Executive Summary
Algeria Weekly Report

Summary

- In the period between 15 and 21 June 2017, there were 79 critical incidents, resulting in seven deaths, six wounded, and 388 arrests. Most of the arrests pertained to drug trafficking, illegal immigration and counter-terrorism. Criminality was the most predominant category this week, with 32.91% the total share of incidents, followed by human and social incidents with 31.65% and security and defense with 16.46%.

- On the terrorism front, two insurgents belonging to the new al-Qaeda coalition in Mali, Nusrat al-Islam, were killed in Tamanrasset moments after they infiltrated Algeria on 15 June. On 16 June, a third member of the group was captured near the Malian border. It is believed that the insurgents were to set up weapons caches and possibly discuss allegiances with southern Tuareg tribes in Algeria.

- In the eastern provinces of Skikda and El Oued, seven wanted insurgents were captured. Only one of them turned himself in, despite the Defense Ministry’s repeated calls to militants to surrender, in the framework of the National Reconciliation Charter. Four of the arrested suspects are the wives of insurgents who were recently captured in sweeping operations in the same region. In Skikda, Oran, Blida and Tizi Ouzou, seven terrorism supporters were nabbed and in Tipasa, an insurgent hideout containing three homemade bombs was found. Moreover, in Batna, a man transporting an important quantity of chemicals used in the manufacturing of explosives was apprehended. He is believed to be tied with insurgent groups.

- In Tizi Ouzou, two protests organized by the Kabyle separatist movement MAK to commemorate the 16th anniversary of the Berber Spring were dispersed by the police in Azazga and Larbaa Nath Irathen. Several protesters were wounded after the police used tear gas. In central Algiers, a group of religious fundamentalists took to the Grande Poste esplanade to shut down a free concert scheduled on 20 June. The protesters claimed to be “protecting the sanctity of Ramadan”. In Constantine and Bouira, social housing issues continue to disrupt the day-to-day lives of locals, who continue to block traffic to have their demands satisfied.

- While discussing the Plan of Action of the government, President Bouteflika has refused to resort to the foreign debt, and called on the new cabinet to launch a non-conventional internal funding system that he claims will help Algeria recover during the transition. Economic experts voiced concerns about this funding method, as it may cause inflation and social unrest. The President has also ordered the resumption of shale gas prospecting and extraction in the south, despite the 2014/2015 protests that led to the suspension of operations in In Salah. This also comes at a time when the opposition party RCD warned the government that Separatist movements are gaining momentum in the Deep South.

- For the first time in months, Chakib Khelil, the former Minister of Energy, addressed the Algerian population via his Facebook page to share his Ramadan wishes. The ex Minister also published what many have considered a “political speech”, triggering new rumors about his presidential aspirations.
Significant Events: 15 - 21 June 2017

Algeria Weekly Report

**Commence in Confidence**

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**Illizi:** 17 June 2017: Army foils border crossing attempt at Libyan border, five arrested.

**Skikda:** 17 June 2017: Six wanted insurgents captured in Skikda.

**Batna:** 18 June 2017: Man arrested with large quantity of bomb-making chemicals.

**El Oued:** 20 June 2017: Insurgent arrested in El Oued.

**Algiers:** 20 June 2017: Religious extremists use violence to force cancelation of free concert in La Grande poste.

**Tizi Ouzou:** 16 June 2017: MAK protests dispersed by police.

**Tipasa:** 15 June 2017: Hideouts containing three bombs unearthed in Tipasa.

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**Adrar:** 16 June 2017: Army seizes weapons and ammunition in Adrar.

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Algeria under fire for acquiring surveillance technology from British arms company

The British arms company BAE has secretly sold mass surveillance technology to six countries in the Middle-East an North Africa region, including Algeria, according to the BBC. The technology purchased by Algeria can reportedly be used to spy on people's emails and mobile phones. This revelation has triggered the anger of human rights activists. BAE was however unable to comment on specific contracts “due to the strict national security and confidentiality regulations we operate under”.

