

OCT2025

MISSION PATHWAY

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NORTH AFRICA'S
THREE NATIONS



CROSSROADS
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North Africa's Three Nations

The Gospel in the "Land of the Setting Sun"

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*“From the rising of the sun to the place where it sets,
the name of the Lord is to be praised!”*

(Psalm 113:3)

Tertullian (155–202), Cyprian of Carthage (200–258), Monica and her son Augustine (354–430), Saint Perpetua, and Saint Felicitas—these familiar names belong to the early church fathers, saints, and martyrs of North Africa.

From the first century onward, Christianity flourished across this region. Tertullian was a Carthaginian, while Cyprian and Augustine were Amazigh (Berber). The Amazigh are the indigenous people of North Africa, and their embrace of the gospel stands as one of the earliest testimonies to God’s mission reaching the nations.

In 1225, Zhao Rukuo of the Song dynasty recorded in his *Zhu Fan Zhi* (Records of Foreign Peoples) the existence of the “Moqielie” kingdom. One passage reads:

“...the king chants scriptures and worships Heaven daily. He wears a turban, a woolen shirt, and red leather shoes. Their religion is the same as that of Dashi (the Arab world). The king rides a horse whenever he goes out from his palace, preceded by a camel that bears on its back a box containing the Buddhist sutras of Dashi. [This is another example of how Zhao Rukuo interpreted Islam as a form of Buddhism]”¹

The “Moqielie” kingdom described here corresponds to what we know today as the Maghreb, the western region of North Africa. From this record, we see that by the 13th century, the people of North Africa had already converted to the Islam of the Arabs.

The word Maghreb literally means “the place of the setting sun.” It shares its root with Maghrib, the Muslim prayer at sunset. Today, the Maghreb consists of three Arabized Islamic nations: Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia.

In the following pages, we will pray for these three nations—beginning with Algeria, then Tunisia, and finally Morocco—devoting thirty days to intercession, that the doors of the gospel may open once again, and the name of Christ be exalted in this land.

¹ Zhao, Rukuo. *The Zhufan Zhi*. Translated by Shao-yun Yang, 4th rev. ed., The Grand Bible series, Guildford Scientific Press, 2022.

Country

People Group

Algeria

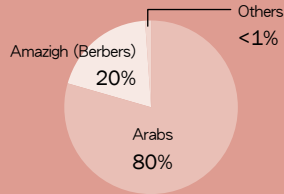
Independent since 1962

Algeria is a major country in North Africa and considered a middle power. Its economy relies heavily on energy exports, giving it relatively strong economic capacity. Its Human Development Index is the second highest on the African continent, after Libya.



Green on the flag symbolizes Islam, while white stands for purity.

Area	2.38 million km ²	Population	46.16 million
Capital	Algiers	Currency	Dinar (DZD)
Languages	Arabic and Tamazight (official); French is widely used in business and media.		



The Amazigh include Kabyles, Shawiya/Chaoui, Mozabites, and Tuareg. Algeria also has small populations of Saharawi, Black Algerians, and migrants from sub-Saharan Africa.

Tunisia

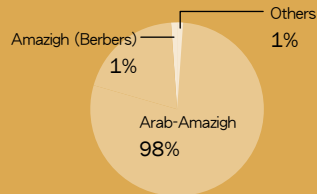
Independent since 1956

Tunisia continues to face the threat of terrorist attacks. Since the 2015 assault on the presidential guard, the country has remained under a state of emergency. Authorities have restricted large gatherings, censored the media, and imposed curfews, limiting basic freedoms for its people.



The crescent and star on the flag symbolize Islam and good fortune.

Area	160,000 km ²	Population	12.2 million
Capital	Tunis	Currency	Tunisian Dinar (TDN)
Languages	Arabic (official); Tunisian Arabic and Tamazight also widely spoken.		



The Amazigh are Tunisia's indigenous people. Although Tunisia has signed the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, its government does not officially recognize the Amazigh as indigenous.

Morocco

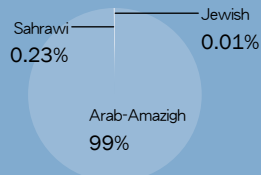
Independent since 1955

Morocco claims sovereignty over Western Sahara, referring to it as the "Moroccan Sahara," which has brought it into conflict with the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic and led to tensions and border disputes with Algeria.



The green five-pointed star on the flag symbolizes love, truth, peace, freedom, and justice.

Area	446,000 km ²	Population	37.71 million
Capital	Rabat	Currency	Moroccan Dirham (MAD)
Languages	Arabic and Tamazight (official); Moroccan Arabic and French widely used.		



Morocco is ethnically diverse, with influences from Amazigh (Berber) peoples, Phoenicians, sub-Saharan Africans, Romans, Andalusians, and Jews. However, due to the dominance of Arab culture, most Moroccans identify as Arabs.

Religion

99%	Sunni Islam
0.4%	Christianity
0.4%	Atheism/Agnosticism
0.2%	Other (Baha'i, Judaism, Ahmadiyya)



The vast majority of Algerians are Sunni Muslims. Christians make up less than 1% of the population. Christianity disappeared by the 9th century, and by the 12th century, no Christians or churches remained.

Photo by abdelghafour bouliga on Unsplash

Economy

GDP Growth	GDP per capita
4.1%	USD 5,364
Inflation (2025)	Unemployment
3.8%	11.81%

Sources: World Bank, Statista (2023)

Algeria's economy remains heavily dependent on natural gas and oil, and diversifying its economic base has long been a central government priority. Its main trading partners for both imports and exports are France, Italy, Spain, and China.

99%	Sunni Islam
1%	Other religions



Other faiths include Christianity, Judaism, the Baha'i Faith, and atheism. There are currently around 3,000 evangelical Christians in the country.

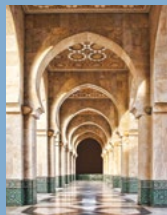
Photo by Mahmoud Yahyaoui on Pexels

GDP Growth	GDP per capita
0.0%	USD 3,978
Inflation (2025)	Unemployment
6.7%	15.1%

Sources: World Bank, Statista (2023)

Terrorist incidents have severely impacted Tunisia's tourism sector. Economically and politically, Tunisia maintains close ties with France and Italy. It is also a major non-NATO ally of the United States and a participant in China's Belt and Road Initiative.

99%	Sunni Islam
1%	Christianity



Other faiths include Shia Islam, Ibadi Islam, the Baha'i Faith, and Christianity. Christianity is the second-largest religion, but most Christians are foreign expatriates. There are an estimated 40,000 evangelical Christians in Morocco.

Photo by GregMontani on Pixabay

GDP Growth	GDP per capita
3.4%	USD 3,771
Inflation (2025)	Unemployment
1.72%	9.11%

Sources: World Bank, Statista (2023)

Tourism is Morocco's largest economic driver. In 2023, international arrivals reached 14.5 million, generating 104.7 billion dirhams—a historic high. The Moroccan government is currently investing in hiking and desert tourism, competing directly with Tunisia.

Algeria



Historical Timeline

800 BC

The Phoenicians, a seafaring people of the Mediterranean (also known as the Canaanites), founded Carthage (near modern-day Tunis) and also established Icosium (today's Algiers).

600 AD

Arab invasions brought the rise of Islam, transforming North Africa. In 698, Carthage, the last Byzantine stronghold, fell and became the Arab city of Tunis.



700 AD

The Arab general Musa ibn Nusayr captured Icosium. The Arabs called the region Maghreb, meaning "the West."

1300~1700 AD

The Ottoman Empire rose to power, and Algeria became one of its provinces.

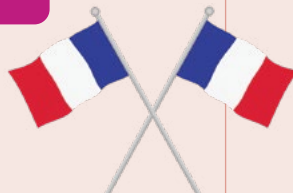
700~1300 AD

Algeria underwent Islamization, ruled by successive Muslim dynasties.



100 AD

North Africa became part of the Roman Empire. Romans reached Algeria in 24 AD. By the 2nd century, Christianity had spread to major cities of the Roman Empire. Augustine, one of the church fathers, was born in Souk Ahras, in northeastern Algeria.



1830

France occupied Algiers, ending over three centuries of Ottoman rule.

The Mediterranean Dream? Not in Algeria

The Mediterranean often brings to mind sunshine, sea breezes, fine food, and leisure. Yet this relaxing picture has little to do with Algeria. Though located along the Mediterranean in North Africa, Algeria is far from being a tourist's dream destination.

Under restrictive, authoritarian, and conservative policies, foreign visitors face great difficulty obtaining visas. Some describe Algeria as "the North Korea of North Africa." The military holds a firm grip on politics, viewing the world through the lens of conspiracy, distrusting all sides, and using both antisemitism and Islamism as tools to divide and rule the nation. Current president Abdelmadjid Tebboune is widely regarded as a puppet backed by the military.

