

THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN PROMOTING DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN NORTH AFRICA: CASE STUDY OF ALGERIA

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Abstract: The subject of this paper is women's involvement in promoting democratic and human rights in North Africa, particularly Algeria. It is specifically concerned with understanding how Algerian women have engaged in democratization processes and promoting and defending human rights. The case and analysis give a particular focus to the Algerian Family Code as a legal document that has helped women's subjugation, especially in legislation, the political realm, and civil society. To elaborate on these dynamics, this paper aims at analyzing legislative effects on women's status, which became a point of interest among Algerian women themselves. Employing a qualitative method, the research was conducted through interviews between 2008 and 2009 among men and women of Kabylia origin. The interviews were coded concerning emergent themes of feminist movements, social media impact, and different sociopolitical ideologies categorized under the Arab political and social movements. Algeria was selected as a case study because of its importance for the region as well as the world.

Keywords: *Algeria, Women's Rights, Democratization, Algerian Family Code.*

Article Category: Political Science

Date of Submission: 01.10.2024

Date of Acceptance: 20.12.2024

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KUZEY AFRIKA'DA DEMOKRASİ VE İNSAN HAKLARININ GELİŞTİRİLMESİNDE KADINLARIN ROLÜ: CEZAYİR ÖRNEĞİ

Özet: Bu makalenin konusu, Kuzey Afrika'da, özellikle Cezayir'de, kadınların demokrasi ve insan haklarının geliştirilmesindeki rolüdür. Bu bağlamda, çalışma, özellikle Cezayirli kadınların demokratikleşme süreçlerine ve insan haklarının teşviki ve savunulmasına nasıl katıldıklarını anlamaya odaklanmaktadır. Çalışma, Cezayir Aile Yasası'na özel bir vurgu yaparak, bu yasanın, özellikle yasama, siyasi alan ve sivil toplumda kadınların baskı altına alınmalarını nasıl görünür kıldığını analiz etmektedir. Bu dinamikleri detaylandırmak amacıyla, bu makale, kadınların statüsü üzerindeki yasal etkileri incelemeyi hedeflemektedir; bu da Cezayirli kadınlar arasında bir ilgi noktası haline gelmiştir. Nitel araştırma yöntemi kullanılarak, 2008 ve 2009 yılları arasında Kabiliye kökenli erkekler ve kadınlar arasında yapılan görüşmelerle araştırma gerçekleştirilmiştir. Görüşmeler, Arap siyasi ve sosyal hareketleri altında kategorize edilen feminist hareketler, sosyal medyanın etkisi ve farklı sosyo-politik ideolojiler gibi ortaya çıkan temalara göre kodlanmıştır. Cezayir hem bölge hem de dünya için taşıdığı önem nedeniyle bir vaka çalışması olarak seçilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Cezayir, Kadın Hakları, Demokratikleşme, Cezayir Aile Yasası.*

Introduction

In the vibrant streets of Algiers and the vast expanses of the Sahara, a silent but formidable force is shaping the destiny of Algeria: the women who form more than half of the country's population. Though their presence may be great, they often speak in low voices in the chambers of power. Picture a country where resistance joins resilience, Algerian women - against all odds- become builders of the future. During the process of examining, the function they perform in guiding the development of democracy and human rights, their stories transform into the unspoken stories of a country that intends to recreate identity.²

In Algeria, women, largely unnoticed, are the heroines of a path to a fair and just society. The picture of women in present politics and human rights in Algeria can be seen through a historical prism. The fight for freedom from French colonialism which had its culmination in 1962 was characterized not only by the common desire for independence but also by the critical participation of Algerian women in the process. These women, often relegated to the sidelines of historical narratives, were catalysts in the fight for liberation, challenging traditional gender roles with unyielding determination.³ Upon independence, the visions of Algerian women for an equal and just society were fully deferred. In fact, "*their voluntarily involvement within the war, a patriarchal domain, in a sense meant an emancipation from their assigned traditional roles*".⁴

The Algerian society is an ancient patriarchy. For a long time, it was the norm to keep women in the background of government affairs and civic participation.⁵ Now, Algeria is at the junction of where history meets the current times. The steadfastness and perseverance of

² Cherifa Bouatta (2020), "Are Algerian Women Full Citizens?", in Maurice Blanc & Julia Droeber & Tom Storrie (eds.) *Citizenship and Religion: A Fundamental Challenge for Democracy*, Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 75-96.

³ Mounira Charrad (2001), *States and Women's Rights: The Making of Postcolonial Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco*, Berkeley: University of California Press.

⁴ Selçuk Şentürk (2023), "Decentering Western Feminism and Manly Nationalism", *İmgelem*, Vol. 7, no: 13, pp. 391-408.

⁵ Valentine M. Moghadam (2003), *Modernizing Women: Gender and Social Change in the Middle East*, Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Algerian women, which was born during the decades of fights, are seen nowadays with absolute transparency. However, the legacy of history thunderingly obliges people to scrutinize which narrations, be they empowering or suppressing, intertwine with the ongoing democratic and human rights situations in Algeria. Not only did women of history face limitations and present-day problems, but they became key players in the democratization and protection process for human rights.