Opposition party warns about social unrest in the South

The President of the Culture and Democracy Rally (RCD), Mohcine Belabbas, has warned the government that the southern population is unhappy about the social and economic problems they are facing. The opposition figure said that the Movement for the Self-Determination of Kabylie is not the only group seeking autonomy in Algeria, and that "some southerners" are willing to start similar movements. Mohcine Belabbes also voiced concern over the austerity measures adopted by the government, calling them "the worst solution possible" that may "further worsen the crisis".

Labor Ministry denies dissolution of Sonelgaz' union

The Secretary-General of the Ministry of Labor has revealed that the National Autonomous Union of Electricity and Gas Workers (Snateg) was not dissolved, despite Sonelgaz's claims. The President of the union, Raouf Mellal, has however denounced the "interference" of the Labor Ministry in the internal affairs of the union, and an "attempt to create a parallel organization within it." In light of this development, Snateg is likely to resume its protest action in the weeks to come.

Industry Ministry officials fired as purge accelerates

The new Minister of Industry, Mahjoub Bedda, has fired five high-ranking employees in what seems to be a purge of officials hired by his predecessor, Abdeslam Bouchouareb. The dismissed officials include the General Directors of Industry, Mines and that of Public Sector Entities. The reasons for the dismissals have not been made public, but the intention to wipe out the legacy of Bouchouareb seems evident, given the criticized performance of the former Minister.

Chakib Khelil makes a comeback, rekindles rumors of presidential bid

After months of absence, the former Energy Minister, Chakib Khelil, has addressed the Algerian people on Facebook. In a short message in Arabic, French, English and Spanish, the former Minister sent Ramadan wishes, and stated "I wish that my country should become strong, respected and among the leaders of this world. I wish our economy should satisfy the demand for employment among our youths and be open to investment." This statement was seen as a political program, and rekindled rumors about his political aspirations. Chakib Khelil remains highly unpopular in Algeria, due to his alleged involvement in the Sonatrach corruption scandal during his term as Energy Minister.

PM slams former cabinet over lack of cooperation with the legislative branch

The newly appointed Prime Minister, Abdelmadjid Tebboune, presented his Plan of Action at the
parliament on 20 June. During his speech, the PM denounced ineffective cooperation between the legislative and executive authorities, and a "hegemonic, arrogant" executive branch under his predecessor, Abdelmalek Sellal. PM Tebboune vowed to improve the relationship between the two government branches through debate.

**Government sounds alarm on reduction of dam water levels**

The Water Resources Minister, Hocine Necib, has sounded the alarm on the dam water levels in the northeast, namely the ones in the provinces of Skikda, Guelma and Souk-Ahras, which cater for the whole region. The Minister revealed that the overall levels decreased by 300 million cubic meters in just one year, and voiced the government's will to build other dams in the region.

**Human and Social**

**Two MAK protests violently dispersed in Tizi Ouzou**

Two MAK gatherings were dispersed by the police in Tizi Ouzou’s Azazga and Larbaa Nath Irathen municipalities on 14 June. Tear gas was used by the police, leaving several wounded. A Dozen of protesters were apprehended. The protests organized by the Kabyle separatist movement had drawn hundreds of people, who commemorated the 2001 Berber spring events, during which gendarmerie officers killed a number of protesters.

**Two other protests reported in Tizi Ouzou**

In the province of Tizi Ouzou, two protests were reported this week.

Clashes erupt as conservative Islamists take to La Grande Poste in Algiers, force cancellation of free concert to “defend the sanctity of Ramadan”

Source: YouTube

A group of villagers in the municipality of Ain Zaouia have closed the industrial landfill of Bouhamou, on 19 June, to protest a disruption in the distribution of drinking water in the region.

Additionally, more than ten women shut down the town hall of Idjier, in Bouzeguene municipality on 19 June, to denounce the non-renewal of their contracts with the municipality council. The protesters described their situation as "insecure".

**Conservative Islamists use violence to cancel free concert in central Algiers**

A group of conservative Islamists gathered at La Grande Poste, in downtown Algiers, to prevent a free concert from taking place on the night of 20 June. The protesters clashed with the concert goers, according to eyewitnesses, to defend "the sanctity of Ramadan." The police intervened and broke up the clash. The organizers of the event eventually decided to cancel the event to avoid further escalations. This incident is evocative of acts of violence committed by members of the now-dissolved Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) in the late eighties.