From independence, through the bloody civil war of the 1990s, the Arab Spring in 2011, the global oil price crash of 2014, and the COVID-19 pandemic, Algeria has endured hardship after hardship. Despite being Africa's largest producer of natural gas—the fourth-largest in the world—its national infrastructure remains outdated and poorly managed, and its economy underdeveloped. In terms of wealth, Algeria ranks in the middle globally, roughly on par with South Africa and Mongolia.



1939~1945
During World War II, the collapse of French power fueled hopes of independence among Algerians.

1962

Algeria gained independence from France. Ahmed Ben Bella became the first president, but was later overthrown by Defense Minister Houari Boumedienne. This marked the start of 25 years of military dictatorship, during which Islam was declared the state religion.

2006

Algeria passed Law No. 06-03, restricting the religious freedom of non-Muslims. Churches faced persecution, and many believers were accused and imprisoned. Some reported visions of Jesus and miraculous deliverance.

2011

During the Arab Spring, Bouteflika lifted the 19-year state of emergency, narrowly avoiding being ousted.



1954

The Algerian War of Independence broke out.

1991

The Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) won elections, but the military intervened, triggering a brutal civil war that lasted until 2002. Around 200,000 people died, and the economy came to a standstill.

2004

Abdelaziz Bouteflika was re-elected, backed by the military. He remained in power through repeated re-elections, while Algeria continued as a military-controlled police state.

2019

After 20 years in power, the 82-year-old Bouteflika sought a fifth term but faced mass protests and was forced to resign. The following year, the COVID-19 pandemic struck.



Seeing God's Help

Youssef's Story (I)



As a boy, Youssef Ourahmane associated Christianity with the Crusades and colonialism. Although Islam taught him that Christians would go to hell, he was also uncertain of his own destiny after death.

In 1977, Youssef's older brother invited him to Sweden. At age 21, it was the first time he ever met Christians, and he was drawn by their love and kindness. After returning home, he began reading the Bible. Two years later, Youssef returned to Europe and enrolled at Uppsala University in Sweden. He stayed for a long time, met many Christians, and asked countless questions.

In 1980, Youssef came to faith. He went on to receive theological training in Sweden and the United Kingdom, and later became a missionary with Operation Mobilization (OM). During this time, he met Hee-Tee, a Malaysian Chinese Christian. The two married and returned to Algeria, where they formed a ministry team.

Over the next six years, the couple's ministry steadily expanded, establishing community and training centers while gathering more co-workers.

In the early 1990s, civil war broke out in Algeria. Youssef and his family prayed daily for God's protection, yet they did not stop their missionary work.

In 2006, after the passage of a new religious law, Youssef was arrested, put on trial, and sentenced to three years in prison. On appeal, however, he was acquitted. Reflecting on this, he saw God's hand: "The religious law gave us more opportunities to declare our faith before the courts and the authorities."

Heavenly Father, we thank You for letting Youssef hear the gospel and open his heart to receive You. You placed in him a burning passion to share the good news. Equipped with theological training, he returned to his people to serve, undaunted by hardship. Neither civil war, nor the passage of restrictive laws, nor harassment from the authorities could extinguish his zeal for You. "How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, 'Your God reigns!'" (Isaiah 52:7) Lord, may many more "Youssefs" rise up in Algeria, pursuing and obeying You all their lives. We pray in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

We Faced Much Opposition

Youssef's Story (II)

In 2011, Youssef's ministry team received official recognition and a renewed license. For him, it was nothing short of a miracle—an answer to years of prayer. At that time, the church in Algeria was experiencing rapid growth. It was estimated that over 100,000 people had turned to Christ. Thousands were baptized each year, sometimes with as many as 50 at once. Youssef's ministry expanded into many areas, including a Bible school and a media team producing Christian television programs.

"You never know what tomorrow will bring in this world," Youssef said. "We must make the most of the freedom we have today." He seized every opportunity to show his fellow Algerians the way to heaven. His message was simple and clear: Jesus.

For 36 years, Youssef and his wife have served as missionaries in Algeria, leading the legally recognized Église Protestante d'Algérie (EPA, Protestant Church of Algeria). Yet in 2019, authorities forcibly closed 46 of its churches, citing building regulation violations. "When the churches were shut down," Youssef reflected, "many Christians felt they had lost part of their faith, because the church buildings had been such a central part of it."

In July 2023, Youssef was sentenced to two years in prison and fined 100,000 dinars for "illegal worship." His appeal in May 2024 was rejected, and the sentence upheld.

Still, Youssef and his wife continue to serve the believers of Algeria. In an interview, he said simply, "We face much opposition. But God is sovereign—He is Lord."

*With gratitude to Pastor Youssef for sharing his testimony.



Heavenly Father, following Jesus is a narrow road filled with trials. You see and remember the hardships of Algerian brothers and sisters who have lost their religious freedom. Strengthen Youssef and the believers, that they would not grow weary when their churches are closed. May they be comforted and encouraged by Your Word: "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." (John 16:33) Lord, shine Your light on Algeria's government, granting its people the basic freedom of worship. May Algerian Christians know that Jesus has overcome all powers and sufferings, and that His name is above every name on earth. In Jesus Christ's name we pray, amen.

Algeria's English Lily

The Mission Story of Liliás Trotter



Liliás Trotter (1853–1928) was born into a privileged family in London. At the age of 34, she responded to God's call and set out for Algeria. She applied to a mission agency to become a missionary, but was turned down due to health concerns. The following year, without the backing of any agency, Liliás and two companions settled in the Casbah, the old city of Algiers. She knew no one and spoke no Arabic. Her missionary path felt as bewildering and thrilling as the steep, narrow, maze-like streets that surrounded her.

Traveling along the North African Mediterranean coast and venturing deep into the Sahara—places no single European woman had visited before—she and her coworkers rented homes

to host visitors, read the Bible with people, and engaged in conversations with Sufi Muslims. Over forty years of service, Liliás bore witness to Christ among Arabs, Amazigh (Berbers), French, Jews, and Black Africans.

In her later years, when confined to bed, she kept maps of Algeria and Tunisia hanging near her bedside. Sleepless nights became times of prayer, as she wrote across the maps: "See that you complete the ministry you have received in the Lord."

By the time of her passing, the Algiers Mission Band* she had founded numbered 30 workers with 15 ministry outposts.

*The Algiers Mission Band later merged into Arab World Ministries.

Heavenly Father, we praise You for Liliás and the workers of the Algiers Mission Band. Liliás sought Your will wholeheartedly and courageously stepped into the unfamiliar Muslim world to proclaim Your gospel. She devoted her life to serving in North Africa, clear in her calling and wholly used by You. Lord, through Liliás we see how You delight in using those who seem weak and small—leaving us with no excuse to shirk our missionary calling. Lead us to find our place in mission, using the gifts and skills You have entrusted to us, that we might serve the unreached. May the door of the gospel open once more in Algeria. May the wind of Your Spirit blow across the land, so that all—young and old, men and women—may come to know You, the Lord, and joyfully receive Jesus as Savior. In His name we pray, amen.

One Building

French Colonial Mentality

In 1957, during the Algerian War of Independence, a massive public housing project called Climat de France was built on the outskirts of Algiers. The French colonial government relocated Algerians into this complex, hoping that modern living conditions would strip away their traditional Muslim practices, reduce hostility, and assimilate them into French culture—instilling French values so they would enjoy the benefits and feel gratitude toward the colonial administration for improving their standard of living.

From the outside, Climat de France looked imposing. Inside, however, the apartments were tiny. Each unit had a living room, one or two bedrooms, a small kitchen, and a bathroom. Small windows were built into the rooms, and the ceilings were barely two meters high. The space was cramped, the structures unstable, and life inside not only meant poor living conditions but also had harmful effects on health. Critics argued that the project revealed the colonial mindset of the French government—the true aim was not to modernize Algerian life but to disconnect Algerians from their own traditions.

In the end, the central courtyards of Climat de France became gathering places for Algerians, where protests and anti-colonial political activities often erupted. With little maintenance, deteriorating infrastructure, and residents building illegal extensions, Climat de France eventually became a symbol of Algerian resistance against colonial rule. Later, it was renamed Oued Koriche.

