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May 28, 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 US Commission for Religious Freedom’s [2025 Annual Report](#) released in March once again recommends that Algeria remain on the Special Watch List. This recommendation underplays the severity of the campaign of religious repression against Christians—as well as Jews—by the Algerian military regime. The report itself notes the “*ongoing* and *systematic* persecution of Christians” and confirms that every church in Kabylia has been closed, the one remaining open church in the entire country being in Algiers, a token accommodation for foreigners. The report makes only passing mention of the egregious case of Slimane Bouhafs, abducted from Tunisia by Algerian agents, imprisoned for three years, released a broken man, and now hounded daily.

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

Beyond the closures of all their churches and places of worship, Christian Kabyles have experienced:

- 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.

www.FreedomforKabylia.org

The repression in Kabylia is increasing—not stabilizing. Reports released last month by human rights groups [Amnesty International](#) and [Riposte Internationale](#) 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



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 OMITTED here to protect the safety of the individuals involved and their families.

Enclosure

Cc: Mark Walker, U.S. Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom (nominee)
Patrick Harvey (acting 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.*

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POUR DIFFUSION IMMÉDIATE

La Coalition chrétienne kabyle appelle l'USCIRF à recommander un renforcement de l'action américaine face aux violations de la liberté religieuse en Kabylie

Washington, DC – 10 février 2026 – Aujourd'hui, la Christian Kabyle Coalition a officiellement soumis sa déclaration post-audition ainsi que ses recommandations politiques à la Commission américaine sur la liberté religieuse internationale (USCIRF), appelant le Congrès et l'Administration à adopter des mesures plus fermes afin de répondre aux violations persistantes de la liberté religieuse et aux atteintes plus larges aux droits humains commises par l'Algérie, en particulier en Kabylie.

La Coalition demande que les États-Unis fassent de la liberté religieuse un élément central de leur engagement avec l'Algérie, notamment par un plaidoyer diplomatique renforcé, des sanctions ciblées contre les responsables de violations, un contrôle accru du Congrès, ainsi qu'un soutien élargi aux minorités religieuses persécutées et aux prisonniers de conscience. La Coalition appelle également à un renforcement du suivi international et à un examen multilatéral formel des pratiques de l'Algérie au regard de ses obligations juridiques internationales.

La Coalition recommande un engagement immédiat du Congrès, y compris la tenue d'auditions par la Commission des affaires étrangères du Sénat portant non seulement sur la persécution religieuse en Algérie mais aussi plus largement sur la situation des droits humains, ainsi que la confirmation accélérée par le Sénat de l'Ambassadeur itinérant pour la liberté religieuse internationale. La déclaration appelle en outre les parlementaires à soutenir des mécanismes de sanctions ciblées, un contrôle renforcé de l'aide étrangère destinée à l'Algérie, et une protection accrue des minorités religieuses persécutées et des prisonniers de conscience.

Parallèlement, la Coalition exhorte le Département d'État à désigner l'Algérie comme « pays particulièrement préoccupant » (Country of Particular Concern – CPC) en vertu de l'International Religious Freedom Act, à faire de la liberté de religion ou de conviction une priorité bilatérale essentielle, et à intensifier l'engagement diplomatique direct sur la réforme juridique, l'octroi d'autorisations pour les lieux de culte et la libération des personnes détenues pour des activités religieuses pacifiques.

« Les États-Unis ont à la fois un mandat légal et un intérêt stratégique à veiller à ce que la liberté de religion ou de conviction demeure au cœur de leur politique étrangère », a déclaré la Coalition. « Le leadership du Congrès est indispensable pour garantir un suivi durable, une véritable redevabilité et un engagement de principe avec l'Algérie au nom des communautés persécutées. »

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La déclaration documente des schémas de répression, notamment la fermeture d'églises, les poursuites visant des convertis chrétiens et des croyants issus de minorités, l'usage abusif de lois antiterroristes contre des militants pacifiques, ainsi que des pratiques judiciaires qui portent atteinte aux garanties fondamentales de procédure régulière. Elle appelle également à un soutien accru aux organisations de la société civile venant en aide aux victimes de persécutions religieuses et à un examen multilatéral soutenu dans le cadre des mécanismes internationaux des droits humains.