This paper underscores the historical background, culture, and strength of Algerian women. This is why, it is important to identify it to properly consider their valuable work as members of the democracy and human rights movements in Algeria. Algeria's various historical events, including those that mark the struggle for independence, have created a kaleidoscope where women provide a critical role as forces of change. Women, even though they face historical disadvantages and current issues, continue playing their pivotal part in democracy building and human rights protection. This research contends that understanding the nuanced interplay between historical legacies, societal expectations, and the indomitable spirit of Algerian women is imperative for recognizing their instrumental contributions to the ongoing evolution of democracy and human rights in Algeria.

Existing literature on women's roles in Algerian politics, society, and activism often emphasizes the complex interplay between historical, cultural, and socio-political factors that shape women's experiences and opportunities in the country. The experts like the sociologist Nira Yuval-Davis and the Algerian journalist Salima Ghezali have put forward marvelous achievements by Algerian women in different domains of education, employment, and political life notwithstanding the persistent existence of the patriarchal order, legal limitations, and social taboos such as violence against women, gender pay gap, and women's unpaid care work. Besides, scholars like Nadia Marzouki and Mounia Ben Hamou have studied numerous methods of surmounting the imposed prejudice among women, including those of molding public awareness, agitation, and representation in government institutions.

In recent decades, women have been emerging as strong pushing forces for democracy and human rights in Algeria. This research will rely on intersectionality feminist theory to examine the parts that women play in supporting democracy and human rights in Algeria. As such, intersectional feminism would be most appropriate for this topic because it considers how various identity categories, including gender, race, economic status, and religion, intersect to influence women's experiences in a multifaceted way. Because women in Algeria are discriminated against for both their gender and the socio-cultural-political circumstances governing the nation, this theory offers an adequate ground for explaining such trends. By employing the intersectional feminist theory, the researcher will be able to study how these multiple individual characteristics affect women in their endeavors to engage in political space, their strategies for surmounting the barriers that are imposed on them, and the difficulties they encounter in the fight for democracy and human rights. This approach will help lay a foundation for a more complex understanding of how the systemic issues affect women's roles in Algeria and will provide the researchers with more profound insights into the consequences of gendered prejudices across the region. To illustrate the case study of Algeria will show how women's activism is influenced by the interrelated social, cultural, and political factors matrices.

Intersectional feminist theory, which seeks to establish how multiple social categories work together in social, political, and economic relations, will be useful in this consideration. But the key aspect here which should not be forgotten is that Algerian women may have different ways of perceiving and therefore queering aspects of intersectional feminist theory or may simply engage the theory in ways not fully envisaged by its purveyors. This indicates that there is a need to have a critical contextual understanding of the feminist activism in Algeria and at the same time recognize the theoretical framework being offered by intersectional feminism. The next step for the researchers is to pinpoint elements of their activism that may need more diverse theories. The social movement theory also explores the place of Algerian

women in democracy and human rights activism. The theory suggests interpreting the movement structure and the tension among the sides if it is used in an Algerian context. The paper aims to demonstrate the impact of governmental policies on women's rights activities in Algeria, as well as the influence of women on policy-making processes related to democracy and human rights. Besides, it assesses the impact of these activities on women's position in Algeria.

Finally, this paper aims to discuss the prospects for women's rights in Algeria, the main achievements in realizing them and the challenges that remain. To compile information for this paper, interviews were carried out with some prominent female activists and civil society actors in the Algerian women's movement. Also, published and unpublished materials from universities and the United Nations (UN) were also used for secondary information collection. This paper has especially concentrated on exploring women within the context of democracy and human rights in North Africa with a special reference to Algeria. It starts with an outline of the historical background of women's organizations and their struggle in the Algerian context. It further explores the extent of the image that women have actively campaigned for political rights and how the civil war influenced these activities. Several political upturns in the Middle East hastened in various countries within the region in recent years. All these changes have resulted in attempts at restructuring governments and societies, and women were highly vulnerable. Therefore, women in these countries have taken the advocacy for democracy and human rights with an eye on changing the position of women in such countries.⁶

1. Methodology

The following is the mixed case study on women of Algeria, where both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies and approaches will be conducted including interviews,

⁶ Valentine M. Moghadam (2020), "Gender Regimes in the Middle East and North Africa: The Power of Feminist Movements", *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society*, Vol. 27, no: 3, pp. 467-485.

surveys, and data collected. To fill the gap in the experiences of women activists, politicians, and civil society members, in the promotion of democracy and human rights, this study will involve interviews with key actors among them being women activists, politicians, and members of civil society organizations. It will be through the semi-structured interviews that the research will have the flexibility to uncover deeper issues. A set of questionnaires will also be used to obtain more general quantitative data concerning women's politicization and activism; measuring sentiments, actions, and impediments. There will be a use of thematic analysis to uncover challenges and success factors of the services and descriptive analysis to examine the correlation and trends of the services. Further, data from academic papers as well as reports and news articles will serve to triangulate results. Altogether, such concerns as cultural prejudice and possible preferences when observing women will help overcome such problems and guarantee sound and objective interpretations of women's functions in Algeria and their participation in social and political processes.