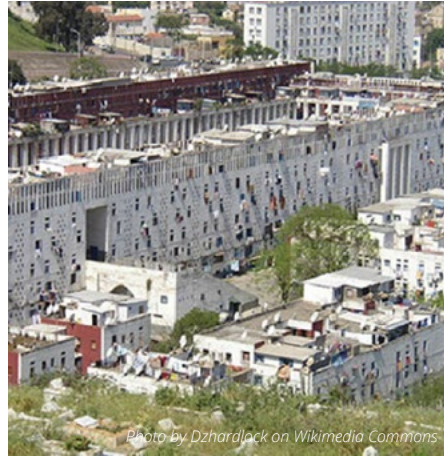


Photo by Dzhardlock on Wikimedia Commons

Heavenly Father, we pray that You would heal the wounds left by colonial history and soothe the painful memories of oppression in Algeria. Raise up historians, political leaders, legal experts, and sociologists to work together with the government in pursuing justice, addressing past human rights abuses and political persecution, and ensuring accountability. As the Algerian government continues modern development projects, grant them wisdom to create cultural policies that revive and sustain local traditions, languages, and arts—rebuilding a strong Algerian cultural identity. May colonial history no longer be a mark of shame, but be transformed into a source of resilience, shaping the Algerian people into a community of compassion, inclusiveness, and welcome for the oppressed. In the name of Jesus Christ we pray, amen.

Who Are You?

The Question of Ethnic Identity



If you ask an Algerian, “What ethnicity are you?” the answer might leave you puzzled.

Most Algerians are descendants of both Amazigh and Arabs. The numbers generally indicate that Arabs make up about 80%, while Amazigh account for around 20%. During the colonial era, the French made up about 10% of the population, but today they are only about 1%. In the past, some 150,000 Jews also lived in Algeria, but they have since emigrated to France or Israel. On the surface, then, Algeria appears to be a “mono-ethnic” nation.

Ethnic identity can be determined by genetics, but it can also be a matter of self-definition—and Algeria is a prime example of this.

The Amazigh are Algeria’s indigenous people. They interacted for centuries with the Phoenicians and Romans, but after the Arab conquest of North Africa in the 7th century, they adopted Islam and assimilated into Arab culture, forming today’s Arab-Amazigh identity. In the 20th century, strong anti-colonial sentiment fueled the rise of Arab nationalism. Most Algerians—including Amazigh—came to see Arab identity as the foundation of their national dignity and sense of belonging.

As we pray for the Algerians, we are reminded of another way people are divided—and the effects of those divisions.

Heavenly Father, You know Algeria’s long history of changing rulers and empires, of peoples mingling together, of identity forged in resistance to French colonialism under the banner of Arab nationalism. Yet You said, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.” May the people of Algeria find true rest in Jesus Christ, and may the wounds of colonial history be healed. May they lift up not the banner of earthly nationalism, but the name of Christ above all. We believe that among every nation You have chosen a people for Yourself, including Algeria. On that day, they will gather with all God’s people before the throne and the Lamb, lifting their voices in praise to You. In Jesus Christ’s name we pray, amen.

Everyone Else Pushed Aside

Arabization

On December 26, 1990, Algeria passed an Arabization decree requiring the use of Arabic in all government agencies, as well as in both public and private sectors. With the exception of French-language newspapers, all films, documentaries, billboards, road signs, and public notices had to be in Arabic. Violators faced fines ranging from 1,000 to 5,000 dinars.

By championing Arab nationalism (Qawmiyyah), Algeria sought to unite its people under a single Arab identity. But under Arabization, anything non-Arab—including Amazigh traditions—was suppressed.

After decades of advocacy, Algeria's 2016 constitution finally recognized the Amazigh language as both a "national and official language." Yet in reality, Amazigh communities still live on the margins of society, excluded from the mainstream.



Photo by Daoud Abismail on Unsplash

Blida, Algiers Province, Algeria

On August 31, 2023, the Amazigh Children's Book Fair organized by the Tagmat Cultural Association in Kabylia was canceled due to lack of official approval. In several regions, Amazigh cultural events were likewise denied permits. That same year, Kabyle-Amazigh journalist Arezki Ait-Larbi's small publishing house was barred from participating in the Algiers International Book Fair over censorship issues. Even Berbere-TV, a channel dedicated to promoting Amazigh culture, was shut down and seized by police. Through such heavy-handed measures, the Algerian government sent a clear message: the Amazigh must fall in line.

Heavenly Father, grant the Algerian government wisdom to lead with justice and hearts that truly love their people. May they act justly, love mercy, and establish fair policies that care for every citizen—especially the marginalized—respecting their needs and enabling all communities to dwell together in peace. Comfort the Amazigh in their sense of exclusion and their struggle to find a place in the mainstream. When they speak out for their rights, stir the hearts of those in authority to listen with empathy and to address interethnic conflicts and tensions with justice and peace. Grant the Amazigh the dignity of their rightful place and the space to renew their culture and traditions. And as they reflect on their history, may they recognize Your wondrous works among them and turn to You in faith. In the name of Jesus Christ we pray, amen.

The Strong Grip of Arab Culture

The Amazigh People (I)



Genetic studies suggest that most Algerians are in fact descended from the Amazigh. Yet historically, the Amazigh never shared a single ethnic identity. Instead, they were organized by tribes and clans, with no notion of a unified nation or people. This fragmentation left them vulnerable when Arab culture and religion swept into the region, too powerful for them to resist.

Today, most Amazigh people are indifferent to questions of identity, but about 15 percent strongly affirm their Amazigh heritage and resist Arabization. They are concentrated in the Kabylia mountains, where calls for autonomy have long been a constant.

Outsiders often call them “Berbers,” a term the Amazigh find offensive. The word comes from the Latin barbari—“barbarian.” They prefer to be known as “Amazigh,” which means “free and noble people.”

The Algerian government does not acknowledge the Amazigh as an indigenous people and withholds population statistics. As a result, there is no official data on their numbers. Like many other indigenous groups, they struggle with a blurred identity and cultural marginalization.

Heavenly Father, You created all humanity in Your image, and every nation comes from You. We bring the Amazigh before You, for they too bear Your beautiful image. History has labeled them “Berbers”—barbarians—causing them to be despised and belittled. With the arrival of the Arabs, their identity was weakened under cultural assimilation, leaving them in crisis today. May the Amazigh come to know You and understand how precious they are in Your sight. May they find freedom through the gospel and true peace in Christ. Bless them, Lord, and draw them back to Yourself. In Jesus Christ’s name, amen.

Honoring a Three-Thousand-Year Tradition

The Amazigh People (II)



For most of the world, it is 2025, but on the Amazigh calendar, the year is 2975.

In recent years, the Amazigh have become more intentional about reclaiming their roots, most visibly in the vibrant celebration of Yennayer, the Amazigh New Year on January 12. Festivities include donning colorful traditional dress, telling ancestral stories to younger generations, teaching crafts such as candle and bracelet making, preparing traditional foods, introducing the Tifinagh alphabet, and performing Amazigh music—all part of an effort to revive a cultural identity long diminished by Arab influence.

The Amazigh share related dialects, but not a single unified culture, and their geographic dispersion has made it difficult to forge a common identity. The Kabyle Amazigh are the most cosmopolitan, with stronger command of French than other Amazigh and a small number who have embraced Christianity. Apart from the Mozabites, who are Ibadi Muslims, nearly all Amazigh are Sunni Muslims.

Algeria still officially defines itself as both an “Arab state” and an “Islamic state,” with laws such as the 1992 Arabization Law continuing to suppress Amazigh identity.

Heavenly Father, as the Amazigh seek their roots, may You open their eyes to see that before Arabization their ancestors once followed Christ. Among them was Augustine, a church father whose reflections on original sin and free will helped establish the foundations of Christian faith. Lord, may Your Spirit guide the Amazigh so that in retracing their past, they uncover the gospel and encounter Your Word. May that Word pierce their hearts like a double-edged sword—dividing soul and spirit, exposing thoughts and intentions—so that their eyes may be opened to recognize Jesus as Savior and joyfully receive Him as Lord of life. In Jesus Christ's name we pray, amen.

Gypsies of Algeria

Romani People



Photo by Nikos Kouroulas on Flickr

The Romani—more commonly known as Gypsies—originate from the lower castes of northern India. Traditionally they lived as wanderers without permanent homes and were long regarded as an inferior people.

Denied the right to own land, they cultivated distinctive trades to survive: tattooing, circumcision, fortune-telling, livestock dealing, acrobatics, blacksmithing, carpentry, and more. Renowned for their musical gifts, singing, and dancing, and often dressed in striking colors, they were frequently invited to entertain at feasts. Nowadays, however, as awareness of human rights and racial equality has grown, the more respectful term “Romani” has replaced “Gypsy.”

The Romani first came to Algeria in the late 19th century during French colonial rule, arriving alongside Spanish settlers. Following Algerian independence, most relocated to France, leaving fewer than 5,000 in the country today. Under the heavy hand of Arabization policies, those who remain have largely assimilated into the mainstream, concealing their ethnic identity and speaking Algerian Arabic. Many also visit the tombs of Islamic saints, blending those practices with both their older folk traditions and the teachings of Sunni Islam.

Algerians once referred to the Romani as “Beni Adas,” a derogatory term meaning people of questionable morals. Under French colonial rule, the French recruited the so-called “Beni Adas” to assist them, further fueling local distrust of the Romani.