Un exemplaire de la soumission complète de la Coalition à l'USCIRF est disponible sur demande.

- 30 -

Notes aux rédacteurs

- **La Kabylie et le peuple kabyle** : La Kabylie est une région montagneuse méditerranéenne du nord de l'Algérie, dont la population est estimée entre 10 et 12 millions de personnes, dont environ la moitié vit à l'étranger. Le peuple kabyle est un peuple amazigh (berbère) autochtone, doté d'une langue, d'une culture et d'une identité historique distinctes.
- **La Christian Kabyle Coalition** est un réseau ad hoc de pasteurs, missionnaires, congrégations et organisations de la société civile œuvrant pour la liberté de religion ou de conviction et la protection des droits fondamentaux en Kabylie et dans l'ensemble de l'Algérie.
- **La Commission américaine sur la liberté religieuse internationale (USCIRF)** est un organisme fédéral indépendant et bipartisan chargé de surveiller la liberté religieuse dans le monde et de formuler des recommandations politiques au Président des États-Unis, au Secrétaire d'État et au Congrès.
- La soumission de la Coalition fait suite à l'audition de l'USCIRF du 13 janvier 2026 consacrée à la persécution des chrétiens dans plusieurs pays et régions hors des États-Unis, dont la Kabylie.
- Les recommandations de la Coalition incluent des appels à des auditions parlementaires, au renforcement des outils de sanctions et à un contrôle accru de l'engagement américano-algérien.
- Les demandes des médias et les requêtes pour obtenir la soumission complète peuvent être adressées à :

<p>Media Contact Elisabeth Myers, Counsel STRATEGIX Legal +1 917 294-3863 (WhatsApp) Elisabeth.r.myers@gmail.com</p>	
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**Post-Hearing Statement to the
U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom**

**Submitted on behalf of
the Christian Kabyle Coalition**

February 10, 2026

I. INTRODUCTION

The Christian Kabyle Coalition appreciates receiving this opportunity to submit a post-hearing statement to the Commission and respectfully submits the following to underscore the gravity and persistence of religious freedom violations committed by the Government of Algeria against Christian communities in Kabylia. Algeria's abuses are not isolated incidents. They reflect a deliberate and systematic policy over many years aimed at suppressing peaceful religious expression, particularly among Kabyle Christians, through administrative closures, judicial obstruction, criminal prosecution, restriction of travel, intimidation, and harassment.

The **Christian Kabyle Coalition** is an ad hoc civil society group of Kabyle Christians in both Kabylia¹ and the diaspora. The Coalition is made up of Christian pastors, missionaries, and congregants, and several rights organizations including the Association for the Support of Christians in Kabylia based in Geneva; the Kabyle League for Human Rights (LKDH) in exile in Paris; and the Red Aza (the Kabyle equivalent to the Red Cross).²

Last year, the Coalition twice urgently appealed to the Trump administration seeking its intervention, once in a February 26, 2025 letter dated to White House Faith Director Pastor Paula White Cain, and again in a letter dated May 28, 2025 to US Secretary of State Marco Rubio. Copies of those letters are attached hereto for inclusion in the record.

The Coalition supports the testimony of Kabyle Pastor Nourredine Benzid who testified in person at the January 13, 2026 hearing and submitted a written statement.

The Coalition's statement amplifies Pastor Benzid's remarks and provides further detail the Commission may find useful in assessing the situation in Kabylia and Algeria. The Coalition also makes a number of recommendations to the Commission.

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¹ Kabylia is a mountainous region covering about 50,000 square kilometers to the east of Algiers all the way north to the Mediterranean Sea with a population estimated at approximately 10–12 million. About half live in the diaspora, mostly in France and Canada. The Kabyle people are an indigenous Amazigh (Berber) people with a distinct language, culture, and historical identity. Many Kabyles live in exile, unable to return to their homeland because of decades of oppression, marginalization, and persecution by subsequent Algerian regimes.