2. Women's Activism in Pre- and Post-Arab Spring Periods

2.1. The Role of Women in Algerian Society during the Arab Spring

The level and intensity of women's engagement in activism in Algeria are directly connected to their societal role. While male contributions to the resistance movement and the current post-conflict reconstruction era have often overshadowed it, the role of women in Algeria has been significant. Women played a part in the fight for independence against France, and twenty years after gaining independence, it was their self-organized response to repression that led to the annulment of the 1992 elections.⁷ The recent ten-year period of severe civil conflict has witnessed the establishment of numerous women's associations such as the Association of Algerian Muslim Women (AFMA). Founded in 1947, the AFMA continued its efforts during the civil conflict to advocate for women's rights and gender equality, particularly in the areas

⁷ Nedjib Sidi Moussa (2016), "Algerian Feminism and the Long Struggle for Women's Equality", *The Conversation*, 04.10.2016, Date of Accession: 10.09.2024 from <https://theconversation.com/algerian-feminism-and-the-long-struggle-for-womens-equality-65130>.

of education, employment, and political participation.⁸ Some of these associations coincide with those formed during the post-independence era, which aimed to accomplish the socio-political and economic objectives that the ruling party had failed to achieve. Others are newly created, with local or specific aims to bring peace and rehabilitate society, placing a special focus on healing the hardships of the past decade taking the example of the SOS Femmes en Détresse (Women in Distress). Founded in the early 2000s, this organization provides legal and financial assistance to women facing domestic violence and other social challenges. It aims to support women who have been marginalized or affected by the socio-economic impacts of the civil conflict, helping them regain stability and autonomy.

To comprehend participation and activism of women, it is important to consider Algerian history and the evolution of women's rights from the pre-independence era to the post-independence period. During the pre-independence era, Algerian women were engaged in both the nationalist movement to free the country from colonial domination and an early feminist movement to improve their position in society. These movements were diverse and often conflicting because of the French assimilation policy, which imposed French culture and laws on Muslim society. The "*Code de l'Indigénat*"⁹ enacted in 1881 did not apply to women, making them the only segment of Algerian society exempt from laws designed to degrade and discriminate. This left woman feeling isolated in their struggle against the colonial regime and placed a strong emphasis on re-Islamization to eradicate what was perceived as immoral and uncultured attitudes and behaviors from society.¹⁰ This massive influx and Muslim integration into French-ruled urban sectors created a new class of exploited individuals, often employed in underpaid and underclass domestic service. It also brought them into more frequent contact

⁸ Djamila Hanafi (2016), "The Association of Algerian Muslim Ulama and Women", *Dirassat*, Vol. 19, no: 19, Article 10, pp. 127-136.

⁹ The Code de l'Indigénat, enacted in 1881, was a set of discriminatory laws that established a legal regime of exception for the indigenous populations in French colonies, particularly in Algeria. However, it did not apply to women, making them the only segment of Algerian society exempt from these degrading and discriminatory laws.

¹⁰ Sonia Laïssaoui, "Code de l'Indigénat : Textes de Loi pour les Inégalités de Droit", Date of Accession: 10.09.2024 from <https://www.asjp.cerist.dz/en/downArticle/77/3/2/146662>.

with French women and, on certain issues, even directly with the French administration. This was a situation of dual and asymmetrical colonization of Algerian women by both Algerian men and French society.¹¹

These experiences of Algerian women during a time of social flux and the subsequent ideological construction of their experiences are the foundations for nationalist and feminist praxis to the present day. The departure of men to work in colonial industries or labor recruitment in France often led to the breakup of relationships and families, with an overall negative impact on men and more severely on women and children. Women in the colonized and exploited areas were always subject to the vicissitudes of patriarchal societies in this context, *“Women’s bodies became central discourse to the insurgents, massive veiling was imposed, massacres and assassinations were committed, and women were abducted and used as servants and sex slaves by Jihadist groups”*.¹² But in the new neo-colonial context, many found themselves in situations of widows or de facto detachments from their husbands and families. Economic necessity drove large numbers of these women into the colonized cities to seek work or to receive family allotments from male relatives. French colonization ushered in a system of capitalism that brought Algerian men to work as cheap labor in the colonized areas or to immigrate to France. French male workers were posted in rural and working areas, which often led to one-sided polygamous relationships with Algerian women and stagnant, thinned veils of traditional Islamic sanction. In this sense, French male workers in Algeria maintained polygamous relationships with Algerian women most of the time.

This phenomenon was further compounded by the economic factor brought about by colonization which had the effect of reducing the strength of Islamic culture. When the Algerian men searched for employment, women were left to ensure the running of homes

¹¹ Imene Bouguesri (2021), “Algerian Working Women’s Position Between Social Dynamics and Culture: A Case Study of Married Female Breadwinners”, Ph.D. dissertation, Abdelhamid Ibn Badis University of Mostaganem, Algeria, Date of Accession: 10.09.2024 from http://e-biblio.univ-mosta.dz/bitstream/handle/123456789/23012/doctorat_thesis.pdf?sequence=1.

