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Elections in Algeria

2017 Legislative Elections

Frequently Asked Questions

Middle East and North Africa

International Foundation for Electoral Systems

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Frequently Asked Questions

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Disclosure:

These FAQs reflect decisions made by the Algerian elections authorities as of April 27, 2017, to the best of our knowledge. This document does not represent any IFES policy or technical recommendations.

When is Election Day?

Algeria will hold elections on May 4 for the People's National Assembly, the lower house of the bicameral Parliament. Algeria's last election was a presidential election, held on April 17, 2014. The election had a 51.7 percent voter turnout among registered voters.

Who are citizens voting for on Election Day?

On May 4, voters will elect 462 members of the lower house of the bicameral Parliament, the People's National Assembly.

Who can vote in the country?

Organic Law 16-10 Relative to the Electoral Systems says that in order to be a voter, an individual must:

- Be 18 years of age on Election Day with full civil and political rights
- Be registered in the municipality of his/her residence
- Not have been involved in "conduct ... against the interests of the country during the national liberation revolution"
- Not have been convicted of a crime or been rehabilitated
- Not have been convicted of an offense punishable by imprisonment that prohibited the exercise of electoral rights and candidature

When is voter registration?

The electoral law stipulates that voter rolls should be updated on an annual basis during the last quarter of the calendar year. According to Article 25 of Organic Law 16-10, an exceptional review of voter registration is convened by presidential decree within the three months preceding the date of an election. Accordingly, from February 8 to February 22, an opportunity was provided for new registrants or those wanting to change their residence to come forward and update such information.

How many registered voters are there?

Following the voter registry update conducted from February 8 to February 22, 2017, there are now 23,276,550 registered voters, including 956,534 voters abroad. Newly registered voters included 722,771 voters, of which 7,021 are voters abroad.

The number of voters removed from lists reached 528,958, including 30,985 voters abroad, with 54.11 percent men and 45.89 percent women.

What documentation is required for a voter to cast his or her ballot?

On Election Day, voters must show both their national identity card and voter card to be able to cast their ballot.

What is the structure of the government?

Article 1 of the constitution states that Algeria is a “democratic and popular republic.” The government of Algeria has three branches of government:

- The executive branch consists of the president of the republic and the prime minister. The president is elected for a five-year term, renewable once, and leads the Council of Ministers and appoints the prime minister, who in turn, appoints the Council of Ministers.
- The legislative branch consists of the People’s National Assembly, which is the lower house of the Parliament comprised of 462 members, and the Council of the Nation, the upper house comprised of 144 members.
- The judicial branch consists of the Supreme Court and the State Council.

Algeria is divided into 48 *wilayas* or provinces. Each wilaya is headed by a *wali* or governor and has an elected assembly, the Wilaya People’s Assembly. Wilayas are divided into districts or *dairas*, which are in turn divided into 1,541 municipalities. Each municipality has its own deliberative body, the Municipality’s People’s Assembly, which elects its mayor.

Are there reserved seats for women? What is the gender balance within the candidate list?

Organic Law 12-03 stipulates that the number of women on the candidates’ list for the People’s National Assembly shall not be less than the percentages defined below based on the number of seats to be filled in the constituency.

- 20 percent for four seats
- 30 percent for five to 13 seats
- 35 percent for 14 to 31 seats
- 40 percent for 32 or more seats
- 50 percent for seats representing Algerians abroad

Currently, women hold 146 out of 462 seats in the People’s National Assembly, making it the legislative body with the highest women’s representation on a national level in the Middle East and North Africa.

What electoral system will be used in these elections?

For the elected bodies at the state and national levels, Algeria uses a [proportional representation system](#) with a minimum threshold for entry. In the municipal and state council elections, the threshold is seven percent, while for the People's National Assembly it is five percent. The upper house of Parliament, or the Council of the Nation, however, is indirectly elected by the people, with two-thirds of its members elected by and from elected members of the municipal and state councils. According to Article 119 of the constitution, members of the Council of the Nation serve a six-year term, and half of its members must be renewed every three years. The council is comprised of 144 members. Two-thirds – 96 senators, two from each Algerian *wilaya* (province) – are elected by a majority system. The other third – 48 senators, one for each wilaya – are appointed by the president.

What is the legal framework for elections?

The legal framework is defined by the amended constitution of March 6, 2016 and Organic Law 16-10. Additional presidential and executive decrees and ministerial orders complement the primary legal framework.

Who are the main parties running?

One thousand eighty-eight (1,088) lists of candidates have been submitted nationally (1,023) and abroad (65), including 796 lists from political parties, 128 from political alliances and 164 from independent candidates.