² In light of the egregious repression of Christians within Kabylia at present and the demonstrated extraterritorial reach of the Algerian government, specific identifying information for the individuals in the Coalition has been omitted to protect the safety of the individuals involved in the Coalition and their families back home.

II. ABUSES OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN ALGERIA ARE PERSISTENT, SYSTEMATIC, AND SUSTAINED

Religious freedom in Algeria has deteriorated rapidly over the last decade, particularly for Christian communities in Kabylia. The Algerian government's repressive actions have been systematic, discriminatory, and inconsistent with Algeria's international human rights obligations — including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), ratified by Algeria in 1989, and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. The following statement describes specific laws, practices, and cases of abuse that have been widely documented by human rights organizations and concludes with a number of recommendations for US foreign policy with respect to Algeria.

A. Systematic Closures of Churches and Denial of Legal Remedies

For the last decade, Algerian authorities have undertaken a concerted campaign to close Christian places of worship, especially those affiliated with the Église Protestante d'Algérie (EPA) (the Protestant Evangelical Church in Algeria).

- In 2017, Algeria began [forcibly closing](#) dozens of Protestant churches on the basis of alleged non-compliance with Ordinance 06-03 (2006), which regulates non-Muslim worship. As of January 2026, *all* of the churches in Kabylia are now [closed](#), and other independent churches have also stopped meeting due to fear of government action. Moreover, the National Commission that approves permits for such places of worship has never issued a permit to EPA churches, effectively abolishing lawful registration. Open Doors ranks Algeria 20th on its worldwide [rankings](#).
- A USCIRF [factsheet](#) from November 2022 documented that Algeria had forced at least 16 EPA churches to close because of their unregistered status, and authorities had refused even to acknowledge receipt of applications for registration.
- Human Rights Watch has [documented](#) the closure and sealing of prominent churches, including the Full Gospel Church in Tizi Ouzou, and the beating and arrest of worshipers protesting those closures.
- The Catholic charity, Caritas, has also been shut down by the Algeria government.

A June 2025 [General Briefing](#) by CSW US documented that the National Commission for Non-Muslim Worship “does not function in practice.” Once sealed, churches are not permitted to reopen, and Algerian courts routinely refuse to adjudicate appeals of closure orders, denying Christians meaningful access to justice.

B. Algerian Law Criminalizes Religious Practice

Algeria's legal framework embeds discrimination against non-Muslims, criminalizes “blasphemy” and “proselytization,” and restricts freedom of peaceful assembly and association that impacts the ability of congregants to worship. According to Open Doors, [more than 50 Christians](#) have been prosecuted in recent years, with some receiving suspended prison sentences and fines.

Ordinance 06-03 (2006)

- This regulation permits collective worship only in buildings designated for that purpose with prior permission, yet no Protestant church has been authorized.
- Article 11 of the ordinance criminalizes any attempt to “incite, constrain, or use means of seduction to convert a Muslim to another religion,” punishable by three to five years’ imprisonment and heavy fines.
- Ordinance 06-03 also restricts “shaking the faith of a Muslim” through teaching materials, effectively criminalizing possession or distribution of Bibles in public contexts.

Article 87 bis of the Penal Code

- Originally justified as an anti-terrorism provision, Article 87 bis has been used to target religious minorities and political dissidents alike, including by criminalizing peaceful activities perceived as undermining “public security.” It has been widely [condemned](#), including by the US government in Country Reports on Algeria. (See attached Coalition Letters and [reports](#) on same). Five UN Special Rapporteurs have [condemned](#) the use of Article 87 bis to violate human rights.

Criminalization of Blasphemy and Proselytization

- As the USCIRF knows well, Article 144 of the Penal Code is a provision frequently used against Christians and others for expressions of faith. It prohibits “offending the Prophet or disparaging dogma or precepts of Islam” and carries penalties of three to five years in prison and fines. (See USCIRF November 2022 Fact Sheet cited above).