¹² Nacima Ourahmoune & Hounaida El Jurdi (2023), “The March for Gender Equality of Algerian Women: The Struggle for Spatial and Historical Recognition”, *Gender, Work & Organization*, Vol. 31, no: 3, pp. 1012-1030.

which altered their roles in the home and society, therefore there was an interplay between traditional society culture and colonialism. Added to that, economic and technological development, which affected transportation and education, altered family structure and weakened the traditional means of subsistence for Algerian men taking an example in cash cropping, small farming, or emigration to find wage labor were phases of development that altered the dislocation of thousands of families. The loss of male lives in both world wars also led to an increase in female-headed households. Although the independence movement was the catalyst for changes in the legal status of Algerian women, they have always been active participants in the resistance due to the specific nature of Algerian society. They had to confront issues that were not faced by most French women in metropolitan France.

The war of national liberation was fought not only against the French colonial presence but also to overthrow the traditional Arab-Islamic feudal society and the system of values and customs it engendered. Algerian women from all social strata and ethnic groups had an acute understanding of the nature of the oppressions they suffered. Overt discrimination of Algerian women was linked with the exploitation and oppression of the Algerian nation. Throughout recent history, women in Muslim societies have played a key role in improving daily life. Although limited concerning men, women have always worked to open the doors of knowledge and moral progress. Algerian women have been inventors, reformers, and educators in nearly every century since the early Muslim period. Their role in the roots of the Arab Spring is not accidental but reflects in part the collective experience of their resistance that stems from an established and respected female freedom-seeking tradition. Women have been inspired, among other reasons, by their past social, political, and literary leaders. They understand that to be equal to the path their foremothers forged and to achieve progress, they will need education, the rule of law, internal democracy, accountability, a government that would guarantee their civil and economic rights, and a state that reflects their demands by being inclusive of all its people. Women will continue to perform a lead role in the *“cradle of*

Arabic civilization” and in all countries seeking progress for themselves and their children within the framework of their national civil society and the broader human rights framework.

The events of the Arab Spring have given an unprecedented voice to the people of the Arab world, particularly those in Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Syria, Tunisia, and Yemen. Masses of women have left the relative safety of their homes and neighborhoods, risked beatings, sexual harassment, forced marriage, and detention, and subjected themselves to diverse and serious assaults to raise their muffled grievances against corruption, unemployment, and repression. The Arab Spring has garnered and disseminated their profound demands for equality, freedom, dignity, better schools, access to modern technology, and more for themselves and their children. This visible display of dissatisfaction has attracted the attention of the outside world. While much of the global focus has been on the role of Islamist groups and their leaders, the critical, facilitating part played by Arab women in the groundswell for progress in Algerian society and in the 2011 Arab Spring pressures has been minimally recognized.

2.2. Activism and Mobilization

The role of women in the liberation struggle in Algeria was immense and both politically and militarily active, in Algeria and other countries. This engagement played a vital role in the disintegration of colonialism to build a new power structure in the newly independent state contributing factors to adopt new reforms for the enhancement of women’s position. Women were engaged in participation in the formation of national bodies, associations and organizations of women aimed at developing communal identity and fighting for their rights at the international level. After the achievement of independence, their social-economic liberation became relevant when education and employment prospects changed women’s standing in society. Today women can work in various sectors male-dominated or not and the new face of economically empowered females is entrepreneurship. However, they have a

problem when it comes to being given leadership positions because of the restrictions posed by the international market and policies while their role in business and national progress is paramount.

It is worth mentioning that women challenged cultural and societal norms, using their voices not only to act but also to lead their country in the Civil War that led to independence from France. Since then, women have been working to sustain and strengthen their roles as leaders in society, a vital credibility in this most recent political, social, and civil crisis. In the Arab world, Algeria is among the countries that have actively endorsed gender equality while being engaged in social, educational, and health programs and the participation of women in national development. Algerian women have actively participated in social developments, political events, and social policies established to lead positive social change. Women were recognized, during the armed struggle, as caretakers, educators, medical workers, and in many different positions. Their neighborliness was recognized and is a part of the governmental programs that have been active even today.

2.3. Obstacles Confronting Women Activists

An attack on an ordered system is unloaded against women activists. It is an argument of sapping the very foundation of Algerian society by removing the women's role from the private sphere and thus defeating the purpose of the women's rights movement. With a close link between political events and the image of Algeria as a nation, the perceived threat to Algerian identity and masculinity through the role of women in the public sphere magnifies the social constraints which women activists are trying to affect.

Finally, the defamation of women's rights movements as a Western crusade for feminism closes off channels of political discussion and often creates an atmosphere of harassment or intimidation against women activists, particularly those connected with NGOs funded by Western organizations. The family as an ordered system explains the attitudes of men and

women. The attitudes held by the family are inextricably linked to the standard of living. Thus, the Algerian family operates by tradition and retains a lot of its pre-colonial attitudes and values. Nonetheless, the most important attitudes held by the family are those concerning men's relationship with the outside world and their relationship with the family. It is here that Bennabib's writings are most relevant. Despite being written nearly a century afterwards, they have a lot of relevance to Algeria's colonial and post-colonial periods. Because these rules of conduct are determined within the family by the men, they carry the force of collective power and tradition. Consequently, when women advocate for women's rights, they are seen as attacking that power and tradition. Many Algerians, male and female, have internalized these attitudes, which greatly exacerbates the difficulties facing women activists. In turn, the label of defiance pinned on women wishing to promote gender-egalitarian policies or to challenge Malek Bennabi referred to the trend of events in history as a succession of ideas which alternate between periods of ascent and descent.