**Outcry against Sub-Saharan Africans grows on social media**

Popular outcry over the presence of Sub-Saharan African immigrants in Algeria's largest cities has grown notably on social media in the past few weeks. Using the hashtag #NoToAfricansInAlgeria, thousands of Algerians denounced an alleged spike in crime in Algiers, Oran, Annaba, Bejaia and other cities, which they claim is being provoked by the undocumented immigrants, took to dozens of Facebook groups and pages to call for the use of violence to "rid the country of the illegal migrants". This campaign triggered outrage among human right activists and the civil society, who have been providing material support to the immigrants.
Protest in Algiers against insecurity at universities
University professors and students announced that they will be holding a sit-in protest outside the Higher Education Ministry in Ben Aknoun, central Algiers, on 22 June, to denounce the wave of violence in Algerian universities. This was reportedly triggered by the murder of a professor in Tipasa.

Municipal workers resume countrywide strike action
The municipal workers affiliated with the National Autonomous Union of Public Administration Personnel (Snapap) have decided to resume their nationwide strike action on 18 June for five days, in an effort to demand a dialogue with the government to discuss their socio-economic situation.

Human rights activist fined for Facebook post in M’Sila
Human rights activist Layachi Amroune was fined 800,000 Algerian dinars (7,200 US dollars) by the court of M’Sila over a Facebook post about President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, which was deemed "offensive".

Amnesty International criticizes Algeria over crackdown on Ahmadiyya movement
Amnesty International has once criticized the Algerian authorities on the crackdown on the al-Ahmadiyya religious movement. The NGO claims that about 280 members of the movement were apprehended in Algeria in recent months. "The repression which crashed down upon the Ahmadis is alarming. This wave of arrests and lawsuits targeting members of the Ahmadiyya clearly show that the authorities have imposed restrictions on freedom of speech in the country", said Heba Morayef, the research director for North Africa at Amnesty International. The latter urged Algeria to drop all lawsuits and release the Ahmadis.

Two men arrested for drinking during fasting hours
Two young men were arrested by the police after being caught drinking during fasting hours in Bir Mourad Rais, Algiers province on 16 June. They are accused of "violating the sanctity of Ramadan".

Social housing claimants block central Constantine traffic, shut down Bouira town hall
Two incidents involving affordable housing were reported this week. In Constantine, dozens of social housing seekers burned tires to block traffic in Bentellis street on 20 June, to denounce nepotism in the allocation of affordable housing units in the region. The protesters, some of which live in slums, have been staging several protests in the last few months to demand re-housing.

Following the publishing of a social housing beneficiaries list in Taghzout, province of Bouira, on 19 June, local residents shut down the town hall to denounce their exclusion.

Government investigates blockage of Tebessa mining complex
The Ministry of Energy has sent an investigative commission to the mining complex of Djebel El-Onk, in Tebessa province on 19 June to discuss the reasons behind the blockage of the said facility by the union. According to a unionist, the director of the complex committed wrongdoing. The same source claimed that the union has proof of the misconduct, and that the documents will be handed to the ministerial commission. The union
shut down the complex three weeks ago, preventing all workers from accessing their place of work to demand the dismissal of the director. The dismissal of eight strikers has since exacerbated the conflict.

**Seven Sonelgaz officials laid off over ties to union**

In Tebessa, seven high-ranking employees of the Electricity and Gas Distribution Company (SDE) were reportedly dismissed over their activities with the National Autonomous Union of Electricity and Gas Workers (Snateg). The Sonelgaz board is even rumored to have launched legal proceedings against the said employees.

**Construction workers go on unlimited strike in Bouira over unpaid salaries**

Construction workers with the company in charge of building the new Bouira governorate headquarters have gone on unlimited strike. The workers claim that they have not been paid for more than five months. The construction sector is going through an unprecedented crisis in Algeria, as the government has been unable to pay many public companies.

