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The United States (US) on 20 February vetoes a draft resolution Algeria submitted to the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) calling for an immediate ceasefire in the Israeli-Hamas war in Gaza (Palestine). Energy and mines ministry announces on 1 February that it implemented a voluntary and additional cut in oil production by 51,000 barrels per day (bpd) from 1 January 2024. The German utility VNG AG on 8 February signs an agreement for the country's first delivery of pipeline gas from Algerian state-owned energy giant, Sonatrach. Mali's military junta on 25 January announces the immediate termination of a 2015 peace accord with separatist Tuareg rebels, accusing Algeria, which was a mediator in the process, of interference.

US vetoes Algeria UN resolution calling for immediate ceasefire in Gaza...

The **United States (US)**, during a **United Nations Security Council (UNSC)** meeting on 20 February, vetoed a resolution that **Arab** countries proposed and **Algeria** submitted calling for an immediate ceasefire in the **Israeli-Hamas** war in **Gaza (Palestine)**, where more than 29,000 people have been killed since 7 October.¹ To pass the resolution, nine countries had to vote in favour and have no vetoes submitted by any of the five permanent members (P5), **China**, the **US**, **France**, the **United Kingdom (UK)**, and **Russia**.² The **US**, which vetoed calling for a ceasefire for the third time, was the sole country that opposed Algeria's draft.³ **France**, **China**, **Russia**, the **United Arab Emirates (UAE)**, **Switzerland**, **Mozambique**, **Malta**, **Japan**, **Ghana**, **Gabon**, **Ecuador**, **Brazil** and **Albania** voted in favour while the **UK** abstained.⁴

The move by the **US**, which is increasingly leaving it isolated in the **UNSC**, has led to widespread criticism from allies and rivals alike. **China's** envoy to the **UNSC**, **Zhang Jun**, blasted the **US** on 20 February stating that the objection is "nothing different from giving the green light to the continued slaughter".⁵ **Russia's** ambassador to the **UN**, **Vasily Nebenzia**, added that the **US** veto marked "another black page in the history of the Security Council".⁶ **France's** envoy to the **UN**, **Nicolas de Riviere**, expressed his regret via **X** on 20 February, citing that the resolution "could not be adopted, given the disastrous situation" in **Gaza**.⁷ **Algeria's** envoy, **Amar Bendjama**, stated that the **UNSC** has "failed once again" to resolve the conflict in **Gaza** and cautioned that the **US** veto could have major consequences for the stability of the **Middle East** as a whole. **Bendjama** also added that countries impeding calls for a ceasefire:

"Should review their policies and their calculations because wrong decisions today will have a cost on our region and our world tomorrow. And this cost will be violence and instability".⁸

¹ Aljazeera, 21 Feb 2024

² Middle East Monitor, 21 Feb 2024

³ Middle East Monitor, 21 Feb 2024

⁴ Aljazeera, 21 Feb 2024

⁵ Xinhua, 20 Feb 2024

⁶ Aljazeera, 21 Feb 2024

⁷ Nicolas de Riviere, X Account, 20 Feb 2024

⁸ United Nations News, 20 Feb 2024

Algeria, which is usually seen as 'radical' in international relations, has found itself in a rare situation where it is garnering major support for its position on the conflict in Gaza. The country is a major supporter of the Palestinian cause and its parliament on 2 November voted unanimously to enter the Israel-Gaza conflict, however, **Algiers** is not expected to provide military weapons to Palestine. Algeria became the second Arab country to enter the conflict, following reports on 31 October that **Yemen's Houthi** rebels had declared war against Israel.⁹ Algeria also joins several Arab countries that have publicly expressed their support for Palestine - **Kuwait** has vehemently condemned what it calls Israeli aggression in Gaza, **Bahrain** has cut all its diplomatic ties with Israel and **Jordan** has recalled its ambassador to Israel.¹⁰ Within Africa, **South Africa** has expressed its unwavering support to Palestine and has also recalled its ambassador to Israel.¹¹ It is also widely expected that with its recent election to the UNSC for the 2024/2025 term, Algeria will use it as a platform to advocate for the Palestinian cause, in a bid to elevate its global standing and show its capabilities in diplomacy.

Algeria implements a voluntary cut in oil production....