2.4. Accomplishments and Impact of Women's Activism

Women activists have made a measurable impact on their society over the past two decades, even though they faced severe obstacles that limited their participation. Through media outlets and women's organizations, activists were able to educate Algerian society about women's rights under the Family Code. They mobilized a network of supporters and informed women of their rights, utilizing education to organize mass protests against oppressive legislation. In 1989, the government passed the Family Code, which eradicated some of the most discriminatory laws against women, serving as a major victory for women activists. These laws would never have been changed without the persistent pressure applied by women's organizations and their ability to mobilize support. The victory of altering the Family Code gave women activists confidence that they could effect change in their society, no matter how difficult the obstacles may be. It also led to a more lenient interpretation of Sharia law in Algerian courts, allowing women to retain custody of their children and keep

their homes after divorce.

Women activists campaigned against Algeria's growing Islamic fundamentalism throughout the 1990s, which was a reaction to economic insecurity and massive repression. The Islamists' vision of creating an Islamic state and society ran counter to the ideals of many Algerian women and even withstood an attempt by the "*Groupe de Recherche sur la Condition Féminine to dialogue with Islamist women*". The Islamists overall were not receptive to women activists, and both verbally and physically assaulted them, claiming that women's organizations were tools of Westernization and that feminism was a manipulation of the West to weaken Muslim societies. The most appalling actions were a series of assassinations and mass rapes of women that continued until the end of the decade. Despite the lack of understanding and support for their cause, women activists were one of the few groups that openly and consistently challenged the Islamist movement.

3. Women's Activism after the Arab Spring

3.1. Changes in Political Landscape

In the aftermath of the Arab Spring, Algeria experienced significant changes in its political landscape, particularly about women's activism. The lifting of the state of emergency in 2011 provided an opportunity for greater political participation, and women's groups seized this moment to advocate for their rights and push for gender equality. As a result, there was a noticeable increase in the visibility and influence of women in the political sphere. Women's organizations and activists became more assertive in their demands for increased representation in decision-making processes and for the implementation of policies that address their specific needs. The changing political landscape also witnessed the emergence of new alliances and coalitions among different women's groups, as well as collaborations with other civil society organizations. These partnerships proved to be crucial in amplifying women's voices and in effectively challenging traditional power structures. Furthermore, the

shift in political dynamics created opportunities for women to engage in grassroots mobilization, public demonstrations, and other forms of collective activism. The changing political landscape in Algeria following the Arab Spring provided a platform for women to assert their rights and actively participate in shaping the country's future. For instance, *“Women's participation in Algerian politics cannot be improved through laws alone. It will require a substantial political process, and ongoing societal work to change negative stereotypes about women.”*¹³

Algeria was not immune to the phenomenon which initiated at the end of 2010 and is widely referred to as the Arab Spring. However, unlike some of the neighboring countries, Algeria did not undergo a revolutionary process due to the events of the Arab Spring, at the same time, the changes that occurred in political relations in the aftermath of the Arab Spring had a remarkable impact on the activation of the female population. Another major shift that was realized in the political arena was in the participation of women in the political systems. In late 2010, similar to many other nations in the Arab world, the nation of Algeria embraced and began experiencing the effects of the Arab Spring movement as women's activism in the country came to the forefront and gained new impetus. During this period, the women increase their participation in protests, political rallies, and civil society organizations in advocating for democratization and social justice. Due to the calls for change and new activism, the Algerian authorities began to adopt legislative changes to strengthen women's political activities.

In 2012, Algeria adopted this code of regulation on political parties that the political parties had to ensure that there was a minimum of women in the candidates they produced for the parliamentary seats that had been set aside for the election. Such legislative amendment in amplification of women representative in the National People's Assembly has made Algeria to rank among the top formulated nations in the Arab world about the proportion of women in

¹³ Ahmed Marwane (2021), “Women and Politics in Algeria: One Step Forward, Two Steps Back”, The Washington Institute, 15.09.2021, Date of Accession: 26.10.2024 from <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/women-and-politics-algeria-one-step-forward-two-steps-back>.

parliament. It also appeared that the emergence of women in political and public fields changed the views of Algerian society on their position progressively. Women played an energetic role in the Arab Spring protests and following political activities for change, which compelled society to alter its perception of women's leadership and engagement in politics. This change has been very useful in persuading more women to seek positions within the political realm, thereby fostering a more inclusive political environment.