Prominent Experts Attest to Impact of Algeria’s Terrorism Law and Other Laws

- At a [hearing held](#) by the European Center for Law and Justice (ECLJ) in July, 2024, speakers including the former Ambassador of France to Algeria, Xavier Driencourt, the U.N. Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion Nazila Ghanea, the U.N. Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Association Gina Romero, and the Vice President of the Église Protestante d’Algérie Pastor Youssef Ourahmane testified that Algerian laws restricting freedom of peaceful assembly and association deprive Christians of the freedom to express and exercise their faith.

After that hearing, the ECLJ called upon Algeria to

“restore freedom of conscience, to repeal all provisions that undermine freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, and to guarantee to all people the full exercise of their freedom of thought, conscience, and religion.”

It also called for “all criminal proceedings against Christians because of their religion to be dropped,” and for “churches and Caritas to be reopened.”

- In June 2025, Moroccan analyst Amine Ayoub called for global attention to what he called the [Hidden Crisis of Christianity in Algeria](#). He described a “discernible pattern of legal harassment” and “persecution [that] is not solely state-sponsored.” Rather, he said, it is

“deeply embedded in society, particularly in the Kabyle (Berber) region, where the majority of Algerian Christians reside as converts from Islam.” He concluded, “It’s time to shine a bright light on Algeria’s systematic repression of Christianity and demand an end to this injustice.”

- In September 2025, Brother Rachid, a Moroccan convert from Islam who is the author of many books and hosts a weekly live call-in show on Alkarma TV, [wrote](#):

“The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom’s designation of Algeria as a [Special Watch List](#) country has not prevented a single church closure or pastoral prosecution. Diplomatic engagement faces fundamental limitations when dealing with governments that view Christianity as an existential threat to Islamic national identity. No amount of diplomatic pressure will change minds that are convinced Christian presence represents foreign infiltration and cultural subversion.

“What proves more effective is direct support to persecuted believers, funding for underground networks and providing platforms for their voices to be heard. Organizations that provide practical direct aid and advocacy within the region, like Christian Solidarity International does in [Egypt](#), represent the most meaningful international response to persecution.”

He described the church in Algeria as having gone “underground.”

- On September 29, 2025, Dr. Charlotte Touati, a researcher at the University of Lausanne and President of the Association for the Support of Christians in Kabylia, testified at a [conference on Arbitrary Detention for Religion or Belief](#) on the sidelines of the 60th Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council. Dr. Touati stated that, “As we speak, some 50 Christians are facing legal proceedings in Algeria for practicing their religion without authorization.” 99% of those Christian prisoners are Kabyle. Dr. Touati called harassment “a daily occurrence for Christians in the workplace.” She said children with Christian names are harassed at school, and even the dead cannot rest in peace nor can their families mourn with dignity because “the authorities refuse to issue death certificates, with all the complications that this entails for funerals and inheritance.” (Dr. Touati’s written remarks are available upon request.)

C. Prominent Egregious Cases

The human cost of Algeria’s policies to silence Christian voices is stark. Here, we highlight only a few of the many cases. They reflect not only Algeria’s misuse and abuse of the legal system, but relentless persecution and repression of Christian pastors, congregants, and believers over many years.

Pastor Youssef Ourahmane (EPA Vice-President)

- Pastor Ourahmane has been repeatedly prosecuted under Ordinance 06-03. In May 2024, a court of appeal in Tizi Ouzou, the heart of Kabylia, upheld a one-year prison term, a

six-month suspended sentence, and a fine for holding an “unauthorized” worship service. His appeal was denied. Although he has since served his sentence and been released, Pastor Ourahmane is still subject to harassment and remains under close surveillance and the constant threat of possible re-arrest by the Algerian regime, a common practice of intimidation to keep people in line.