**Illegal immigrants in Europe denounce harsh conditions in Algeria**

Algerian illegal immigrants who made it to Europe have been posting videos on social media to recount their experiences. In two videos widely shared on Facebook the “Harraga”, as they are referred to in Algeria, denounced the lack of prospect and their “marginalization” by the authorities and the social malaise that prompted them to cross the Mediterranean Sea. The immigrants urged the “desperate Algerian youth” to follow suit, and organize their own trip rather than counting on human smugglers.

**Security**

**Two insurgents killed, a third one captured in Tamanrasset**

In what appears to be a stricter crackdown on Islamic insurgency in the Deep South, two armed Islamic insurgents were killed in the southern province of Tamanrasset on 15 June in an army ambush. Two FMK machine guns, an important quantity of ammunition and a 4x4 vehicle were seized. It is believed that the insurgents were coming from Mali.

On 16 June, a third militant identified as Mohamed Ladmi, aka "Abu Saab", surrendered to the army in the same province. A Kalashnikov machine gun and ammunition were seized in the operation.

In light of the recent security escalations in Mali this week, and the attacks on the Malian army, including those on a UN peacekeeping mission and a tourist resort frequented by foreign nationals outside Bamako, the Algerian army has decided to increase efforts to make the large border shared by the two countries less porous. As a result, in Adrar, two Kalashnikov machine guns and a large quantity of ammunition were seized on 15 June.

**Nine terrorism supporters captured in five provinces**

In the provinces of Skikda, Blida, Tlemcen, Tizi Ouzou, Constantine and Oran, nine terrorism supporters were captured between 14 and 19 June by the Algerian authorities. In Tipasa, an army unit conducting a combing operation discovered a hideout containing three homemade bombs on 15 June.

**Seven wanted insurgents apprehended in the northeast**

On 17 June, a wanted Islamic
insurgent known as Abu Sufian surrendered to the army in Skikda's Collo mountains. A Kalashnikov machine gun, a quantity of ammunition, a pair of goggles and a mobile phone were seized. Abu Sufian joined the Islamic insurgency in 2007, and was a member of al-Qaeda. In the same operation, three Kalashnikov rifles, two automatic rifles, a large quantity of ammunition, a large amount of Algerian dinars and euros were seized.

On 19 June, five other insurgents, including four wives of recently captured al-Qaeda militants, were arrested in Collo. According to security sources, the suspects were hiding in shelters when an army brigade started a large-scale operation in the area. Local residents had reportedly provided support to the insurgents. An automatic rifle was seized.

In the eastern province of el-Oued, another wanted militant was captured on 19 June by the military during a combing operation. His affiliation remains unknown.

Man arrested with large quantity of bomb-making chemicals in Batna
A man was apprehended by the gendarmerie in Oued Taga, in Batna province, in the possession of 192 kilograms of gunpowder, 33 kilograms of potassium nitrate and 30 kilograms of sulfur. The suspect was supposedly trying to make explosives, in order to provide them to Islamic insurgents.

Defense Ministry urges Islamic insurgents to surrender
The Ministry of National Defense has exhorted all Islamic insurgents living in the mountains of the north and the Sahara in the south to turn themselves in order to benefit from the Charter for Peace and National Reconciliation, thanks to which they could be pardoned for their crimes. In the meantime, large-scale combing operations continue in more than a dozen provinces.

Criminality

Vietnamese Ambassador mugged in central Oran
The Ambassador of Vietnam was the victim of a mugging in central Oran on 15 June. The young delinquent, who attacked the diplomat outside his hotel, was later captured in a sweeping operation conducted by the police.

Contraband smuggling: 12 arrested in the East and Deep South
In the northeastern province of El Tarf, three contraband smugglers were apprehended with four kilograms of coral. The smugglers were reportedly heading for Tunisia.

In Tamanrasset, on 15 June, the authorities caught four gold miners and seized a 4x4 vehicle and various gold mining tools. In Adrar, on 16 and 19 June, five smugglers were arrested and two 4x4 vehicles, a truck, gold mining tools, 80 kilograms of a gold-rock-gravel mixture and 7,500 liters of cooking oil were confiscated.

Drug trafficking: Sharp increase in arrests this week
This week, a total of 65 individuals were apprehended on drug charges in Algeria. In Algiers, Tizi Ouzou, Skikda, Illizi, Sidi Bel-Abbes Constantine and Ouargla only, 55 were apprehended, and a total quantity of 968 kilograms of treated kif and 30,100 psychotropic tablets were seized.