Nonetheless, as it will be discussed throughout this research, there are still key impediments to Algerian women's political participation. Patriarchal attitudes and mentalities, cultures, and politics still pose a significant challenge to women's equality in the contemporary world. Moreover, while there has been passage of legislations that espouse the core principles of women's empowerment, the practical application of these laws remains worrisome in most cases since they are often compromised. Several civil society organizations and grassroots movements have also supported women's activism and ensured that the rights of women are fought for the continuation of political reforms. These organizations have been useful in creating awareness, offering training and encouragement to women candidates as well as initiating changes to the policies in a bid to improve the plight of women. Women by their efforts have contributed to the continuation of feminism and women's participation in political activities and coming up with the decisions.

3.2. Success Stories and Best Practices of Women's Activism in Algeria

Analyzing women's activism in Algeria, one can conclude that its development with an increase of problems still existing. Judicial and political developments concern changes to the family code that since 2005 improved women's status in such matters as divorce and housing rights, reduced male guardianship and women's ability to pass on citizenship to their children. The fulfillment of higher quotas for women representatives within legislative assemblies also testifies to a strengthening of measures concerning women's political engagement. Further,

Femmes Algériennes Revendiquant leurs Droits (FARD) is another strategy in place to fight gender violence. Social and educational developments are observable as Algerian women record higher pass rates in secondary school mostly in urban areas than men despite the traditional attitudes towards women.¹⁴ They are still being implemented to enhance the share of the labor force, especially women, with paid employment and to narrow the wage gap. Activism through civil society by struggling and survivor-centered, more or less feminist organizations that call against violations of women's rights, demand shifts of laws, and fight violence against women are apparent at the civil and grassroots level and especially, they use social media to mobilize their movement. There are still issues such as society's continuing to give religious rationales to counter liberal legal developments, violence against women, and fundamental bureaucracy and funding hurdles that feminist organizations endure. To deal with these problems, recommendations include encouraging women to attain leadership positions in various governmental organizations and institutions, educating women about their rights through public campaigns, housing policies focusing on women's demands mainly for women in desperate situations, legal knowledge and aware movements for women rights to struggle against prejudices against women.

It is important to note that these successes and difficulties illustrate the constant fight for women's rights in Algeria since legal improvements are constantly counterbalanced by new barriers. The regions of Algeria, in general, and the northeast in particular, have the highest level of violence against women. A guide on where to go for legal aid before the Divorce Question was distributed to 3000 families in poor communities in 2002. The silver medal awarded to the Algerian League for the Defense of Human Rights (LADH), for *“tenacity and sacrifice in defense of the cause of equality and citizenship in Algeria speaks volumes about the spirited contest of how and why a qadi becomes the implementer of his party's policy and*

¹⁴ IEMed (2017), “Violence Against Women in Algeria – Focus on Oran”, 01.04.2017, Date of Accession: 10.09.2024 from <https://www.iemed.org/publication/violence-against-women-in-algeria-focus-on-oran/?lang=fr>.

the interpreter of anachronistic Islamic obligations".¹⁵ For instance, "*Liens de l'Amour: A Story of Love, Trial, and Monopolized Surnames*" discussed how challenging Algerian women's status of political rights' abjection and the threats that weigh over the female vote again involved publicizing another category of private sufferings and the public transliteration of the familiar Western feminism concepts of equality and rights into the Algerian idiom of the universal for de-victimization, to come into their own.

Some of the Algerian women's rights organizations and advocacy groups have played a great role in shaping the fight against violence towards women in Algeria. Feminist movements have vigorously worked for their establishment onto the national platform to fight against patriarchal violence by defining its mechanisms and supporting the victims of abuse. These are organizations that, most of the time operate as a team, and whose goal is to provide the women with safe spaces, legal counsel, and advocacy. Coalitions of women's NGOs have come together to represent victims and turn the spotlight to gender equality. Despite that, their overall goal is to fight gender-based violence and to promote women's rights in Algerian society. In the spring of 1999, the LADH¹⁶ lauded the case of "*Liens de l'Amour*", whereby the principle of sex discrimination was invoked by an Algerian judge to grant women the right to discard surnames associated with their ethnic-confessional community and select their surnames. The association attached great importance to this decision, which they considered a blow to the static and preconceived conception of the person that is imposed upon individuals. The women's movements of Algeria are also more broadly concerned with tackling legal pluralism and its impacts on women's rights, more than simply the issue of violence, as being a second space involves such a double space. Activists have fought for years to overturn the

¹⁵ Khadidja Kelalech (2024), "Women's Rights in Algeria: Women Stand Up Against Femicide", D + C - Development and Cooperation, 16.01.2024, Date of Accession: 10.09.2024 from <https://www.dandc.eu/en/article/after-several-brutal-cases-femicide-many-women-algeria-no-longer-want-put-discrimination>.

¹⁶ Arab.org, "Ligue Algérienne pour la défense des droits de l'homme", 19.07.2017, Date of Accession: 10.09.2024 from <https://arab.org/directory/ligue-algerienne-pour-la-defense-des-droits-de-lhomme/#:~:text=The%20mission%20of%20the%20LADDH,apart%20from%20any%20partisan%20action.>

misuse of “*honor*” to justify acts of violence.

