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Algeria Summary 20 April 2026

Pope Leo XIV begins his landmark African tour in Algeria on 13 April, intended to deepen the Vatican's engagement with the continent. President Abdelmadjid Tebboune (2019-present) signs Decree No. 26-145 on 4 April, officially confirming 2 July as the date for the parliamentary elections. Mali's foreign minister Abdoulaye Diop announces on 10 April that his country is endorsing Morocco's autonomy plan for the disputed Western Sahara, a decision that comes amid heightened tensions between Mali and Algeria.

Pope Leo begins historic Africa tour in Algeria

The head of the Catholic church, Pope **Leo XIV**, [began](#) his landmark **African** tour in **Algeria** on 13 April, a significant event for the Muslim-majority nation **North African** country. The pope's ten-day Africa tour, which includes visits to Algeria, **Cameroon**, **Equatorial Guinea**, and **Angola**, seeks to deepen the **Vatican's** engagement with the continent, which has the world's fastest-growing Catholic population.

While in Algeria, Pope Leo [met](#) with President **Abdelmadjid Tebboune** (2019-present) in **Algiers**, where he emphasised the world's urgent need for peace and forgiveness. Later that day, the pope visited the **Great Mosque of Algiers**, the largest in Africa and third largest globally, as a gesture targeted at promoting interfaith dialogue. He also made a symbolic [stop](#) in Algeria's eastern city of **Annaba**, the ancient birthplace of Saint **Augustine of Hippo**, who inspired Leo to become a priest and lived from 354-430 AD. Despite being a majority Muslim nation, Algeria is home to about 9,000 Catholics and the local state media [extensively](#) covered the pope's visit, framing it as a historic event; the local newspaper **El Khabar**, one of Algeria's most widely read dailies, used headline 'Algeria Captures the World's Attention' during the visit.

Pope Leo's visit to Algeria also came amid his dispute with **United States (US)** President **Donald Trump** (2017-2021; 2025-present), who [criticised](#) the pope on 13 April for being "weak on crime, weak on nuclear weapons" after he criticised US-**Israeli** military strikes on **Iran** as "truly unacceptable" and later said the war was "being ravaged by a handful of tyrants". Pope Leo, who has pledged to "continue to speak out loudly against war", appears to have the [support](#) of African Catholics, many of whom see Trump's attacks on him as deeply unacceptable. Maintaining the support of African Catholics is very important to the Vatican, particularly at a time when divisions within the global Church are increasingly. The **Global South Anglican Church** [effectively](#) separated from the **Church of England** over theological differences in late 2025 and is considering electing a rival to Archbishop of Canterbury. In this context, Pope Leo's visit to Algeria and the region can also be viewed as a strategic aimed at strengthening ties with the growing and increasingly influential African Catholic community.

Pope Leo is the third notable global leader to have visited Algeria within the last three weeks. **Italy's** prime minister **Giorgia Meloni** (2022-present) and **Spain's** foreign minister, **José Manuel Albares**, made separate trips to Algeria on 25 and 26 March respectively, with the aim of securing new energy deals to alleviate their pressing energy needs caused by the conflict in the **Middle East** (see *ARC Briefing Algeria Mar 2026*). These high-profile visits highlight Algeria's growing diplomatic and economic relevance, as both the Vatican and European leaders increasingly view the country as a strategic partner in achieving their respective objectives.

Parliament polls set for 2 July as Tebboune attains more powers

Following the approval of constitutional changes that increased some of his powers, Tebboune [signed Decree No. 26-145](#) on 4 April, which officially confirms 2 July as the date for the election of members of the **People's National Assembly** (lower house of parliament). The decree also confirmed that “*an exceptional revision*” of the electoral list will begin on 12 April and conclude on 26 April.

The 80-year old Tebboune, who has the support of Algeria's powerful army and was elected in 2019 following months-long protests that demand a transition to full democracy, [managed](#) to secure the parliamentary support in March for amendments to the country's charter. The presidency first [unveiled](#) its set of proposed “*technical*” constitutional amendments on 24 January and said that they were aimed at refining institutional procedures rather than overhauling the political system (*see ARC Briefing Algeria Jan 2026*).