Senior EPA Pastor Salaheddine Chalah

- Pastor Chalah and other Protestant Christians were charged in November 2021 with practicing unauthorized worship. According to a USCIRF report, Chalah received an 18-month prison sentence in March 2022 (others received six-month sentences) which was suspended. Like Pastor Ourahmane, Pastor Chalah remains under surveillance and the constant threat of possible re-arrest.

Christian Convert Slimane Bouhafs

- Slimane Bouhafs, a Kabyle Christian convert, is perhaps the most powerful “poster child” representing the extreme of Algeria’s persecution of converts to Christianity. Bouhafs has been repeatedly imprisoned on blasphemy-related charges. In 2021, he was abducted from abroad by Algerian agents as he awaited his asylum papers in Tunisia and forcibly returned to Algeria in the boot of a car. Since then has been subjected to imprisonment, abuse, and ongoing harassment because of his faith and speech. Most recently, the Algerian government revoked his pension (equivalent to social security), his only means of livelihood, and he is constantly under threat of rearrest. Bouhafs appealed directly to the President of the United States last year in a video posted on Facebook, calling upon him to intervene. Others have written to Pope Leo to call attention to the plight of Bouhafs and other Christians. Like pastors Ourahmane and Chalah and others who have been detained, Bouhafs remains under constant surveillance by the Algerian regime with the constant threat of possible re-arrest at any time. Bouhafs is the only Kabyle listed on the USCIRF victim’s list.

“Unauthorized” Worship and Bible Possession

- Pastors and lay leaders in Tizi Ouzou and Béjaïa, prosecuted and fined for holding prayer services in closed churches, despite the absence of any legal alternative for worship.
- Christian families subjected to surveillance, intimidation, and social exclusion, particularly when refusing to renounce their faith.
- Prosecution of individuals for activities related to Christian literature and faith expression. For example, USCIRF is already aware that a pastor and bookstore owner were imprisoned and fined for distributing Christian materials deemed proselytizing under the penal code. (*See* USCIRF November 2022 Fact Sheet cited above).
- Two brothers were heavily fined for transporting a large number of Bibles in their car, punished under laws restricting possession of religious material construed as proselytization. (*Id.*)

D. Patterns of Discrimination and Systematic Repression Have Driven Christians “Underground”

Despite a constitution that guarantees freedom of religion, the discrimination and repression against Christians in Algeria, especially among Kabyles, have been sustained and systematic. This is in part because the regime falsely equates Christian believers with members of the secular Kabyle independence movement that for more than two decades has demanded civil and human rights for Kabyles, including the rights to freedom of association and assembly and the right to freedom of religion and belief. These rights no longer exist in Algeria.

While Article 2 of Algeria’s 2020 Constitution provides that Islam is the state religion, [Article 51](#) declares that “freedom of conscience and freedom of opinion are inviolable” and guarantees the “freedom of worship,” provided it is exercised “in compliance with the law.”³ Article 36 also states that the freedom of creed and opinion are “inviolable.”

The exception in Article 51 regarding compliance with the law, however, completely swallows the rule. As a result, Algeria’s statutory, judicial, and enforcement practices have permitted and have resulted in:

- The closure of all evangelical Protestant churches in Kabylia and refusal to license new ones, effectively outlawing public Christian worship locally.
- Christians forced to worship in private homes at risk of arrest and prosecution under unauthorized assembly provisions; numerous adherents have been detained or investigated after raids on house meetings.
- Arbitrary application of association laws that prevent EPA and similar bodies from registering, blocking access to both legal recognition and legal remedies.

Algeria has not only effectively weaponized its legal system against Christians, but it uses systematic harassment and intimidation, along with the threat of arrest and rearrest, as tools of the state to silence the population. This is one of the reasons researchers will tell you why it is so difficult not only to document the violations of people’s rights, but also to determine the number of Christians in Algeria. The patterns of discrimination and constant systematic repression have driven Christians and Christianity “underground.”

III. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR U.S. POLICY

The U.S. Department of State found in its [2023 country report](#) on human rights practices in Algeria, that the human rights situation in Algeria had deteriorated, “due to increased repression, notably of the freedoms of expression, press, assembly, and association.” Its [2024 country report](#) found the situation had deteriorated even further in 2024. The 2025 report is not out yet, but undoubtedly will paint an even grimmer picture.

³ “Article 51 — Freedom of Conscience and Worship
Freedom of conscience and freedom of opinion shall be inviolable.
Freedom of worship shall be guaranteed and exercised without discrimination in compliance with the law.
The State shall impartially guarantee the protection of places of worship.”

The USCIRF in its [2024 annual report](#) and [2025 annual report](#) recommended that the U.S. government take several measures to address what it correctly described as “serious violations of religious freedom in Algeria.” In both reports, the Commission called for the country to remain on the State Department’s Special Watch List.

In its 2025 report, USCIRF recommended the following:

- **Multilateral pressure:** For the US to work with allied governments, the Article 18 Alliance, and UN human rights mechanisms to raise consistent religious-freedom concerns with Algeria.
- **Condition assistance:** Tie U.S. foreign assistance to concrete reforms, including decriminalizing blasphemy and proselytization, to recognizing unregistered religious communities, and to reopening closed places of worship.
- **Congressional engagement:** Congress to urge the State Department and Algerian counterparts to address the impact of blasphemy laws and worship-site closures and to elevate religious freedom as a priority in bilateral relations.

While Algeria rejected the USCIRF’s findings, claiming they “do not reflect the reality” on the ground, the Christian Kabyle Coalition assures the Commission that they do. This is the grim reality Christians in Kabylia face every day.

The US is currently considering sanctions against Algeria for its acquisition of Russian fighter jets, according to Robert Palladino, the head of the US State Department’s Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, who testified on February 3, 2026, during a Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing. He said, “We are leveraging diplomatic channels, often privately, to safeguard our interests and prevent unacceptable actions.”

The egregious long-term, systematic repression of Christians and Christian worship by the Algerian government is one such unacceptable action.

In light of these serious abuses, the Christian Kabyle Coalition urges USCIRF to upscale and make more robust its recommendations. Accordingly, the Coalition respectfully requests that USCIRF recommend that the U.S. take the following actions:

1. The State Department **issue its statutorily mandated International Religious Freedom report** that was due in May 2025, and **designate Algeria a Country of Particular Concern (CPC)**, not just a Special Watch List country, under the International Religious Freedom Act. Such designation would reflect the regime’s persistent, systematic, and egregious violations of religious freedom.
2. The Senate to **schedule confirmation hearings** forthwith to confirm the nominated U.S. Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom whose nomination has been pending since April 2025 to fill the lead US government position on religious freedom;
3. **Deploy robust diplomacy** by the U.S. Ambassador to Algeria and the State Department, with religious freedom elevated as a central bilateral issue and linked to discussions on legal reform and licensing of places of worship and other human rights such as assembly, association, and speech.

4. **Impose foreign assistance restrictions, trade-related restrictions, as well as targeted sanctions on individual officials** responsible for unlawful closures, prosecutions, and interference with religious association rights.
5. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee **hold hearings on human rights more broadly in Algeria with a specific focus on the situation in Kabylia**. Such hearings should include testimony from human rights experts, legal scholars, and Kabyle representatives.
6. **Provide direct support** to persecuted believers, so that their voices can be heard, and **support organizations** that provide them practical direct aid.
7. **Press for the immediate release of prisoners of conscience** and others detained, subject to legal proceedings, or penalized solely due to their faith or peaceful religious activities.
8. **Press for the cessation of harassment and persecution** of Christians, especially converts to Christianity such as Slimane Bouhafs, as well as people of other minority faiths, and of people of no faith at all.
9. **Support sustained international monitoring and reporting**, including formal inquiries under the ICCPR and enhanced scrutiny by multilateral human rights mechanisms, with particular attention to judicial obstruction, misuse of counterterrorism laws, and collective punishment of religious communities.