Following these efforts, this has been setting important precedents in the region and contributing to conversations in the region as well as internationally on human rights and gender equality issues. These movements continue to advocate, lawsuit, and take part in public awareness campaigns to foster change in Algeria’s ever-dynamic women’s societal rights. The case of “*Liens de L’Amour*” can be considered a turning point in Algeria’s legal and social situation since it put an end to the tradition of non-punishment and cooperation between the judiciary system and the powers that be in the country for 18 years. Whereas other cases blame structural problems on the immoral and primitive culture of a certain society or refer to some charismatic local personality such as Madame Rachida Dati, this case looked at the urgent challenge of creating the appropriate culture of combating for human rights of equal citizenship and individual freedoms.

Other calls for change included the ones coming from organizations such as the Algerian League for the Defense of Human Rights (LADH), pointing out the need to adjust the practices on the ground toward the values inscribed into the Algerian Constitution and the international treaties signed by the country. It impacts a lot more than legislation; It involves and changes the perception of society to what citizenship includes both legal and positive awareness. The case also concerned the psychological and social consequences of years of war and Apartheid that affected the existence and lives of people and tried to bring changes to building the society with freedom for the rights of individuals. In conclusion, *Liens de L’Amour* case epitomizes the Algerian fight for justice and gender equity, to reform the social justice order of the society and liberally transform the Algerian state that the women’s associations and human rights organizations are trying to achieve.

3.3. Continuation of Women’s Activism

The women of Algeria who have moved beyond the perceptions of legal and ideological

construction of men as privileged in career and marriage selection, doing so with the rights of women are not only reshaping society's perception of women but are transforming themselves as well. Such changes signify a shift that is occurring within society as a whole and introduce into civil sector activism the ability to create considerable political transformative power.¹⁷ The activism women have embraced, especially the female youth, who make up 70 % of the society, represents changes that may open for all Algerians fresh opportunities for practicing solidarity in the processes of rebuilding their society, though it has tensions, contradictions, and radiant moments. Women have remained active and assertive in the liberation struggles within the politico-social context of the Algerian nation-state.

In the course of decades, women strived to change the family code and have aimed at the legal alteration of the personal laws to achieve equality. Although at first women spoke out only to protest the disappearance of loved ones, they later engaged themselves in the struggle to seek answers to the otherwise normal problems in society such as the horrendous civil war that was taking place in the 1990s. Such women as Zohra Drif, who played a vital role in Algeria's struggle for liberation, serve as role models for contemporary female Algerians. Activism has also resulted in policy changes for instance the Family Code of 2005, enhanced protection of women and introduction of quotas that enabled women representation in political institutions in 2012. Speaking about Algeria's laws appears ideal. The Constitution clearly states: "*All citizens are equal before the law. No discrimination shall prevail because of birth, race, or sex*".¹⁸ But the concern for equity and equality in legal status has slowly regressed for more than twenty-two years because of poverty, femicide, domestic and sexual violence, and social inequalities that women endure constantly. These problems stem

¹⁷ Jackson Lebedun (2020), "5 Things to Know About Women's Rights in Algeria", The Borgen Project, 08.12.2020, Date of Accession: 10.09.2024 from <https://borgenproject.org/womens-rights-in-algeria/>.

¹⁸ Kahina Bouagache (2021), "Gender Equality in Algeria Requires an Immediate End to Violence Against Women", Wilson Center, 08.03.2021, Date of Accession: 10.09.2024 from <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/gender-equality-algeria-requires-immediate-end-violence-against-women>.

from cultural norms that give men dominion over women, and shun women into submission to be abused. When women fight for equality and claim their rights it shuts the door for them in economic participation as well as excludes them from social lives, all these deceptions notwithstanding the legal reforms and the revolutionary acts that have been passed in the given societies.

Future vision and direction towards maintaining women's activism in Algeria may be a little far but has every tendency to succeed. Blending with or stemming from accomplishments made, women's organizations and civil society organizations must maintain pressure for radical legal changes and political participation. It is important to highlight that the Arab Spring was significant for the persistence and escalation of women's activism in Algeria. Algeria did not experience the exact kind of revolution as some other countries in the Arab region during the Arab Spring, but the period following the Arab Spring was marked by an active participation of Algerian women in political and societal matters. Being able to speak up and mobilize, the women of Algeria benefit from this newfound confidence in their fight against a patriarchal society and the lasting discrimination it has put into place. This period saw the formation of various women's organizations and other civil society societies that helped in the lobbying for legislation change as well as increased participation in the decision-making process. Algerian women after the Arab awakening had some accomplishments for instance the modification of the Algerian Family code in 2015. This was not an ideal revolutionized code but at least it posed to be a small improvement in offering women better protection. In addition, women take an active part in protests and political campaigns, and this is testimony of the changing society whereby gender issues are being highly acknowledged. The Hirak movement that started in 2019 also provided a chance for women's engagement where women protested for political change free from corruption status again underlining the importance of women for a better future of the country.