Only the National Liberation Front (FLN), the National Democratic Rally (RND), the Rally of Algerian Hope (TAJ) and the alliance between the Movement of Society for Peace (MSP) and Front for Change (FC) have submitted candidate lists in all 52 electoral constituencies. No other parties plan to compete in all constituencies.

Other parties that will compete in at least 30 constituencies include the Front El Moustakbal (FM, 50 candidate lists), the Union of Ennahdha-El Adala-El Bina (UNAE, 49 lists), the People's Movement of Algeria (MPA, 48 lists), the Workers Party (PT, 42 lists), the National Republican Alliance Party (ANR, 38 lists), the Front for Socialist Forces (FFS, 35 lists), the National Algerian Front (FNA, 34 lists), and El Islah (32 lists).

In the 2012 legislative election, the FLN, which is led by President Bouteflika, won 208 seats in the People's National Assembly and formed a government with the RND, which won 68 seats. An alliance comprised of three Islamist parties – MSP, Movement El Islah, and Ennahdha – won 49 seats.

How many electoral constituencies have been established?

The People's National Assembly is composed of 462 seats allocated proportionally to the 48 multi-member constituencies corresponding to the provinces or *wilayas*. One seat is allocated per each 80,000 inhabitants with a minimum of four seats in each constituency using the largest remainder system. For overseas constituencies, four zones have been created: zone 1 (northern France); zone 2 (southern France); zone 3 (Middle East, North Africa, Africa, Asia-Oceania); and zone 4 (the Americas and the rest of Europe).

What is the election management body? What are its powers?

Election management duties are shared between several entities in Algeria. The Ministry of Interior and Local Authorities is the primary body in charge of managing elections. It maintains the database for the voter registry and is in charge of overseeing voting operations in the *wilayas*. Each wilaya also has a local election commission reporting to the Interior Ministry that manages procedures during the electoral cycle. The names of the members of these provincial commissions were made public through a ministerial order on February 7, 2017.

An independent electoral commission was also recently created per Article 194 of the [constitution](#). President Bouteflika [issued a decree](#) in August 2016 identifying the roles, responsibilities, and composition of the High Independent Commission for Election Oversight, or *Haute Instance Indépendante pour la Surveillance des Élections* (HIISE). The decree was followed by another executive order [appointing](#) the 410 members of the commission, who are divided evenly between judges and non-partisan, unelected civil society figures. Over the next five years, the HIISE will oversee the electoral process for local, national, and presidential elections, as well as any referenda and will provide recommendations for improvement. The HIISE is also responsible for receiving any complaints from voters and candidates and referring them to the appropriate authorities.

When does the electoral campaign start?

The election campaign will run from April 9 to 30. A total of 4,734 public meeting spaces have been reserved across the country for campaigning, an increase of 388 spaces compared to the 2012 legislative elections. Pre-determined public spaces are reserved for campaign posters and awarded equitably based on the representation of the political party or list in the parliament. The law prohibits campaigning in places of worship, public institutions and schools.

What are the rules on campaign finance?

Electoral campaigns are funded through the contribution of political parties, state finances and/or candidates' income. Foreign funding to political parties is prohibited.

Articles 194 and 195 of Organic Law 16-10 stipulate that election campaign expenses for each list of candidates may not exceed 1,500,000 Algerian Dinar (approximately 13,300 USD) per candidate. Additionally, lists that received at least 20 percent of the vote may get reimbursed up to 25 percent of the expenses incurred and up to the authorized ceiling mentioned above. Expense reimbursements can only be made after the election results have been announced by the Constitutional Council.

It is mandatory for each candidate on a party's list to open a campaign account that provides comprehensive details and documentation related to incurred expenses. An accountant or an auditor must present the account to the Constitutional Council.

How will media cover the elections?

Article 177 of Organic Law 16-10 guarantees equitable access to national media for each candidate running in the legislative elections.

The airtime allocation process for political party candidates and independents in the media took place on April 5 through a draw that was held in the presence of representatives of political parties and lists, media and the High Independent Commission for Election Oversight.

How many polling places are set up on Election Day?

Following the annual revision of voters' lists, 299 additional polling centers were set up, bringing the overall total to 12,089 centers, in addition to the creation of 2,050 polling stations for the reception of new registrants and relocated families. Within those centers, the total number of polling stations will be 52,273. The Ministry of Interior has instructed *walis* to register up to 500 voters in each polling station.

Who works in a polling station? What are their duties?

Executive Decree 17-23 stipulates the rules regarding polling station operations. Each polling station shall consist of five full members and two alternate members. The full members should be composed of a president, vice president, secretary and two assessors. The list of members of the polling station is posted on Election Day in the polling station.