Heavenly Father, millions of Romani remain unreached by the gospel. For generations they have carried the name “Gypsy,” burdened with prejudice, contempt, and low status. Lord, break their chains and open their eyes to see the One who loves them and calls them home. May they hear the gospel, open the Scriptures, and drink from the living water that You have prepared that satisfies forever. Grant that they wander no more, but rest in the arms of the Good Shepherd and know true peace. In Jesus’ name we pray, amen.

“Don’t Discriminate Against Me!”

Black Algerians

In 2019, Khadija Benhamou from the southern region of Adrar was crowned Miss Algeria. Almost immediately, she became the target of social media abuse. Critics claimed she could not represent Algerian beauty because of her dark skin. Others mocked the shape of her nose and lips, and some even sneered that she looked like a man.

As in much of North Africa, beauty in Algeria is often measured by the fairness of one’s skin. A 2009 estimate suggested that about 10 percent of the population are Black Africans, most of them living in the south. Yet because of Arabization and Islamization policies, Algeria releases no official statistics on ethnicity.



Photo by Daoud Abismail on Unsplash

From the seventh to the twentieth century, the trans-Saharan slave trade lasted for some 1,300 years. Black Africans—such as the Tuareg—have long lived in southern Algeria, but they are often viewed as descendants of slaves. Their darker skin makes them especially vulnerable to discrimination. At checkpoints and airports, they are often subjected to extra questioning or taunts, with slurs like *kahlouche* (“blackie”) or *abd* (“slave”) hurled at them despite presenting national identification.

Compared with their northern counterparts, Black Algerians in the south feel excluded from society. Their region produces 95 percent of the country’s revenue through oil and natural gas, yet it remains poor and underdeveloped. Many feel that the wealth is siphoned away while they are left behind and treated as second-class citizens.

Heavenly Father, You know the anguish of being despised, for Your only Son was scorned and suffered on the cross. Today we lift before You the Black Algerians, who are looked down upon and burdened with the shame of ancestors taken as slaves—still living under the weight of that stigma across generations. May they come to know You, the God who does not judge by outward appearance. May they receive the beauty You bestow, so they no longer despise themselves but find freedom from the wounds of bondage. And Lord, may You open the eyes of Algerians to remember that they too endured oppression under colonial rule, and grant them love from You, so that with compassion and mercy they may embrace people of every background. In the name of Jesus Christ we pray, amen.

A Forgotten Union

The Arab Maghreb Union

Spurred by the achievements of the Arab League and the African Union, Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, Libya, and Mauritania founded the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU) in 1989, declaring bold ambitions in a bid to keep pace with their neighbors.

But just three years later, Algeria was engulfed in nine years of civil war. Its unresolved dispute with Morocco over Western Sahara also deepened tensions. The Arab Spring of 2011 brought upheaval to Tunisia and Libya, toppling long-entrenched regimes. In 2021, political rifts between Algeria and Morocco erupted again; when Morocco normalized ties with Israel, Algeria reacted by severing relations altogether.



The AMU was meant to open borders, foster friendship, and boost economic growth across its member states. Instead, political instability, terrorist threats, and ideological divides have kept borders closed and cooperation stagnant.

Over thirty years since its creation, the Arab Maghreb Union has gone nowhere: ambitious rhetoric gave way to paralysis, as lingering rifts kept member states from consensus. Today it is viewed as a failed project—an institution surviving in name but dead in practice.

Heavenly Father, we look to Your sovereign hand and lift up Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, Libya, and Mauritania. Grant these nations political stability, that their people may dwell in peace and prosper in their labors. May Your Spirit move upon the parched land of North Africa, softening the hearts of those in authority, so that leaders may persist in dialogue, heal divisions, rebuild trust, stand united against terrorism, and advance trade and cooperation for mutual benefit—fulfilling the Arab Maghreb Union's original vision of shared prosperity. Lord, open wide the doors of the gospel in this region. May lives be renewed through faith in Christ, and may men and women in every sphere be raised up as salt and light—living out justice and peace, and bearing witness to the glory of Your kingdom. In the name of Jesus Christ we pray, amen.

Tunisia

Historical Timeline



814 BC

Phoenician settlers from Tyre founded Carthage, on the outskirts of present-day Tunis, leaving behind the first written record of the region's history.

300 AD

Carthage produced major Christian thinkers such as Tertullian and Cyprian, and came to be regarded as the center of African Christianity.



1300 AD

By now, Islam had taken deep root in the Maghreb for more than five centuries, erasing Christianity from the region. As Arab migration spread westward, Arabic rapidly advanced inland, making Tunisia the cultural center of Arab North Africa.

700 AD

Carthage was transformed into an Arab city—Tunis. Arabs referred to the North African lands west of Egypt as the Maghreb, and Tunisia became known as Ifriqiyyah.

100 BC

Carthage rose to become the Mediterranean's dominant hub of trade and commerce. After repeated clashes with Rome, it was absorbed into the Roman Empire as the administrative center of its African province.



Once a Beacon of the Christian Church

On the Mediterranean coast outside Tunis, waves wash ashore where tourists sunbathe and play in the water. Lush greenery frames the shoreline, dotted with luxury resorts and stately mansions, radiating an air of leisure.

Yet nearly three millennia ago, this very spot was where the Phoenicians landed to found Carthage. The Romans followed, leaving behind baths, theaters, villas, cisterns, Byzantine churches, and intricate mosaics. In time came the Arabs, the Ottomans, and the French—each ruling Tunisia for a season before moving on.

Through the centuries, empires and peoples have inscribed their presence on this land. It has witnessed revolutions too: the joy of independence from France and the triumph of toppling dictatorships.

Once hailed as the “lighthouse of Latin Christianity” in North Africa, Tunisia today is almost entirely Sunni Muslim, with only a small remnant of Christians remaining.



1505~1830 AD

Tunisia fell under Ottoman control but developed a hereditary dynasty that ruled with nominal independence.



1952

Habib Bourguiba rallied the population to lead the independence movement, ending French rule. Yet the system he built was authoritarian rather than democratic.

2025

Today, Tunisia is once again clouded by repression. The government has jailed journalists, targeted civic organizations, and tightened its crackdown on opposition groups and dissenting voices.

2011



1881

France established Tunisia as a protectorate, not a colony. French language, education, economic reforms, and administration shaped the foundations of modern Tunisia.



Colonial Shadows, Diverging Paths

Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco



Algeria: France treated Algeria not as a colony but as part of its own European territory extended into Africa. Land was redistributed to French settlers, and Algerians were forced to labor under new landlords—a humiliation that ran deep. Some Algerians, educated in French schools and shaped by French culture, grew increasingly Europeanized, forming a privileged class above the rest. French-style architecture rose across the land, and schools taught the French language, stirring resentment among many locals.

Tunisia: Tunisia acknowledged France's influence and sought modernization with French assistance. But the more it reformed,

the more dependent it became on France. Burdened by fiscal imbalance, Tunisia eventually fell under French control. In 1881, France invaded and declared it a protectorate. Unlike Algeria, Tunisia retained a high degree of autonomy and therefore offered less resistance to French rule.

Morocco: France's colonial rule in Morocco was relatively lenient, allowing the traditional Makhzen system* to coexist with the French administration. The Amazigh retained their customary laws and tribal assemblies. France even supported and encouraged aspects of Moroccan Islamic culture, with particular emphasis on Sufi traditions. It also carried out anthropological, sociological, and ethnographic research in Morocco, helping to preserve and enrich Moroccan culture.

The three Maghreb nations thus endured very different colonial experiences. These divergent histories shaped distinct national identities that remain hard to reconcile, with divisions still echoing today.

*The traditional governing system in Morocco prior to French colonization, consisting of the monarchy, elite families, tribal chiefs, the military and security forces, and local administrators.

Heavenly Father, heal the wounds and scars left by French colonialism in Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco. Turn harm into blessing, and replace rivalry with reconciliation. Let peace take root in these three nations, that people may set aside prejudice, resolve conflicts with wisdom, and rebuild trust and friendship. May the gospel's light shine into the hearts of their leaders, guiding them to govern with justice and integrity, so that their societies may experience true harmony, peace, and prosperity. Grant that in trade, diplomacy, and regional cooperation they may seek the common good with their neighbors. In Jesus Christ's name we pray, amen.

Waiting for Spring's Return?

Extremists in Tunisia

In March 2019, Malaysian police arrested nine extremists in Kuala Lumpur, including one member of Ansar al-Sharia in Tunisia (AST).

The Arab Spring toppled dictators but left a power vacuum that extremist groups quickly exploited. For a time, Tunisia became the world's largest exporter of foreign fighters. In 2015, the country endured a series of devastating terrorist attacks¹. Between 6,000 and 7,000 Tunisians left to fight in Syria and Iraq. Meanwhile, Ansar al-Sharia, Tunisia's largest extremist group, had swelled to more than 70,000 members.

