rubio:

On behalf of the Christian Kabyle Coalition, I write with grave concern regarding the U.S. Department of State's continuing [designation](#) of Algeria as merely a Special Watch List (SWL) country under the International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA).

The Religious Freedom Designations process mandated by IRFA is designed to hold governments accountable for egregious violations of religious liberty. The framework includes:

- **Countries of Particular Concern (CPCs)** – for “systematic, ongoing, and egregious” violations;
- **Special Watch List (SWL)** – for serious violations falling short of CPC status;
- **Entities of Particular Concern (EPCs)** – for non-state actors engaging in severe abuses.

Not merely symbolic, as you know these designations can trigger sanctions, shape U.S. foreign policy, and are meant to drive reform.

The Department's Office of International Religious Freedom (OIRF) [states](#) that its mission is to “promote the right of every person in the world” to believe—or not—and to act on those beliefs without fear. Yet despite this commitment, the U.S. has maintained Algeria's status as SWL since 2020, even as persecution by Algeria against Christians, particularly in Kabylia, has intensified in both frequency and cruelty.

The State Department's [2025 IRF Report](#) released in March once again recommends that Algeria remain on the Special Watch List. This recommendation underplays the severity of what is now a *systematic* and *ongoing* campaign of religious repression against Christians—as well as Jews—by the Algerian military regime.

Christian Kabyles have experienced:

- Closures of virtually all churches and places of worship;
- Arbitrary arrests, detentions, and criminal charges for their Christian worship;
- State-sponsored surveillance and harassment; and
- A chilling effect on their freedom of conscience and expression.

The Christian Kabyle Coalition detailed that the situation had reached a critical point in a letter to White House Faith Office Director Pastor Paula White-Cain, dated February 26, 2025. A copy of the redacted version is enclosed herewith.

www.FreedomforKabylia.org

Indeed, the repression in Kabylia is escalating—not stabilizing. Reports by human rights groups [Amnesty International](#) and [Riposte Internationale](#) released in April subsequent to our letter to Pastor White-Cain documented *widespread, systematic* violations in Kabylia, many of which fall squarely within the IRFA’s CPC criteria.

The Christian Kabyle Coalition respectfully urges you to commit to a full and immediate reassessment of Algeria’s designation. U.S. law requires that these classifications reflect conditions on the ground, and while the U.S. government has repeatedly affirmed its support for religious liberty, that commitment must be reflected in action.

The Christian Coalition therefore calls upon the Department of State to elevate Algeria’s designation to a Country of Particular Concern (CPC) and to pursue appropriate consequences under IRFA, including the consideration of sanctions and other diplomatic measures.

The Coalition anxiously awaits your assurance that the Department will act in accordance with U.S. law and American values to protect the religious freedom of Kabyle Christians.

Sincerely,

THE CHRISTIAN KABYLE COALITION



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Christian Pastors, Missionaries, and Congregants

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Enclosure

Cc: Mark Walker, U.S. Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom
Stephen Schneck, Chair, U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom
Senator Tim Kaine
Senator Ben Cardin
Senator Cory Booker
Senator Thom Tillis
Representative Maria Elvira Salazar
Representative Carlos Jimenez
Representative Mario Diaz Balard

**This material is distributed by Elisabeth R. Myers on behalf of
The Movement for Self-Determination of Kabylia.
Additional information is available at the Department of Justice, Washington, DC.**

www.FreedomforKabylia.org