The now approved amendments include involving the foreign and interior ministries in the organisation and monitoring of election – roles previously reserved for the electoral watchdog, **Autorité Nationale Indépendante des Élections (ANIE)** (independent national authority for elections). Another change eliminates the requirement for the president to seek the binding opinion of the **Conseil supérieur de la magistrature** (high judicial council), parliament, senate, and state human-rights body when appointing or transferring senior judges and prosecutors. The presidency, which described the moves as technical amendments, argued that this process is unnecessary, as the president already chairs the council and its strengthen democracy.

Other notable changes approved [include](#):

- Reduction in the number of signatures candidates need to contest legislative elections from 250 to 150;
- Introducing of an educational requirement for presidential candidates;
- Introduction of a quota mandating that people under 40 make up a certain percentage of candidates;
- Reduction in the existing quota for women candidates from half to one-third of the candidate lists;
- The term of the **Council of the Nation** (upper house of parliament) speaker is extended from three to six years;

Although authorities presented the approved constitutional amendments as corrective measures aimed at stabilising institutions, clarifying authority, and preventing constitutional deadlock, they also subtly increase presidential influence within Algeria's political system.

Mali backs Morocco's autonomy plan for Western Sahara

Mali's foreign minister **Abdoulaye Diop** announced on 10 April that his country was endorsing Morocco's autonomy plan for the disputed **Western Sahara**, a decision that comes amid heightened tensions between Mali and Algeria. Western Sahara is a resource-rich territory claimed by Morocco but contested by the Algeria-backed **Polisario Front**, which is seeking to establish an independent state called the **Sahrawi Republic**.

Tensions between Mali and Algeria have been building for months. Mali [confirmed](#) in September 2025 that it had taken Algeria to the **International Court of Justice (ICJ)**, accusing Algeria of aggression after it shot down one of Mali's military reconnaissance drones in April 2025 (*see ARC Briefing Algeria Sep 2025*). Mali further alleged that Algeria deliberately downed its drone along their shared border in **Tinzaouaten/** (also called **Tinzawatène**) in the **Kidal Region**, reporting that the downing was targeted at hindering efforts of the **Forces Armées Maliennes (FAMA)** (Malian armed forces) in their fight against terror groups.

The drone incident, Mali's subsequent ICJ case filing, and Mali's endorsement of Morocco's Western Shara plan further increases existing diplomatic tensions with Algeria. Mali has been struggling with conflict since the 2010s after a loose alliance of primarily ethnic **Tuareg** separatists and Islamist jihadist fighters with communal ties to Algeria and **Libya** captured large swathes of the north in 2012. Algeria once served as a key mediator in the between Mali and Tuareg rebels but the two countries

have grown apart since the military coups in 2020 and 2021. **Russian** paramilitary, **Wagner Group**, deployed its forces to Mali in 2021 to help stabilise the country, further expanding Russia's influence in the region. Algeria and Mali share a 1,400km border and there are concerns within Algeria that continued instability in Mali could lead to a power vacuum, a rise in militias, displaced persons and refugees, and overall greater instability in the region.

Mali's support for Morocco's plan aligns with a broader international and regional trend. After the US became the first country to recognise Morocco's sovereignty over Western Sahara in 2020, **France**, the **United Kingdom (UK)**, and Spain have shifted towards backing autonomy under Moroccan control. France, the UK and the US are permanent members of the **United Nations Security Council (UNSC)**, giving Morocco an unprecedented diplomatic advantage as it consolidates international support for its position. **Ghana** and **Kenya** also confirmed their [support](#) for Morocco's autonomy plan last year, continuing a trend in the region.

This alignment among major powers not only strengthens Morocco's leverage but also reshapes the geopolitical landscape around the dispute, with an increasing number of European governments changing their policies in the same direction. The UNSC in October 2025 also took a major step in shaping the future of Western Sahara by [adopting](#) a US-drafted resolution that recognised Morocco's "genuine autonomy" over the disputed region and its plan to retain sovereignty (*see ARC Briefing Algeria Nov 2025*).

While these developments collectively mark a clear setback for Algeria's decades-long strategy of rallying international support behind the Polisario Front, a local analyst noted that Mali's decision "would not have surprised" Algeria:

"To be honest, I'm more surprised Mali didn't do it sooner with how things have been escalating."

Diplomatic relations between Morocco and Algeria have also been severed since 2021, with Western Sahara remaining a central source of tension alongside Morocco's normalisation of relations with Israel.