As early as 2011, many Tunisians had already joined jihadist campaigns abroad. After the Jasmine Revolution², the fragile transitional government lacked the capacity to maintain control. Extremists were freed from prison, and disillusioned by the collapse of their political hopes, many gravitated to groups like Ansar al-Sharia. There, through outreach, religious teaching, charity, and relief programs, they found a sense of belonging they had long been missing.

According to the Global Terrorism Index 2024, Tunisia ranked 36th. Jihadist factions such as the Uqba ibn Nafi Brigade and Jund al-Khilafah continue to operate, maintaining both structure and fighting capability in the rugged borderlands between Tunisia and Algeria.



Notes:

¹ The Bardo Museum shooting, the Sousse attacks, and the presidential guard bus bombing.

² Refers to the anti-government protests in Tunisia from late 2010 to early 2011 that brought down the regime.

Heavenly Father, may the seeds of the gospel take root in Tunisia's dry soil, bringing hope and comfort to hearts weighed down by disappointment, despair, and emptiness. Lord, we intercede for those once drawn to extremism, whose hands have held weapons and whose hearts were filled with hate. Show them mercy: soften their hearts, release them from rage and hopelessness, and let Your Spirit open their eyes to the surpassing love revealed in our Great Shepherd, Jesus Christ. We also ask that You transform Tunisia's leaders—giving them compassion for their people, determination to rebuild the nation's economy and society, and vision for a brighter future for the next generation. In Jesus Christ's name we pray, amen.

Who Are You?

Tunisia's Question of Identity



Ask a Tunisian, “What is your ethnicity?” and the likely reply is: “We don’t talk about ethnicity. There aren’t any official categories anyway.” More than 90 percent identify themselves as descendants of Arabs.

This lack of ethnic consciousness is rooted in decades of Arabization policies, a shared religious framework, and post-colonial notions of national unity.

Tunisia’s heritage, however, is a tapestry woven from Arabs, Amazigh, Turks, Andalusians, and others. Yet because Arab civilization has been the dominant force, Tunisians embraced Arab traditions and claimed an Arab identity.

Arabic is the official language; most people speak the Tunisian dialect, while schools teach Modern Standard Arabic. By the late 12th century, Tunisia had been largely Arabized. Today, only small communities in the south still speak Amazigh dialects.

At independence, Tunisia’s first president, Habib Bourguiba, advanced the idea of “One Tunisian Nation.” This reinforced an identity of being “Arab Muslim Tunisians,” effectively erasing ethnic distinctions.

Geography plays its part too: Tunisia is the only North African state that does not border sub-Saharan Africa. Its weaker ties to the rest of the continent have left Black Tunisians, who carry sub-Saharan ancestry, feeling marginalized and out of place.

Heavenly Father, when Tunisians ask themselves, “Who am I?” may Your light uncover how history and national policies have shaped their identity today. Lord, ethnic identity remains a sensitive subject—many remain silent, having been taught from childhood to claim only a single, official identity. Give Tunisian society a vision of the beauty of diversity, and a knowledge of You, the Creator of all peoples who values every people and culture. Comfort Black Tunisians as they struggle for belonging on the edges of an Arabized society. Move the government to face their reality with honesty and to pursue policies of inclusion and acceptance. In the name of Jesus Christ we pray, amen.

A Gateway for Migrants to Europe

Human Trafficking

"I spent seven months enduring the worst—thirst, hunger, fear, and danger. I left Côte d'Ivoire, passed through Mali and Niger, crossed Algeria's desert, and finally reached Sfax, Tunisia," Vincent told the Tunis News Agency (TAP), recounting his attempt to reach Europe.

Separated from Europe by only a narrow stretch of sea, Tunisia has become a favored departure point for migrants trying to cross by boat. Italy is the destination of choice, and Tunisia the most heavily used transit hub.

Vincent's journey ended abruptly when Tunisian patrols intercepted him at sea and forced him back. "My goal is to reach Europe," he declared angrily. "Only death can stop me!"

As waves of migrants press toward Europe, the EU has poured funds into North Africa to tighten border control. In 2023, Tunisia received €127 million for anti-smuggling efforts. Yet an OCCRP investigation revealed that some Tunisian officers, after detaining migrants, transferred them to facilities near the Libyan border where they were treated as slaves and sold to militias and armed groups for as little as €12 to €90 per person. Only those whose families could pay ransom were released.



Photo by Katie Moum on Unsplash

Heavenly Father, we intercede for those fleeing war, poverty, and despair, who embark on perilous journeys through wilderness and across seas. You are the God who makes a way in the desert and brings forth streams in the wasteland. Protect wanderers like Vincent; work miracles for them in times of danger and darkness. In their helplessness, let them know Your care; in their despair, let them hear Your voice. Guard them from human traffickers and deliver them from being sold into bondage. We pray that African nations, the EU, and international organizations would work together to strengthen Africa's political and economic foundations. And by Your grace, wisdom, and power, may they continue to act with compassion as they confront the pressures and challenges of the refugee crisis. In the name of Jesus Christ we pray, amen.

“We Face Discrimination!”

Black Tunisians



Photo by Joshua Duneebon on Unsplash

In February 2023, President Kais Saied declared that the influx of sub-Saharan migrants into Tunisia was part of a criminal scheme to alter the country's demographics—transforming it into an “African nation” rather than a member of the Arab and Islamic world. He alleged that the large numbers of illegal African migrants in Tunisia were bringing violence, crime, and misconduct.

His rhetoric inflamed anti-immigrant sentiment. Black Africans were rounded up, evicted, attacked, and deported. Native Black Tunisians, long treated as outsiders and scarred by prejudice, braced themselves for violence as well.

Official figures suggest that 10–15 percent of Tunisians have Black African ancestry, with some tracing their roots to sub-Saharan slaves brought centuries ago. Analysts note that although Tunisia shed French colonial rule, many Tunisians still look to European culture as a reference point—harboring prejudice and distance toward Black Africans.

After the fall of Ben Ali's dictatorship in 2011, Tunisia's path toward democracy emboldened Black citizens to call for equal treatment and embrace their African heritage. In 2018, Tunisia broke new ground as the first Arab country to pass a law making racial discrimination a crime.

Heavenly Father, we remember that once we too were strangers to Your covenant, without hope in this world. Yet through Christ we have been reconciled to You, made new, and gathered into one body—calling each other brothers and sisters. Let the gospel of peace take root in Tunisia, breaking down walls built on bloodline, skin color, and background, and drawing people into unity through Your love. Lord, heal the wounds that race and identity have left on this society, and comfort Black Africans—whether migrants or native-born—who face rejection and exclusion. Stir Tunisia's leaders to honor You, to turn from divisive words, and to pursue true inclusion and reform. May this nation become a place of tolerance and welcome. In the name of Jesus Christ we pray, amen.

Hiding Their Identity, Denying Their Roots

The Amazigh of Tunisia

How many Amazigh live in North Africa? It's a difficult question. Precise figures are unknown; many governments do not track ethnic populations; and decades of Arabization have blurred Amazigh identity. In this climate of pressure and fear, some Amazigh deny who they are, worried that admitting their heritage will invite trouble. The very word "Amazigh" has become taboo.

Tunisian graffiti artist and painter Youssef Hedfi told Global News in 2023 that he himself once denied his Amazigh roots. Even his late grandmother, marked with traditional Amazigh tattoos—including a Star of David—practiced Islam and identified as an Arab.



Photo by Nocturk on Wikimedia Commons

A elderly woman bearing Amazigh tattoos

"My grandmother's grandmother said the same thing, because she was afraid," Hedfi recalled. "That fear has been passed down from generation to generation. Today, we say we are Arabs."

Under the dictatorship of Ben Ali, no one dared to speak of being Amazigh. But the Arab Spring thundered like a storm, awakening Tunisia's religious, ethnic, and cultural minorities—among them the Amazigh, who raised their voices for the first time to claim their rights.

Heavenly Father, You created every nation, gifting humanity with diverse languages, cultures, and identities. We pray that Tunisia may become a land that respects and welcomes its religious, ethnic, and cultural minorities. We especially lift up the Amazigh. You know their history and struggles; You hear their unspoken cries. Lord, remove the fear handed down through generations, and grant them courage to embrace their heritage—knowing that they are Your beloved children, created in Your image. May they take pride in who they are. And may Tunisian society move beyond its fixation on being a "single-ethnic nation," learning instead to see diversity as a blessing—so that the Amazigh can freely say: "We are Amazigh, and we are Tunisians." In Jesus Christ's name we pray, amen.