In Oran, Tiaret, Chlef and Bechar, in the northwest, 1.6 ton of cannabis resin was intercepted. In Tizi Ouzou, a wanted drug lord known as "Fellah Pablo Benchabane" was apprehended by the security forces in the Djurdjura mountains, between Tizi Ouzou and Bouira in the Kabylie region on 18 June. Before his arrest, the drug trafficker was living in hiding in the said mountains. However, he was very active on social media, using his accounts to share photos of him holding war grade weapons. His accomplices are still being sought.

Ten arrested for leaking exam papers online in Batna
Ten individuals suspected of leaking Baccalaureate exam papers were arrested by the national gendarmerie in the northeastern province of Batna on 20 June.

Two arrested for killing university professor in Tipasa
Two individuals were apprehended by the police in the center of Tipasa on 19 June for the killing of a university professor who is said to have prevented them from cheating during an exam. The suspects used a hammer to hit his skull repeatedly, and left him for dead in a neighborhood located in downtown Tipasa on 18 June. The Minister of Higher Education claims that the conflict between the victim and his killers did not arise at the university. This was however rejected by the professor’s family.

This case comes two weeks after another university professor was
attacked by his students in the eastern province of M’Sila. The victim is still in a coma.

Four arrested in Ali Mendjeli for money counterfeiting
In Constantine’s Ali Mendjeli municipality, four individuals were apprehended on 20 June by the national gendarmerie for money counterfeiting. Four fake 2,000 dinar notes were seized in the operation.

Security reinforced in Ain el-Turk, man wanted by Interpol captured
A 58-year old man wanted by Interpol was captured by the police in the municipality of Ain el-Turk on 19 June. The suspect is said to be involved in an armed robbery that took place in France a few months ago. Security was increased in Ain el-Turk recently due to an increase in criminal activities.

Public Ministry denounces weak sentencing against ex Bouira town clerk found guilty of embezzlement
A former town clerk in Bouira was given a one-year suspended prison sentence and was fined 50,000 dinars by the court of Bouira for money embezzlement. The representative of the Public Ministry had requested 20 years of jail. The final sentence was denounced as too weak.

Man arrested in Bouira for killing several relatives
A 63-year old man who killed his brother, sister-in-law and nephews over an inheritance conflict, was arrested on 21 June after being actively sought by the army in the region of Taghzout, Bouira province. The killer was described as "dangerous" by the authorities, and was in possession of hunting rifles at the time of his arrest.

Illegal immigration: 258 arrested throughout the country
This week, 135 Sub-Saharan African immigrants were captured in Tlemcen, Adrar, Illizi and Tamanrasset. In Djanet, a town located near the Libyan border in Illizi, three vehicles coming from Libya were intercepted on 16 and 17 June. Three human smugglers and 13 immigrants were apprehended.

Moreover, in Annaba and Oran, 123 would-be immigrants trying to cross the Mediterranean Sea were caught on 14 and 15 June. Further attempts are expected to soar during the summer season.

President urges resumption of shale gas extraction
In the face of the difficult economic situation of Algeria, President Bouteflika has ordered the government to "increase efforts to optimize the use of the country’s natural resources, including conventional and nonconventional fossil fuels and renewable energy." This statement hints that the government is possibly contemplating to resume shale gas prospecting and extraction operations in the south, despite the opposition of local populations. Algeria has 20 billion cubic meters of shale gas reserves, and is considered the third biggest reserves in the world.

Informal economy: Almost $54M in untraceable transactions were reported during Ramadan
The Ministry of Commerce reported that in the last 20 days of
Ramadan, the amount of untraceable transactions stood at 5.8 billion Algerian dinars (or 54 million US dollars). Almost 30,000 violations were recorded during that period, and 1,279 informal businesses were shut down by the authorities.