In a statement published on 1 February, the energy and mines ministry announced that it had implemented a voluntary and additional cut in oil production by 51,000 barrels per day (bpd) starting from 1 January.¹² The ministry also noted that the voluntary cuts will be implemented until March and that production will be returned gradually subject to market conditions.¹³ The move was in line with an **Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries + (OPEC+)** agreement to voluntarily cut oil production by 2.2 million bpd in the first quarter of this year.¹⁴ The voluntary cuts by OPEC+ members are in addition to the cartel's current collection production cuts of 3.6 million bpd, which includes a two million bpd production cut enacted in October 2022 and a 1.6 million bpd cut that has been ongoing since May 2023.¹⁵

In its statement, the ministry cited energy minister, **Mohamed Arkab**, who had just participated in the OPEC+ 52nd ministerial meeting of the **Joint Ministerial Monitoring Committee (JMMC)** in **Vienna (Austria)**.¹⁶ Arkab noted that OPEC+ countries are constantly monitoring developments in the global oil market and that the meeting in Vienna discussed the risks associated with global economic growth, particularly a slowdown in economic activity in industrialised countries.¹⁷ He also warned that these risks could affect the demand for oil despite the "*wide availability of supply in the market*".¹⁸ Arkab on 6 December 2023 also warned that OPEC+ members could extend its latest oil supply curbs beyond the first quarter of this year, echoing statements from Russia and group leader **Saudi Arabia** (*ARC Briefing Algeria Jan 2024*).¹⁹

OPEC+ countries produce around 40% of the world's crude, which means that its policy decisions have a major impact on oil prices. Algeria and OPEC+ members will most likely see some increase in oil revenues as a result of the production cuts. In a major boon for Algeria, skyrocketing energy prices – a consequence of Russia's war in **Ukraine** – have already shored up the country's foreign reserves, giving the government more scope to cushion citizens against increasing living costs and ward off social unrest.²⁰ Algeria currently produces approximately one million barrels of oil per day.²¹

...and inks pipeline gas deal with Germany utility VNG

⁹ ABC News, 31 Oct 2023

¹⁰ The Cradle, 3 Nov 2023

¹¹ Reuters, 9 Nov 2023

¹² Ministry of Energy and Mines, 2 Feb 2024

¹³ Ministry of Energy and Mines, 2 Feb 2024

¹⁴ Anadolu Agency, 2 Feb 2024

¹⁵ Middle East Monitor, 2 Feb 2024

¹⁶ Middle East Monitor, 2 Feb 2024

¹⁷ Anadolu Agency, 2 Feb 2024; Middle East Monitor, 2 Feb 2024

¹⁸ Ministry of Energy and Mines, 2 Feb 2024

¹⁹ Ministry of Energy and Mines Statement, 6 Dec 2023

²⁰ Bloomberg, 20 Oct 2023

²¹ Reuters, 9 Jan 2024

In another development that also offers economic benefits for Algeria, the **German** utility **VNG AG** on 8 February signed an agreement for the country's first delivery of pipeline gas from Algerian state-owned energy giant, **Sonatrach**.²² The deal, which also sees Germany strengthen its energy ties with Algeria, took effect in January and allows for gas to be shipped through pipelines to **Italy** and then on to Germany.²³ However, other details on the deal, such as lengths of the contract and volumes to be delivered, were not immediately available. VNG CEO **Ulf Heitmüller** said during a German business delegation visit to Algeria on 8 February that the deal lays the foundations for a “*trusting supply relationship*” and strengthens the energy partnership between the two countries.²⁴

Heitmüller also added that the current contract with Algeria is a small one and they are exploring options to expand it.²⁵ VNG AG is also seeking to forge a partnership with Sonatrach to import hydrogen into Germany. However, at the moment, long-term gas delivery contracts are still rare in Germany, with importers generally relying on the volatile spot market.²⁶ Furthermore, the US, which is a top exporter of liquefied natural gas (LNG), has also imposed a moratorium on new exporter licenses while it observes the economic and climate impacts, creating uncertainty for global markets.²⁷

Germany, which is **Europe's** largest economy, has been struggling to find alternative sources of gas since it decided to curb Russian natural gas supplies following its invasion of Ukraine in February 2021.²⁸ Algeria is one of the countries that has filled the energy gap facing Germany and European countries, and the VNG-Sonatrach deal also highlights the strengthening relations between Europe and Algeria. The **European Union's (EU)** latest market statistics show that Algeria currently supplies around 14% of the bloc's total imports of both LNG and pipeline gas.²⁹ German economy minister, **Robert Habeck**, who led the German delegation to Algeria, also said:

*“We now want to expand this and encourage Algeria to produce more green hydrogen in the future, invest more in solar and wind energy and thus create its own added value”.*³⁰

Habeck and Arkab on 8 February also signed a declaration of intent to establish a hydrogen task force, including a pilot plant.³¹ Feasibility studies for the project are also currently underway. Ultimately, the deal with VNG AG and the possibility of supplying Germany with green hydrogen bodes well for Algeria as it could further boost its crucial energy sector. The government is dependent on the sector's profits for about 60% of its budget and 95% of export revenues.

Mali slams Algeria as peace deal with rebels unravels...