The Goddess Who Still Haunts Carthage

The Tophet Ruins



Symbol of the goddess Tanit

Among the ruins of Carthage outside Tunis, one striking symbol appears again and again: a triangle crowned with a circle, bisected by a horizontal line. Sometimes the line extends into vertical strokes, evoking arms lifted in worship. The image decorates ancient mosaics as well as modern souvenirs—keychains, necklaces, earrings, and books.

At the Tophet altar, rows of stelae bear this same mark. Between 800 and 146 BC, Phoenicians gathered here to worship Baal and his consort Tanit. The triangle-and-circle emblem was Tanit's sign.

“They have built the high places of Topheth in the Valley of Ben Hinnom to burn their sons and daughters in the fire—something I did

not command, nor did it enter my mind” (Jeremiah 7:31). Scholars largely agree that the infants buried here were sacrificed, typically one to one and a half months old—not children who died naturally or with defects. Inscriptions carved by grieving parents read: “He has heard my voice and blessed me.”

Though Tunisia today is overwhelmingly Muslim, Tanit has not vanished. She reappears in culture, literature, music, visual arts, and tourist trinkets—evidence of her lingering influence across the centuries.

Heavenly Father, You have said, “You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or serve them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God” (Exodus 20:4–5). We pray that the people of Tunisia would recognize their land’s history of Tanit worship and come to understand the cultural legacy it has left behind. May Your Word show them that You abhor idols and forbid the burning of children in sacrifice—deeds that were neither commanded nor desired by You. Holy Spirit, open their eyes to choose what pleases You and to worship the true fountain of living water, Jesus Christ. In His name we pray, amen.

A Church Forced Into Hiding

Protestants in Tunisia

For many years, Tunisia's Protestant community was made up almost entirely of European expatriates, worshiping in two historic churches in Tunis: the Reformed Church and Saint Georges Anglican. But about two decades ago, the arrival of sub-Saharan students and workers reshaped the landscape. These African believers rarely attended the traditional churches. Instead, they rented hotel conference rooms or small halls for worship—seeking spaces where they would not be disturbed.

A handful of local Tunisian churches exist, but they are small and must keep themselves hidden. Because the government recognizes only the Catholic



The Reformed Church of Tunis

Church as “Christian,” Protestant congregations face restrictions at every turn. With no official framework to protect them, they quietly improvise—meeting privately and in secrecy. Yet life in this legal gray zone leaves them exposed to harassment by the authorities.

What these Protestants long for is simple: recognition and legal standing. Yet Tunisian authorities remain silent, convinced that Christianity poses a threat to Islam. For many citizens, Christianity is still linked in their minds with European colonial rule—few remember that this very land was once a lighthouse of the early church.

Heavenly Father, You once caused Tunisia to shine as a lighthouse of the gospel, where the light of Christ spread across North Africa. Lord, we earnestly ask that You ignite this land again with the fire of Your Spirit, rekindling a deep hunger for Your Word and letting the light of the gospel shine once more over this dry and thirsty land. We entrust our brothers and sisters in Tunisia to Your care—cover their gatherings, shield them from the eyes of the authorities, and block every attempt to disrupt their worship. We pray for those in power and in the legislature: open their eyes, that they would no longer see Christianity as a threat but would grant Protestants legal recognition. May Tunisia again stand as a testimony to Your glory. In the name of Jesus Christ we pray, amen.

A Lamp Once Extinguished, Awaiting Flame

Carthage

The Lost Lighthouse of Latin Christianity



In his 1947 book *The North African Demographic Problem*, Louis Chevalier observed: “The Berbers were profoundly devout. Even in villages and remote hamlets one could find two or three large churches. The founders of early Christian literature were Tertullian and Augustine, himself a pure Berber. The first Latin Bible translations were completed in Africa. Berber migrants living in Rome also helped spread the Christian faith.”

For centuries, the Latin Christian church of the Maghreb was hailed as a lighthouse for the faith. Yet today it has all but vanished from the historical record. What happened to this beacon?

When Arab forces swept in during the 7th century, large numbers of Roman Christians fled to Europe. By the 8th century, Muslims and the remaining Christian Amazigh lived in relative peace. By the late 10th century, the surviving Christians had shifted to speaking Arabic. In 1076, only one bishop remained in the entire region—Cyriacus of Carthage.

A few small churches lingered into the 11th century, but by the 13th, attempts by Spain and Italy to impose Catholicism faltered. Dominican friars raised chapels along the coast, but the gospel failed to take root; within years, even some Catholics converted to Islam. By the early 15th century, only a small remnant of Arabized Christians survived in Tunisia—the last flicker of the Maghreb’s ancient church.

After seven centuries of faith, the North African church poured out its last drop of oil. The lamp went dark.

Heavenly Father, You are the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness—the light that enters human hearts and reveals Your glory in the face of Jesus Christ. Let that light shine again over the Maghreb, driving out darkness and transforming lives. Lord, pour fresh oil into this abandoned lighthouse and rekindle the flame of the gospel. May Your Word cut to the heart, awaken souls, and open eyes to see the God who worked wonders in the past and who still shows mercy and saves today. We believe nothing is impossible for You. Revive Tunisia, Lord—beginning with one person, then one household, then clans and nations—until every people lifts their voice to praise Your holy name. In Jesus Christ’s name we pray, amen.

One Roof, Two Peoples

Amazigh and Arab Christians in the Maghreb

Across the Maghreb, a small community of Amazigh and Arab Christians gathers under the same church roof. But they, too, feel the currents of rising ethnic consciousness. The Amazigh, for example, have pushed hard for Tamazight to gain official recognition and a place in schools. Morocco—home to the region's largest Amazigh population—only in May 2023 declared the Amazigh New Year (Yennayer) a public holiday, and allocated new funds to promote the language.

Some churches still give priority to Arabs. A Moroccan Christian shared that in her congregation there are only two Arabs, while the rest are Amazigh, yet both worship and Bible teaching are carried out in Arabic.

She longs to read the Bible in Tamazight, because it speaks more closely to her own cultural background.

Pastors observe that lines of division remain. Some Amazigh Christians strongly identify with their people, tailoring their evangelism especially to fellow Amazigh. And when Amazigh gather, they often default to Tamazight, leaving Arab believers feeling excluded and isolated.



Heavenly Father, You have revealed through Galatians 3:27-28: "All of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." We pray that Amazigh and Arab brothers and sisters may live this truth—breaking down prejudice, pride, and fear. Let Your love be their bridge, teaching them to see each other through Christ's eyes, to meet one another's needs, and to embrace their differences with grace. Lord, honor the longing of those who desire to read Your Word in Tamazight. Provide more translations and raise up workers so that Your Word reaches every culture and language, and Your name is lifted high among all peoples. In Jesus Christ's name we pray, amen.

Morocco



Historical Timeline

1100 BC

Phoenicians began settling along the Mediterranean coast, extending into what is now Morocco in cities such as Tangier, Rabat, Asilah, and Essaouira. At the time, many Amazigh tribal kingdoms thrived further inland.

146 BC

With the fall of Carthage, the Roman Empire took control of the North African Mediterranean coast. Morocco became the empire's westernmost frontier.



670 AD

The Arab Umayyad dynasty invaded, conquering much of the Maghreb. Morocco entered the Islamic era.



300 AD

Christianity spread into northern Morocco and across much of the Roman Empire.



300 BC

The Mauri, an Amazigh people north of the Sahara, established the tribal kingdom of Mauretania in Morocco, surviving between the rival powers of Carthage and Rome.

1912

The Treaty of Fez made Morocco a French protectorate, while Spain took control of northern and southern zones as protectorates.

Hollywood's African Backlot



As early as 1930, Morocco had already become a source of inspiration for Hollywood. The film *Morocco* showcased the country's sweeping landscapes, prompting the Moroccan government to place full-page ads in *The New York Times* to entice Western tourists. In 1942, *Casablanca* used Morocco's largest city as the backdrop for a wartime tale of tragic romance—its dashing leads captivating audiences worldwide.

Yet in reality, both *Morocco* and *Casablanca* were filmed entirely on studio sets in Southern California. Not a single scene was shot on Moroccan soil, nor did any Moroccan actors appear on screen.

Today, however, Morocco has become a favored overseas location for Hollywood productions. Its vast deserts, towering dunes, barren rocky plateaus, and evocative ancient backdrops—often seen in biblical epics and countless other films—have all been captured here. Audiences seldom realize that the cinematic landscapes they are watching are, in fact, Morocco.

Even now, Morocco retains its timeless, centuries-old atmosphere and an aura of Arab mystique. Among the Maghreb states, it remains the most stable and the most accessible for tourists.



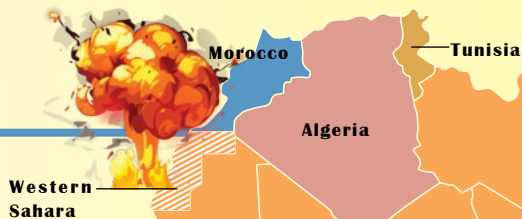
1975

Morocco annexed the former Spanish colony of Western Sahara, sparking conflict with the Polisario Front of the Sahrawi people—a war that continues to this day.