**Boats carrying animal feedingstuffs blocked in ports: Millions of dollars of losses reported**

A total of 23 boats carrying hundreds of thousands of tons of animal feedingstuffs, including corn, barley and soy, have been blocked in different ports in Algeria for over three weeks, owing to lack of authorizations to unload the merchandise, according to well-informed sources. The Ministry of Commerce decided to review the authorization process in the framework of a crackdown on imports. Consequently, the price of feedingstuffs has skyrocketed in markets, prompting cattle breeders to sound the alarm on the situation. Furthermore, this situation is forcing big importers to pay 20,000 US dollars per day for the immobilization of the rented boats. Given the fact that the Bank of Algeria stopped the transfers of demurrage charges, importers are turning to the black market.

**Employers’ organization call on President to intervene in Cevital crisis**

The National Organization of Employers and Businessmen (ONPE) has addressed a letter to President Abdelaziz Bouteflika to denounce the setbacks that the Cevital oilseed trituration plant in Bejaia has suffered, recently due to the blocking of two ships transporting the equipment needed to start production and create at least 1,500 jobs. "At a time when the country needs the synergy of all national companies, private or public, to break the infernal import-export cycle and shift investment toward local production, it is deplorable to be facing administrative setbacks that ruin all patriotic efforts and undermine our socio-economic independence," said the ONPE in the letter, adding "It is thus that Cevital, the second economic power of Algeria behind Sonatrach, is suffering from the torments of bureaucracy, which are blocking this project in Bejaia." The ONPE called on the President to intervene and counter the decision taken by the Bejaia port authority to block the two vessels.

**Sonatrach maritime transport branch in turmoil**

Sonatrach's Oran-based branch Hyproc, a company specialized in the maritime transport of hydrocarbons and chemicals products, is in the middle of a crisis. In fact, some 400 retirees have been staging sit-in protests in the last month to demand the payment of due bonuses and holiday pay. The retirees denounce a violation of the labor code.
Political
The new cabinet’s plan of action has triggered discontent among many civil society organizations and NGOs. First of all, the non-conventional internal funding was deemed to risky for the country. According to the civil society, the average Algerian is struggling to make ends meet due to inflation. Further inflation increases, combined with a possible cancelation of generalized subsidies, may lead to a very difficult socio-economic environment in the months to come, with possible repercussion on national security.

Additionally, the resumption of shale gas extraction in the south is very likely going to lead to the reemergence of protest action, especially in In Salah and Illizi. In 2014 and 2015, the civil society put immense pressure on the government to end the operations, due to their environmental impact.

The new plan of action is in fact so unpopular among the civil society that it is believed that protests will be organized in the next few weeks to oppose it.

Chakib Khelil’s speech was met with anger in social media sites, as most Algerians still hold a grudge over his alleged involvement in the Sonatrach corruption scandal. A possible presidential bid in 2019 may also lead activists to take action.

Security
The Defense Ministry’s calls for surrender has not borne fruit so far. Every Ramadan, the Ministry reiterates the offer to reintegrate Islamic insurgents into society through the National Reconciliation Charter program launched in the 2000s by President Bouteflika. However, despite the intense crackdown on insurgency groups and the lack of resources that those groups are facing, the insurgents don’t seem to be interested.

The momentum that al-Qaeda has gained in Mali and southwestern Libya may have motivated the Algeria-based militants, as reorganization efforts are underway, according to security sources. Thus, the military will continue conducting intense counter-terrorism operations before the end of Ramadan, as the last week of the holy month may be more conducive to terror attacks,

Economy & Social
The cancelation of the free concert in central Algiers has raised a lot of concern, as it is the first instance of religious extremists censoring a cultural event during Ramadan since before the civil war. The radicalization of society in the capital has also led intellectuals to denounce the role of some Imams, who are said to be preaching against Western values in mosques that remain beyond the control of the State.

Economically, the government’s inability to pay public workers and construction companies raised many questions as to how the public budget is being managed. Furthermore, the blocking of boats loaded with feedingstuffs is indicative of a general lack of organization within the Trade Ministry, and shows that bureaucracy continues to strongly hamper the economy, despite the crisis that the country is going through.
### Forecast of Events 2017

**Algeria Weekly Report**

*Muslim holidays are often determined by local sightings of lunar phases; dates given are approximate.*

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Commercial in Confidence
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