

Jews in Islamic Countries: Algeria


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Jewish Population

1948: 140,000 | 2020: <5⁷

[Jewish](#) settlement in present-day [Algeria](#) can be traced back to the first centuries of the Common Era. In the 14th century, with the deterioration of conditions in [Spain](#), many Spanish [Jews](#) moved to [Algeria](#). Among them were a number of outstanding scholars, including Rav Yitzchak ben Sheshet Perfet (the *Ribash*) and Rav Shimon ben Zemah Duran (the *Rashbatz*). After the [French](#) occupation of the country in 1830, Jews gradually adopted French culture and were granted French citizenship by the [Crémieux Decree](#) on October 24, 1870.²

On the eve of [WWII](#), there were about 120,000 Jews in Algeria. In 1934, [Muslims](#), incited by events in [Nazi Germany](#), rampaged in Constantine, killing 25 Jews and injuring many more. Starting in 1940, under [Vichy rule](#), Algerian Jews were persecuted socially and economically. On October 7, 1940, French citizenship was [withdrawn](#) from all Jews by the Vichy government.

The Jews averted total destruction through their initiative and participation in the resistance. Their resistance activities helped neutralize Algiers while the Allies landed on the beaches during [Operation Torch](#). Following the Allied capture of Algeria, President Roosevelt intervened to reactivate the Crémieux Decree on October 20, 1943

In February 2018, the German government agreed to recognize Algerian Jews as [Holocaust](#) survivors and offered them [compensation](#).

In 1955, there were 140,000 Jews in Algeria. After being granted independence in 1962, the Algerian government harassed the Jewish community and deprived Jews of their economic rights. As a result, almost 130,000 Algerian Jews immigrated to [France](#). Since 1948, 25,681 Algerian Jews have [immigrated to Israel](#).

Most of the remaining Jews live in Algiers, but there are individual Jews in Oran and Blida. Jews practice their

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In 1994, the terrorist Armed Islamic Group - GIA declared its intention to eliminate Jews from Algeria; thus far, no attacks have been reported against the Algerian Jewish community.⁴ Following the announcement, many Jews left Algeria and the single remaining [synagogue](#) was abandoned.⁵ All other [synagogues](#) had previously been taken over for use as mosques.

Marking another step toward the end of the once vibrant Jewish community Algerian authorities moved forward with a project to demolish a Jewish [cemetery](#) in Oran in November 2015.⁶

On October 26, 2024, it was reported that an Algerian book event for *Jewish Algeria*, focusing on the nation's Jewish heritage, was canceled amid rising regional tensions over the [Gaza conflict](#). The bookstore in Algiers, L'Arbre a dire, confirmed the cancellation but provided few details. Islamist lawmaker Zouhir Fares claimed responsibility for requesting the ban, calling the book a form of "cultural normalization with [Zionists](#)" due to its foreword by French-[Israeli](#) author Valerie Zenatti. The book's author, Hedia Bensahli, had previously stated that the work, chronicling over 2,000 years of Jewish history in Algeria, aimed to explore Algerian history rather than current events.

In October 2025, A 130-year-old [synagogue](#) in Algiers, Chaloum Lebhar, was demolished by local authorities due to the risk of collapse. Located in the Bab El Oued neighborhood, the historic building had suffered significant structural damage, with its roof and walls partially caved in. Officials said the demolition was part of a broader initiative to remove unsafe, deteriorating buildings. Built in 1894 on land donated by its namesake, Chaloum Lebhar, the synagogue had previously been spared destruction thanks to the efforts of the small local Jewish community.⁸

The State Department estimated around 200 Jews remained in Algeria in 2020. Religious and civil society leaders reported that the Jewish community faced unofficial, religion-based obstacles to government employment and administrative difficulties when working with government bureaucracy.

The number of Jews living in Algeria in 2024 is not known, but historians estimate the country's Jewish population is made up of a handful of people who practice their faith in secret for fear of being targeted by extremists.⁷

Sources:

- ¹"2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices," [U.S. State Department](#), (March 30, 2021).
- ²[World Jewish Congress, Jewish Communities of the World](#).
- ³Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1991, (DC: Department of State, 1992), p. 1339.
- ⁴U.S. State Department Report on Human Rights Practices for 1997.
- ⁵ [U.S. Department of State, 2000 Annual Report on International Religious Freedom](#), Released by the Bureau for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor Washington, DC, September 5, 2000.
- ⁶ Lev, Chaim. ["Algeria Begins Plans to Uproot Jewish Cemetery," Israel National News](#) (October 1, 2015).
- ⁷"'Jewish Algeria' book reading canceled amid criticism over 'Zionist' links," [Times of Israel](#), (October 26, 2024).
- ⁸Zev Stub, "130-year-old Algerian synagogue demolished due to safety risk," [Times of Israel](#), (October 13, 2025).

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