IV. CONCLUSION

The record here shows not just sporadic intolerance by Algeria, but a **systemic policy of repression directed at Christian communities** in Kabylia over many years. This persecution contravenes not only Algeria's domestic constitutional guarantees, but also its international obligations under treaties including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights as a signatory party.

But this is only part of the story of oppression and human rights violations the Kabyle people have faced. While the United States should respond with principled action commensurate with the severity of the violations of religious freedom, the US should also act more broadly to align its foreign policy to recognize, promote, and insist upon the civil and human rights of the Kabyle people more broadly.


As two former IRF Ambassadors-at-Large David Saperstein and Samuel Brownback suggested on [USCIRF's podcast](#) on October 3, 2025, the US needs to use the commitment we have for religious freedom to help broaden the fight for human rights globally.

Ambassador Saperstein put it succinctly: "You won't sustain human rights if people don't have religious freedom and freedom of conscience, and you won't sustain religious freedom and freedom of conscience if you don't have human rights more broadly."

We thank the Commission for its attention and leadership on religious freedom and stand ready to provide any further documentation, testimony, and assistance necessary in support of religious freedom for all in Algeria.

Respectfully submitted,

THE CHRISTIAN KABYLE COALITION

By  _____
Elisabeth R. Myers, Counsel
Strategix Legal
On behalf of The Christian Kabyle Coalition

NGOs

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The Kabyle League for Human Rights
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Christian Pastors, Missionaries, and Congregants

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

Enclosures

Christian Kabyle Coalition letter to Pastor Paula White-Cain, dated February 2025
Christian Kabyle Coalition letter to US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, dated May 2025

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Christian Kabyle Coalition Urges USCIRF to Recommend Stronger U.S. Action on Religious Freedom Violations in Kabylia

Washington, DC – February 10, 2026 — Today the Christian Kabyle Coalition formally submitted its post-hearing statement and policy recommendations to the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), calling on Congress and the Administration to adopt stronger measures to address ongoing religious freedom violations and broader human rights abuses by Algeria, particular in Kabylia.

The Coalition urges that the United States elevate religious freedom as a central component of U.S.–Algeria engagement, including through stronger diplomatic advocacy, targeted sanctions on officials responsible for violations, expanded congressional oversight, and increased support for persecuted religious minorities and prisoners of conscience. The Coalition further calls for enhanced international monitoring and formal multilateral scrutiny of Algeria’s practices under its international legal obligations.

The Coalition recommends immediate congressional engagement, including hearings by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee focused not only on religious persecution by Algeria but also on human rights more broadly, as well as expedited Senate confirmation of the Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom. The statement further calls on lawmakers to support targeted sanctions authorities, increased oversight of foreign assistance to Algeria, and enhanced protections for persecuted religious minorities and prisoners of conscience.

In parallel, the Coalition urges the State Department to designate Algeria a Country of Particular Concern (CPC) under the International Religious Freedom Act, elevate freedom of religion or belief as a core bilateral priority, and expand direct diplomatic engagement on legal reform, licensing of places of worship, and the release of individuals detained for peaceful religious activity.

“The United States has both a legal mandate and a strategic interest in ensuring that freedom of religion or belief remains central to its foreign policy,” the Coalition stated. “Congressional leadership is essential to ensuring sustained oversight, accountability, and principled engagement with Algeria on behalf of persecuted communities.”

The statement documents patterns of repression including the closure of churches, prosecutions of Christian converts and minority believers, misuse of counterterrorism laws against peaceful activists, and judicial practices that undermine basic due process protections. It also calls for increased support to civil society organizations assisting victims of religious persecution and for sustained multilateral scrutiny under international human rights mechanisms.

A copy of the Coalition’s full submission to USCIRF is available upon request.

- 30 -

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.