Mali's military junta on 25 January announced the immediate termination of a 2015 peace accord with separatist **Tuareg** rebels, accusing Algeria, which was a mediator in the process, of interference.³² The development deepens diplomatic tensions over the protracted efforts to bring to an end the armed rebellion in Mali. The Algerian government has been the main mediator in peace efforts between Mali and the Tuareg rebels, whose separatist movement in the northern region has thrown the country into violent conflict for a decade.³³ The Tuareg in 2012 claimed the region from the Malian army, **Forces Armées Maliennes (FaMa)**, which set in motion a series of events that destabilised the country.³⁴ Algeria was key in getting the two parties to sign onto a 2015 peace deal

²² Bloomberg, 7 Feb 2024; Yahoo Finance, 9 Feb 2024

²³ Yahoo Finance, 9 Feb 2024

²⁴ Bloomberg, 7 Feb 2024

²⁵ Bloomberg, 7 Feb 2024; Yahoo Finance, 9 Feb 2024

²⁶ Yahoo Finance, 9 Feb 2024

²⁷ Bloomberg, 7 Feb 2024; Yahoo Finance, 9 Feb 2024

²⁸ Yahoo Finance, 9 Feb 2024

²⁹ Bloomberg, 7 Feb 2024

³⁰ Bloomberg, 7 Feb 2024

³¹ Yahoo Finance, 9 Feb 2024

³² Aljazeera, 25 Jan 2024

³³ ABC News, 22 Dec 2023; AP News, 29 Nov 2023

³⁴ AP News, 29 Nov 2023; Bloomberg, 23 Dec 2023

which has now collapsed. Government spokesperson **Abdoulaye Maiga** said during the announcement:

"We note with deep concern the increasing number of unfriendly acts, instances of hostility and interference in Mali's internal affairs by the authorities of Algeria".³⁵

Maiga also noted the "hidden hand of Algerian authorities" who he said "consider Mali as their backyard or state doormat" by imposing unilateral changes to the peace accords.³⁶ He added that Algeria's action undermined Mali's sovereignty and national security, rendering the peace pact inapplicable.³⁷ Shortly afterwards, Algeria's foreign ministry said that it noted Mali's termination of the peace pact "with deep regret and concern" and added that the decision was "dangerous" for Mali and the region.³⁸

Relations between the two countries have deteriorated in recent months as fighting between FaMa and Tuareg rebels has intensified. Relations between Algeria and Mali reached the brink of diplomatic breakdown in December, with both countries recalling each other's ambassadors and in the process, closing official channels for dialogue and deepening tensions over efforts to end the armed rebellion in northern Mali.³⁹ Mali summoned Algeria's ambassador to Mali, **Noureddine Ayadi**, to protest Algerian president **Abdelmadjid Tebboune's** (2019-present) reception of a religious leader backing the local Tuareg independence rebels, **Mahmoud Dicko**, an opponent of the ruling regime in Bamako.⁴⁰ Dicko is one of a few local figures to openly express disagreement with the junta in Mali that overthrew civilian president **Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta** (2013-2020) in a military coup in 2020.⁴¹ The Algerian foreign ministry defended Tebboune's meeting with rebel leaders claiming that it "fit perfectly" into its efforts to uphold the 2015 peace deal and help achieve peace in Mali.⁴² Tensions between the two countries greatly intensified since then and have now culminated in the termination of the peace deal.

The diplomatic fallout between Mali and Algeria could further risk destabilising the **Sahelian** region, which is already dealing with increased **Islamic** insurgency, in addition to a series of military coups in Mali, **Burkina Faso** and **Niger**. The termination of the peace accords also deals a major blow to Algeria's goal to find a political solution to the crises in the region amid concern that continued instability could lead to a power vacuum, a rise in militia and increased numbers of displaced persons and refugees.

Planner

2024 **(France)** President **Abdelmadjid Tebboune** to visit France;

Dec 2024 **(Algeria)** Presidential elections;

Chronology

20 Feb **Algiers (Algeria)** *Algeria Press Service*. President **Abdelmadjid Tebboune** chairs a working meeting devoted to free zones, notably that between the **Tindouf** region and **Mauritania**;

³⁵ AFP, 26 Jan 2024

³⁶ Africa News, 26 Jan 2024

³⁷ AFP, 26 Jan 2024; Bloomberg, 26 Jan 2024

³⁸ Bloomberg, 26 Jan 2024

³⁹ Atalayar, 24 Dec 2023

⁴⁰ North Africa Post, 23 Dec 2023

⁴¹ AFP, 28 Dec 2023

⁴² Algerian Foreign Affairs Ministry, 22 Dec 2023

19 Feb **Addis Ababa (Ethiopia)** *Algeria Press Service*. Foreign affairs minister **Ahmed Attaf** holds bilateral meetings with **Somalia's** deputy prime minister **Salah Ahmed Jama** on the sidelines of the 37th ordinary session of the assembly of heads of state and government of the **African Union (AU)**;