1956

Morocco gained independence, establishing a constitutional monarchy under King Mohammed V. The country's official name became al-Mamlakah al-Maghribiyyah, meaning "the Western Kingdom."



Africa

Denied and Overlooked: Black Moroccans

Racism

Morocco keeps no official ethnic statistics, but it is estimated that around 10 percent of the population is Black. In earlier centuries, lighter-skinned Arabs and Amazigh in Morocco bought and sold Black slaves from the Sahara for thirteen centuries. Enslaved Africans were stripped of their identity, taking their masters' surnames, serving as domestic servants, concubines, porters, and property to be owned. In 1925, Morocco formally abolished slavery, but many still regarded keeping slaves in the household as a mark of status and prestige.

In recent years, sub-Saharan Africans have come to North Africa for work or study. Many others, fleeing poverty and conflict at home, have stayed illegally or attempted to cross into Europe. Their presence has made Black people unwelcome in Morocco. In public discourse and the media, sub-Saharan Africans are often depicted as slaves, criminals, prostitutes, drug dealers, or carriers of disease.



In Morocco, when lighter-skinned people are asked to do something undesirable, they sometimes joke: “Wena Kahlouch?” (“Am I Black?”). Common racial slurs include al-ʿabd (“slave”), al-Khādem (“servant”), al-Hartāni (“freed Black slave”), al-`Azzi (racial slur), and al-Kahlouch (“blackie”).

Black people are also derided as qird (“monkey”), khanzīr (“pig”), ākil laʾm al-bashar (“cannibal”), or ʿayawān (“animal”). Some Moroccans even make monkey sounds to mock them.

Note: Information adapted from Stephen J. King’s article, “Ending Denial: Anti-Black Racism in Morocco.”

Heavenly Father, the ancestors of Black Moroccans once labored on this land, cultivating and contributing to its growth. Yet for generations they have faced discrimination and injustice because of their skin color and status, unable to shake off stigma or the legacy of slavery. Lord, in Your abundant grace, let Your mercy reach them. Free them from the chains of the past, make them new in Christ, and help them see their worth and dignity through Your eyes. Transform the atmosphere of Moroccan society to accept and respect people of all colors and ethnicities. Guide policies and institutions to protect the rights and needs of minority groups, so that Your justice and mercy may be made visible. In the name of Jesus Christ we pray, amen.

Chefchaouen

Jebala People

Here, everything is blue. Some say the color drives away mosquitoes or cools the summer heat; others say it symbolizes the sky, spirituality, serenity, and peace.

The blue of Chefchaouen has made it a major attraction in the Rif Mountains. This small town in northwestern Morocco is home to the Jebala people, who speak a northern Moroccan dialect of Arabic with Andalusian influence.

In the past, the Jebala were fierce warriors, known for their resistance against foreign invaders. Today in Chefchaouen, you can see Jebala women draped in beautiful woolen blankets and wearing traditional hats, selling their goods along the streets—an enduring part of their tribal way of life.



Photo by Hawkeyes8 on Wikimedia Commons

Some say the Jebala are a subgroup of the Amazigh, while others trace their roots back to the Arabian Desert. Their ancestors migrated to North Africa and intermarried with the Amazigh, forming a distinct community.

The Rif Mountains were once notorious for large-scale illegal cannabis cultivation, with Chefchaouen becoming a hub for visiting hashish users. In 2021, Morocco legalized the controlled farming of cannabis for medical and industrial purposes (but not recreational use), seeking to curb illicit trafficking.

Heavenly Father, we lift up Chefchaouen, this “blue city.” May its beauty not only attract tourists but also reflect Your glory. We pray that the cannabis grown here would be used rightly and lawfully for medicine and industry, bringing real help to those in need. Move the Jebala people to plant within the law, working with the government to put an end to drug abuse and illegal trade, so that Chefchaouen may be known for wholesome tourism rather than indulgence, corruption, or crime. Lord, we entrust the Jebala people into Your hands. May Your Spirit open their eyes, stir their hearts to seek the way of eternal life, and draw them to Yourself by Your love. In the name of Jesus Christ we pray, amen.

Why Such Bitter Strife?

The Tophet Ruins



19th-century Amazigh Jews

"I am both Jewish and Amazigh," says Moussa, who lives in Casablanca, pointing with a smile to a photo of his father on the living room wall.

In the 1950s, Morocco had some 80,000 Jews. By 2020, that number had dwindled to just 2,500—most of them Amazigh Jews.

Historically, Phoenicians sailing west from Canaan, along with Jews exiled after the destruction of the First Temple, brought Jewish communities to what is now Morocco. Once settled, Jews intermingled with Amazigh, intermarrying, spreading Judaism and Jewish culture, and in turn absorbing Amazigh traditions. The two identities blended deeply over time.

Today, Amazigh Jews form a minority who practice Judaism while preserving Amazigh cultural traditions. Although political leaders often emphasize a unified "Arab identity" and call for the liberation of Palestine, Amazigh Jews take a different view. They do not identify as Arabs, and many feel a stronger connection with Israel.

For some, that bond with Israel exists more as an idealized image of a homeland they have never seen. Those who have traveled there, however, have sometimes been jolted by reality: witnessing Palestinians struggling under the weight of the conflict, they realized that Israel too is marked by male-dominated politics and offers little room for peaceful coexistence.

Heavenly Father, You created every nation and people, weaving history, culture, and memory into each unique identity. The Amazigh Jews carry a heritage and story distinct from the Moroccan majority, yet each one is precious in Your sight, beloved as Your people. Lord, reveal to them that Jesus Christ is the Messiah who has already come. May the Holy Spirit awaken in them a hunger for truth, and open their eyes to see the eternal gate already standing open—welcoming them into Your kingdom to receive the gift of true redemption. Lord, use the unique heritage of the Amazigh Jews to bear witness to Your justice and love. May they show compassion to the marginalized, speak out for peace, and become instruments of reconciliation—especially amid the pain and division of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In the name of Jesus Christ we pray, amen.

Endless Conflict

Sahrawi People

“Can you give me medicine—the kind that makes it so I won’t have children?” she whispered urgently to me. I could not take my eyes off her 10-year-old face.” In her essay “Child Bride,” the writer Sanmao recorded what she witnessed in the 1970s: child marriage among the Sahrawi. She was appalled by the tradition in which a groom violently seized a girl’s virginity on their wedding night while her family looked on in silence.

The Sahrawi are a mixed people of Amazigh, Arab, and Black African descent. Their nomadic life has long stretched across the harsh deserts from southern Morocco and Western Sahara to Niger and the Senegal River valley.

The Western Sahara—homeland of the Sahrawi—was once a Spanish colony. In 1975, Morocco annexed the territory, erecting a “defense wall” to block the armed resistance of the Sahrawi’s self-declared Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR). Morocco insists that Western Sahara is an inseparable part of its territory and refuses any possibility of independence.



The United Nations does not recognize Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara, designating it instead as a “non-self-governing territory.” For years, many nations recognized the SADR’s independence, though the United States and the European Union did not. As of 2024, the tide has shifted: more countries are moving toward acceptance of Morocco’s claim. To this day, the sovereignty of Western Sahara remains deeply contested, with recognition shifting according to the ebb and flow of global politics.

Heavenly Father, remember the silent tears of the Sahrawi, like the pleading, helpless gaze of that young girl Sanmao once described. We lift up their difficult political situation to You: may the nations of the world, even as they pursue their own interests, not neglect the dignity and welfare of the Sahrawi, but make decisions that align with Your heart. We will give thanks to You among the nations and sing Your praises among the peoples, for Your marvelous works of salvation must be proclaimed among all peoples—including the Sahrawi. Open their hearts to You, Lord. May they lay down their fear and defenses, encounter the Savior in the desert, and find eternal hope amid turmoil. In the name of Jesus Christ we pray, amen.

Avatars of the Desert

Tuareg People



Out of the rolling sands come figures robed in deep indigo, their faces wrapped in veils, leading camels step by step. They are the Tuareg, a nomadic Amazigh subgroup of the Sahara.

The Tuareg are scattered across Morocco, Algeria, Niger, Libya, Burkina Faso, Nigeria, and Mali, and speak their own Tuareg language. While not strictly observant of Islamic practices, their worldview remains shaped by Islam. For example, they may not pray five times a day, but when good things happen, the whole family will quietly offer thanks to Allah.

Ansar, a Tuareg man, moved to Nigeria for work at age 40. There he first encountered a Christian church—but assumed it was simply another kind of mosque. Six years later, while working in Libya, he grew disillusioned with Islam and became an atheist.