Notes to Editors

- **Kabylia and the Kabyle people:** Kabylia is a mountainous Mediterranean region in northern Algeria with a population estimated at approximately 10–12 million, about half of whom are abroad. The Kabyle people are an indigenous Amazigh (Berber) people with a distinct language, culture, and historical identity.
- The **Christian Kabyle Coalition** is an ad hoc network of pastors, missionaries, congregations, and civil society organizations advocating for freedom of religion or belief and the protection of fundamental rights in Kabylia and across Algeria.
- The **U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF)** is an independent, bipartisan federal body that monitors religious freedom worldwide and makes policy recommendations to the U.S. President, Secretary of State, and Congress.
- The Coalition’s submission follows the USCIRF’s January 13, 2026, hearing addressing religious persecution of Christians in numerous countries and regions outside of the US, including Kabylia.
- The Coalition’s recommendations include calls for congressional hearings, strengthened sanctions tools, and enhanced oversight of U.S.–Algeria engagement.
- Media inquiries and requests for the full submission may be directed to:

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PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Kabyle Government in Exile Submits First Historic Request to President Trump's Board of Peace, Seeking International Mediation on Self-Determination

Français: https://siwel.info/la-kabylie-saisit-le-board-of-peace-et-ouvre-une-demarche-inedite-de-mediation-internationale_71996.html

London / Washington — 29 January 2026 — The [Kabyle Government in Exile \(Anavad\)](#), representing the Federal Republic of Kabylia, has formally submitted a written appeal to the United States Board of Peace, established by US President Donald J. Trump in January, requesting international assistance to help resolve the Kabyle people's long-standing and peaceful campaign for self-determination.

This submission marks the first known instance of a people formally approaching the Board of Peace to seek mediation, dialogue, and a peaceful resolution to a self-determination process grounded in international law.

In its letter, Anavad sets out the political, legal, and humanitarian context underpinning the Kabyle people's claim, including decades of peaceful political mobilisation, repeated attempts at dialogue with the Algerian authorities, and escalating repression against Kabyle political, cultural, and religious life. The letter calls on the Board of Peace to use its good offices to facilitate a constructive and non-violent pathway toward resolving the Kabyle question.

President Ferhat Mehenni, President of the Kabyle Government in Exile, said the submission reflects Kabylia's continued commitment to peace and dialogue:

"The Kabyle people have consistently chosen peaceful, lawful, and democratic means to assert their rights. By turning to the Board of Peace, we are reaffirming that our objective is not conflict, but a just and durable resolution based on dialogue, dignity, and international law."

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The Kabyle leadership notes that all internal avenues for democratic expression within Algeria have been effectively closed, with peaceful activism criminalised and political representatives detained or forced into exile. Against this backdrop, Anavad argues that international mediation is now essential to prevent further deterioration and to ensure stability in North Africa.

The submission builds on recent legal opinions by independent British barristers confirming that the Kabyle people constitute a “people” under international law and possess the right to self-determination. It also follows the formal Declaration of Independence proclaimed by the Kabyle Government in Exile in December 2025 after receiving a democratic mandate from Kabyles worldwide.

Anavad emphasises that its approach is neither hostile nor confrontational toward Algeria, but instead seeks a negotiated and peaceful outcome that respects the rights of the Kabyle people while contributing to regional stability, security, and cooperation with Western partners.

The Kabyle Government in Exile has invited UK and US media to review the submission to the Board of Peace and to engage with Kabyle representatives on the broader implications for diplomacy, conflict prevention, and democratic self-determination in North Africa.

END

Media enquiries and interview requests:
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Notes to editors

Kabylia and the Kabyle people

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Kabyle Government in Exile (Anavad)

The Kabyle Government in Exile, known as Anavad, was established in 2010 and operates from Paris. It functions alongside a Kabyle Parliament and judiciary and has advocated for self-determination exclusively through peaceful and democratic means. The Kabyle Government in Exile proclaimed the independence of the Federal Republic of Kabylia on December 14, 2025.

The Board of Peace

The Board of Peace was established by President Donald J. Trump in January to promote conflict resolution, dialogue, and negotiated solutions to international disputes, with an emphasis on preventing escalation and fostering durable peace.

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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.