19 Feb 2024 **Algiers (Algeria)** *Daily Sabah*. **United States, United Kingdom** and **Spain** issue security alerts for Algeria, warning citizens residing in or visiting Algeria against travelling to the city of **Tindouf** or surrounding **Polisario Front**-controlled areas;

16 Feb **Addis Ababa (Ethiopia)** *Algeria Press Service*. Foreign affairs minister **Ahmed Attaf** attends the 44th ordinary session of the **African Union (AU)** executive council;

15 Feb 2024 **New York (United States)** *Africa news*. Members of the **Arab League** say they have “*massive support*” support among the **United Nations Security Council (UNSC)** members to pass a draft resolution calling for a cease-fire in **Gaza**;

13 Feb 2024 **Algiers (Algeria)** *Bloomberg*. **Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries + (OPEC+)** reports the cartel has only partially delivered new oil production cuts in the first month of its latest supply pact;

11 Feb **Algiers (Algeria)** *Algeria Press Service*. Prime Minister **Nadir Larbaoui** receives the ambassador of **Turkey** to Algeria, **Muhammet Mucahit Kucukyilmaz**;

10 Feb **Algiers (Algeria)** *Algeria Press Service*. The first session of the **Algerian-Russian** political consultations is held in **Moscow (Russia)**;

7 Feb 2024 **Algiers (Algeria)** *New Arab*. Algeria will present a revised draft resolution to the **United Nations Security Council (UNSC)** calling for an immediate ceasefire in **Gaza**;

6 Feb 2024 **Algiers (Algeria)** *Zawya*. Algeria approves plans to build five free-trade zones in a bid to expand investment and commercial exchanges with **West Africa**;

3 Feb 2024 **Algiers (Algeria)** *Daily Sabah*. Foreign affairs minister **Ahmed Attaf** arrives in **Libya** to meet with the acting foreign minister of the **Government of National Unity (GNU)**, **Al-Taher Al-Baour**;

2 Feb 2024 **Algiers (Algeria)** *Reuters*. The **United States (US)** ambassador to the **United Nations (UN)**, **Linda Thomas-Greenfield**, says that Algeria's draft Security Council resolution calling for a Gaza ceasefire could jeopardise “*sensitive negotiations*” aimed at brokering a pause in the **Israel-Hamas** war;

1 Feb 2024 **Algiers (Algeria)** *SABC*. Algeria circulates a new draft **United Nations Security Council** resolution that demands an immediate humanitarian ceasefire in **Gaza**;

1 Feb 2024 **Algiers (Algeria)** *Bloomberg*. Officials say that the **Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries + (OPEC+)** countries plan to decide in early March whether to extend oil output cuts into the second quarter;

1 Feb 2024 **Algiers (Algeria)** *Bloomberg*. **Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)** countries cut oil production last month as the group and its allies began a new effort to prevent a global surplus and shore up prices. Output from the OPEC fell by 490,000 barrels a day last month to 26.57 million barrels a day;

31 Jan 2024 **Algiers (Algeria)** *Reuters*. **United Kingdom**-headquartered **National Grid's Grain LNG** says it has signed a 10-year deal with Algeria's state-owned oil company **Sonatrach** to extend its long-term storage and redelivery capacity at the Grain LNG terminal beyond January 2029;

31 Jan 2024 **Algiers (Algeria)** *Middle East Monitor*. Algeria's permanent representative to the **United Nations (UN)**, **Amar Bendjama** says that the **International Court of Justice's (ICJ)** provisional ruling "reaffirms" that the time of Israel's impunity has come to an end;

28 Jan 2024 **Algiers (Algeria)** *Sudan Tribune*. President **Abdelmadjid Tebboune** meets with **Sudan's** President **Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan** who is seeking Algeria's participation in efforts aimed at ending the ongoing Sudanese conflict;

27 Jan 2024 **Algiers (Algeria)** *Middle East Monitor*. President **Abdelmadjid Tebboune** instructs Algeria's permanent mission to the **United Nations (UN)** to request a **UN Security Council** meeting as soon as possible to discuss the **International Court of Justice's** ruling that **Israel** needs to take measures to prevent genocide against **Palestinians** and improve the humanitarian situation in the **Gaza Strip**;

27 Jan 2024 **Bamako (Mali)** *Bloomberg*. **Mali's** military leadership is reportedly prepared to embark on new national peace and reconciliation talks only days after ending a landmark peace deal with **Tuareg** separatist rebels and accusing mediator Algeria of meddling in its affairs;

22 Jan 2024 **Algiers (Algeria)** *Middle East Monitor*. President **Abdelmadjid Tebboune** says that Israeli occupation of **Gaza** is in violation of international humanitarian law and deprives the Palestinian people of their most basic rights.

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