The president of the polling station is required to make the necessary arrangements for the good conduct of the voting process. In the event of disruption by a voter, the president is in charge of drawing up a report to be included in the polling station statements.

The vice president shall assist the president in all voting operations, including stamping voter's cards and soaking the voter's left index finger with indelible ink (right index if it is a proxy vote).

The secretary of the polling station is in charge of verifying the voter's identity and matching it on the voter list and handing over the ballot paper and envelope to the voter. The secretary is also in charge in keeping a count of the number of voters at all times.

The first assessor is responsible for maintaining crowd control and ensuring grouping does not occur within the station. The second assessor assists the vice president in conducting his/her duties.

What are the voting procedures on Election Day?

Polling stations will be open from 8:00 a.m. until 7:00 p.m. according to Organic Law 16-10. In exceptional cases, the opening and closing time of some polling stations can be altered to facilitate voters' right to vote. Only a governor can issue such a decree following authorization from the minister of interior and local government. In constituencies where the population is spread out and where polling stations are not easily accessible, polling stations can open three days early through the same legal procedures.

Upon entering the polling station, the voter will provide his/her national identity card and voter cards to a polling station staff member. After confirmation that the voter's name appears on the registry, the voter will then take an envelope and a ballot, head to the polling booth, make his/her selection and put the ballot in the envelope.

The president of the polling station will then ensure that the voter only has one envelope and will authorize him/her to insert the envelope into the ballot box. Using indelible ink, all voters shall affix the imprint of their left index finger next to their signature on the voter register. The voter's card will be stamped indicating the voting date.

In the absence of a voter card, every voter whose name appears on the voters' list is allowed to vote by presenting a national identity card or any other official document proving his/her identity.

Is out-of-country voting allowed?

Out-of-country voting is allowed for the legislative elections. In order to participate, out-of-country voters must be registered and hold a valid voter card and a national ID card or passport. Based on Article 16 of Organic Law 16-10, an electoral administrative commission is created for each diplomatic or consular representation and comprised of four members. Voting abroad can take place up to five days prior to Election Day.

How will voters with disabilities cast their ballots?

Algeria signed and ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). Under the CRPD, Article 29 stipulates that the state protects "the right of persons with disabilities to vote by secret ballot in elections and public referendums" and requires that "voting procedures, facilities and materials are appropriate, accessible and easy to understand and use."

Organic Law 16-10 states that any voter with a disability preventing him/her to physically insert the envelope in the ballot box can be assisted by a voter of his/her choice. No reference is made to other forms of disabilities.

Where is voting, counting and tabulation held?

According to Article 48 of Organic Law 16-10, the vote count begins immediately after voting hours end on Election Day. It must be public and take place in the polling station. Vote counting is controlled by scrutinizers, under the watch of the polling station officials. Scrutinizers are designated by polling station officials from among registered voters, in the presence of candidate representatives. Once vote counting operations end, scrutinizers submit signed vote tally cards to the president of the polling station, in addition to ballots whose validity are in question. Results are recorded on the official record of the polling station, signed by the polling station officials, announced by the president of the polling station and then posted publicly at the polling station. A stamped copy of the results is sent to the High Independent Commission for Election Oversight. Ballot papers must be kept in sealed bags, which clearly identify their origin until the end of the dispute and appeal periods and the final proclamation of election results.

Who will observe during Election Day? How can they get accreditation?

Political party agents and candidate agents will observe the voting at polling stations on Election Day. The 2017 legislative elections will also be observed by international and domestic observers who received invitations from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The High Independent Commission for Election Oversight (HIISE) is in charge of approving the accreditation request. The HIISE's chairman, Abdelwahab Derbal, stated the institution's readiness to approve approximately 300 international observers. The League of Arab States, European Union and Organisation for Islamic Cooperation plan on sending observation missions.

How will election disputes be adjudicated?

According to Organic Law 16-10, each candidate has the right to challenge the regularity of voting through an application filed with the Constitutional Council within 48 hours following the announcement of the election results. The Constitutional Council notifies the candidate whose election is contested to produce written comments within a period of four days from the date of notification. After this deadline, the Constitutional Council decides within three days whether to cancel the result or maintain it and duly update the election records. The decision should be provided to the minister of interior and the president of the People's National Assembly.

Resources

- [Constitution of the Republic of Algeria](#) (French)
- [Executive Decree 17-58 on Technical Characteristics of the Ballot Paper to be used during the May 2017 Elections](#) (French)
- [Ministry of Interior](#) (French)
- [Official Journal of the Republic of Algeria](#) (Arabic)
- [Organic Law 16-10 on Electoral System](#) (French)