Planner

2 Jul 2026 (**Algeria**) National assembly elections

Chronology

19 Apr 2026 **Algiers (Algeria)** *Reuters*. Algeria launches its 2026 oil and gas licensing round, offering seven exploration blocks across regions like **Ouargla** and **Illizi** to attract foreign investment and increase national output;

18 Apr 2026 **Algiers (Algeria)** *Al24news.dz*. Foreign affairs minister **Ahmed Attaf** holds bilateral talks on economic cooperation with his **Saudi** counterpart **Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud**;

15 Apr 2026 **Algiers (Algeria)** *Vatican News*. Pope **Leo XIV** departs for **Cameroon** following his two-day visit to Algeria;

14 Apr 2026 **Algiers (Algeria)** *Africanews*. In his first speech in Algiers, Pope **Leo** pays tribute to victims of the country's 1954-1962 war of independence from **France** and calls for "forgiveness";

14 Apr 2026 **Algiers (Algeria)** *Reuters*. Hydrocarbons regulator, **ALNAFT**, grants **United Kingdom**-headquartered **BP** prospecting rights in the country's eastern basin to conduct preliminary surveys and resource assessments in underexplored regions;

13 Apr 2026 **Blida (Algeria)** *AP News*. A reported terrorist attack involving two suicide bombers takes place in Blida, coinciding with an official visit by **Pope Leo XIV**, marking the first such incident in Algeria since 2012;

13 Apr 2026 **Algiers (Algeria)** *eNCA*. Pope **Leo XIV** begins an 11-day tour of Africa, his first major international trip since becoming pontiff and the first ever by a leader of the world's Catholics, in Algeria;

9 Apr 2026 **Algiers (Algeria)** *Africanews*. **Western Sahara's** independence movement, the **Polisario Front**, celebrates the 50th anniversary of the establishments of the **Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR)**;

9 Apr 2026 **Algiers (Algeria)** *AP News*. **People's National Army** chief of staff **Saïd Chanegriha** conducts a high-level visit to the 6th military region to assess combat readiness along the country's southern borders, which it shares with **Mali, Mauritania, Niger**;

8 Apr 2026 **Algiers (Algeria)** *Algeria Press Service*. Foreign affairs ministry welcomes the preliminary agreement reached to halt military operations in the **Gulf Region**;

7 Apr 2026 **Algiers (Algeria)** *Algeria Press Service*. Foreign minister **Ahmed Attaf** highlights a shared political commitment to elevate ties with **Mauritania** to a strategic level during the 20th **Grand Joint Cooperation Committee**, with the session resulting in signing of multiple bilateral agreements aimed at strengthening transport and economic ties;

5 Apr 2026 **Algiers (Algeria)** *Al24news.dz*. President **Abdelmadjid Tebboune** sets 2 July as the date for the election of members to the **People's National Assembly** (lower house of parliament);

4 Apr 2026 **Algiers (Algeria)** *Algeria Press Service*. **People's National Army (PNA)** chief of staff **Saïd Chanegriha**, chairs an annual meeting of military infrastructure officers in Algiers, emphasising the development of PNA's engineering capabilities;

2 Apr 2026 **Algiers (Algeria)** *Al24news.dz*. Hydrocarbons and mines ministry's secretary general, **Miloud Medjelled**, receives a delegation from **Chad's** petroleum, mines and geology ministry, with whom he discusses ways to strengthen bilateral cooperation in the fields of hydrocarbons and mining;

1 Apr 2026 **Algiers (Algeria)** *APA News*. **United States (US)**-headquartered **Human Rights Watch (HRW)** releases a report detailing a persistent erosion of freedoms in Algeria, describing a political climate defined by a security-driven approach to both domestic dissent and regional migration;

31 Mar 2026 **Algiers (Algeria)** *Algeria Press Service*. President **Abdelmadjid Tebboune** receives **Serbian** prime minister **Djuro Macut** and his delegation in Algiers to discuss reviving and strengthening diplomatic and friendship ties;

30 Mar 2026 **Algiers (Algeria)** *Algeria Press Service*. Foreign minister **Ahmed Attaf** holds high-level talks in **Croatia** to strengthen bilateral ties;

28 Mar 2026 **Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)** *Fratmat*. Mines, petroleum and energy minister **Mamadou Sangafowa-Coulibaly** meets with his **Algerian** counterparts, **Mourad Adjal** and **Mohamed Arkab**, in Algiers (Algeria) to sign a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on bilateral cooperation;

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