Some years on, Ansar heard of a Christian church where people prayed in the Tuareg language. Intrigued, he went to see. That Sunday he heard prayers not only in Tuareg, but also in Hausa, English, French, and even Spanish. He was astonished: religion was not locked to one ethnicity. He came to believe in Jesus—and remained a Tuareg.

When Ansar returned to share the gospel with his people, he was spat upon and cast out of his home. Yet he did not give up. We must pray for him.

Heavenly Father, may our Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ, call the Tuareg people home. Let them know that in trusting You, they lack nothing—that they can rest in green pastures and beside still waters. Lord, pour living water into their dry and weary souls, that they may thirst no more but taste Your truth and steadfast love. Raise up more workers to go among them, carrying the gospel in their heart language and cultural context, so that many may come to know You. We lift up Tuareg brothers and sisters who suffer rejection for their faith—when they are despised and driven out, be their refuge. Strengthen their faith in trials, anchor their steps in hardship, and deepen their experience of Your presence and grace. In the name of Jesus Christ we pray, amen.

I Am Free, Released at Last

Haratin People

The Haratin—sometimes called the “Black Moors”—are descendants of sub-Saharan African slaves. Most live in Mauritania, with others spread across Morocco, Western Sahara, Senegal, Algeria, and Mali.

In Morocco, the Haratin inhabit oasis towns along the edge of the Sahara. The word Haratin comes from Arabic, meaning “free” or “freed.” Yet despite no longer being slaves, in Morocco their lack of traceable ancestry leaves them regarded by society as even lower than slaves, a despised status passed down through generations.

Across both Morocco and Mauritania, the same pattern emerges: Haratin are generally seen as “Black,” while the “noble”

Arabs and Amazigh are seen as “White.” This division of black and white is less about skin tone itself and more about entrenched social hierarchies shaped over centuries.

In Morocco, the Haratin are a Sunni Muslim, Arabic-speaking community of roughly 60,000 people, with no reported evangelical Christian presence.

The term Moors is often misunderstood. It does not denote a single ethnicity, but rather a broad label for Muslims from Spain and Andalusia. The Moors could be either “white” or “black”: the “White Moors” were lighter-skinned Arab-Amazigh Muslims of North Africa, while the “Black Moors” were sub-Saharan African Muslims from Mauritania, northern Senegal, and western Mali.



Photo by Hawkeye58 on Wikimedia Commons

Heavenly Father, for generations the Haratin have endured suffering and oppression—treated as inferior and still chained by the legacy of slavery, denied the respect that is their due. May they come to know the Lord Jesus Christ, the One who breaks every chain and sets the captives free. Holy Spirit, soften their hearts to welcome the Savior, that they may be lifted from oppression into new lives filled with dignity and hope. God of justice, stir governments, scholars, nonprofits, and churches to confront the deep injustices of race and class. Raise up advocates for the Haratin, to press for change and secure their God-given rights as human beings created in Your image. In the name of Jesus Christ we pray, amen.

Feared by Many

Reguibat People



Photo by Collectie Stichting Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen on Wikimedia Commons Wereldculturen

The Reguibat are a Sahrawi tribe scattered across southern Morocco, Western Sahara, southwestern Algeria, northern Mauritania, and northwestern Mali. In the past, they were frequently attacked by neighboring tribes, which drove them to arm themselves in self-defense and gain a reputation for violence and banditry.

They trace their lineage to a 16th-century Arab Islamic preacher, Sidi Ahmed al-Reguib, regarded both as a saint and as an Idrisi—a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad.

For centuries, Saharan tribes have intermarried extensively, blending bloodlines. The Reguibat place great importance on their “pure” Arab lineage,

taking pride in their claim of descent from Muhammad. For them, being recognized as part of the Prophet’s line elevates their status as members of the chorfa*.

Today, about 40,000 Reguibat live in Morocco, all of them Sunni Muslims. They hold fast to their traditional way of life and strong kinship ties, though many have moved from a nomadic existence to more settled livelihoods.

* chorfa is an Arabic honorific meaning “nobility.”

Heavenly Father, the Reguibat have long endured attack and hardship, turning to weapons and violence to shield themselves, hiding wounded and fearful hearts behind a hardened exterior. Lord, heal their inner anxieties and free them from striving after identity and worth through bloodline. Though they take pride in their descent from the Prophet Muhammad, we know true honor is found only in You. May the Reguibat discover the new identity that comes from being called Your children—“The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ.” In the name of Jesus Christ we pray, amen.

Seeking Help from Witches

Folk Customs

As a young woman, Amal once jokingly stopped at a fortune-teller's stall. The Shawafa (Moroccan witch) looked at her and declared: "You'll never get married!" Amal shrugged it off as nonsense and walked away laughing. Yet twenty years later—still unmarried at 42—Amal had consulted nearly a hundred Shawafa, desperate to undo the "curse" of those words.

In 2022, a Moroccan witch was prosecuted for "repeated acts of sorcery and serious blasphemy." She had cast spells on behalf of three women, trying to stop their husbands from taking second wives. A cemetery guard caught her attempting to bury hair, underwear, and other ritual items, and she was convicted of "desecrating graves."

Though Islam forbids sorcery, such folk practices run deep in Morocco. When people are desperate—for wealth, luck, love, healing, contact with the dead, or protection against rivals in marriage—they turn to witches for spells, consult fortune-tellers, seek the aid of spirits, pray at the tombs of saints, brew herbal charms, curse with the "evil eye," or wear and display the "Hand of Fatima" as a talisman.

Many Moroccan women especially turn to Shawafa because it is seen as the most convenient solution—cheap, quick, and simple.



Heavenly Father, when Amal grows weary and helpless, chasing after remedies in vain, lift her eyes to You that she may call on Your name. Reveal Yourself to her as the loving Father—the God who gives true peace and lasting hope. May she experience Your power, healing, and redemption, and know that she is precious, redeemed at great cost. Lord, for Moroccan women who face broken marriages, financial hardship, or the sorrow of losing loved ones, make Yourself known as the God of comfort and provision, who dwells with them in mercy. Strengthen Moroccan Christians to walk beside the afflicted with love and practical care, becoming a blessing to those around them. Grant missionaries wisdom from above, that they may share the gospel in ways that open the eyes of those in darkness to behold Your glory. In the name of Jesus Christ we pray, amen.

Protecting Freedom, Yet Forbidding Evangelism

Ranked #21 on the World Watch List



“Morocco is changing. King Mohammed VI says he is king of all Moroccans—Christians, Jews, and Muslims alike. The seven of us no longer hide our identities. We believe God will protect us.”

In 2016, 46-year-old Mustapha told a newspaper it was time to declare openly: “We are Moroccans, we are Christians.” Together with other believers, he launched an online radio station and YouTube channel to speak out boldly. Yet before long, those platforms disappeared without a trace.

By 2025, Morocco ranked 21st on Open Doors’ World Watch List. The country guarantees freedom of religion, but strictly forbids evangelism. With powerful and well-

informed security forces, believers caught sharing their faith risk arrest and interrogation. Many also face betrayal by family members, persecution, social rejection, loss of inheritance or financial support, house arrest, forced divorce, and even being denied access to their children.

And yet, the gospel continues to spread in Morocco. In 2016, a group of Moroccan Christians, supported by Al Hayat TV, launched the Moroccan and Christian channel on social media and YouTube. The programs are in Moroccan Arabic and today have around 14,000 subscribers.

Heavenly Father, strengthen and comfort Your children in Morocco. In every trial and persecution, be their refuge, their fortress, their God in whom they trust. Deliver them from the snare of the fowler and from deadly pestilence. We lift up gospel work in Morocco: use social media and online platforms to carry the light of Christ into every corner of the country. Bless and protect the Moroccan and Christian channel, that Your Word may reach hearts and transform lives. Raise up many more of Your people in Morocco, that they may step out of fear and oppression into the freedom of Christ, and receive the eternal inheritance He gives. In the name of Jesus Christ we pray, amen.

Mint Tea and Manners: A Guide to Moroccan Etiquette

Morocco is a conservative and traditional Muslim country, so it's important to observe local customs:

- Remove your shoes before entering a house or room.
- Men should wear clothing that covers the shoulders and pants that reach below the knees. Women should wear long, loose-fitting garments that cover everything above the knees.
- Local friends of the same gender typically greet each other with a handshake or two “air kisses” on the cheeks. The opposite sexes never do this, unless they know each other very well.
- Hosts will serve mint tea as a sign of hospitality; guests should drink it to show appreciation.
- At meals, wait until the host says Bismillah (“in the name of God”) before eating.
- Avoid making casual remarks about politics, organizations, religion, or the monarchy.
- Non-Muslims are forbidden to enter mosques or the tombs of saints (koubas), though there are some exceptions.



October 31

On this day, write down a prayer for North Africa as the Spirit leads you.



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