However, the women in Algeria still suffer from tremendous hurdles even in the current

society. Patriarchal culture, tradition, and politics constitute a major challenge today. Nonetheless, Algerian women activists have not relented in their fight for a better future. They continue to strive for change with an emphasis on the development of a society that is free of prejudices and discrimination, thus employing the outcome of the Arab Spring to inspire people to call for a greater change. The continuation of women in this case will not only indicate their fighting spirits despite all the hardships they undergone but also elaborate them part of the fight towards addressing democracy, human rights, and social justice in Algeria. Their permanent work proves the closeness of the gender approach to the development of Algerian society as a whole. Despite the small number of senior positions held today, Algerian women are the pioneers of women who are gradually breaking the chains and opening paths to new opportunities to ensure that future generations of women have more freedoms and opportunities than today.

4. Impact of Women's Participation in Promoting Democracy and Human Rights

4.1. Women's Role in Promoting Democracy

There have been both strong contributions and strong challenges, as we would say in Algeria, to women helping to promote democracy in Algeria. Yet, for generations since Algeria's independence in 1962, women have been at the heart of Algeria's political development, even though systemic barriers persist that limit women's participation. The Algerian Constitution guarantees that women have the same rights as men, but low levels of implementation are due to outdated legal frameworks and suffocating social resistance. For example, the Family Code of 1984 in turn, is a key piece of legislation which has all too often reflected a patriarchal reading of Islamic law, constraining women's rights and reinforcing gender inequality. Algeria ratified the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)¹⁹ in 1997 but reserves that prevent full consonance with

¹⁹ Un.org, "CEDAW Country Report – Algeria", Date of Accession: 10.09.2024 from <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/cedaw20/algeria.htm>.

international standards on women's rights. An initial progressive step, the introduction of gender quotas following the Arab Spring saw women's parliamentary representation rise from 8 % before 2011 to 32 % come the moment the quota system was enacted.

Finally, this was out of short-lived progress as recent electoral reforms have rolled back these gains. With the entry into force of the 2021 electoral law, which abolished the gender quota system, female representation fell dramatically, from 145 seats in 2012 to 34 seats (8 percent) in the latest elections.²⁰ More importantly, however, this regression reveals how easily political reforms might unravel, and that there are centuries-old societal attitudes that see women's political participation as derivative. In many cases, the sentiments regarding these attitudes set a precedent of women as unqualified for leadership positions and even outright discourage women from participating in politics. The major obstacle in the way of women in Algeria is the cultural perception of gender roles. The media and political discourse generally reinforce such norms that regard women's public life as inappropriate or shameful and traditional views often paint women's engagement in public life as inappropriate or shameful. Negative pictures of female politicians especially when they challenge the patriarchy contribute to attitudes that women just are not capable of governing. As a result, there is very little that competent women can achieve in matters of public support during elections. The open-list voting system, where voters can choose from party lists of candidates, often favors male candidates, and this puts many women's chances of winning certainly off limits. Despite these setbacks, Algerian women have taken a major role in civil society in promoting the goals of democratic reform and pursuit of gender equality. Notable about the Hirak movement that started in 2019 was its inclusivity: women at the center of protests both local and patriarchal corruption. Protests included women who belonged to different socio-economic backgrounds who joined the protests demanding not just political reforms but gender equality. While they played an important, if minor, role in the movement overall, their

²⁰ *Ibid.*

policy demands frequently encountered peripheral status within the movement, which underscores the difficulties of bringing gender concerns into the national political arena.

4.2. Political Participation

In Algeria, human rights are indicators of democracy that represent the unity, pluralism, and participation of all Algerian men and women while preserving the national identity reinforcing the principles of citizenship and striving for human development for all. Hence, placing human rights and democracy within the heart of the Algerian Constitution was aimed at lifting the symbol of national reconciliation to the rank of rights and duties that guarantees to every individual whether female or male the possibility of existing within a context that respects human rights. In June 1990, a unique political event occurred which could not pass without appropriate assessment and consideration. In the parliamentary elections, women were allowed to vote, for the first time in the history of independent Algeria where the society was mostly rural, and half of the voters came from urban areas (50.03 %).²¹ This marked the start of a process of democratization in Algeria with a particular aspect fighting for the rights of women.

The percentage of votes cast for women was on the rise but at a slow pace as it reached 34.8 % in February 1992 and 35 % in June 1997 against 35 % in June 1990 and 18.33 % in April 1997 bringing the total number to 32 leading to a decrease in the number of seats won.²² Women representatives carried out intense work to defend and promote women while adjusting themselves to the grand council of the nation after experiencing the national consultative council and the national people's assembly and while taking seats allocated for women within the framework of the Constitution.

²¹ Wikipedia, "Women in Algeria", Date of Accession: 26.10.2024 from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women_in_Algeria.

²² Ahmed Marwane (2021), "Women and Politics in Algeria: One Step Forward, Two Steps Back", The Washington Institute, 15.09.2021, Date of Accession: 26.10.2024 from <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/women-and-politics-algeria-one-step-forward-two-steps-back>.

4.3. Advocacy and Activism

As many women's actions are happening under the religious-Muslim umbrella, research on the religious aspect as a source of hindering women's progress (Muslim on Muslim discriminatory practices) and boosting women's advancement is necessary. Only legal prescriptions explained and analyzed thoroughly list the acquired rights and the rights to be acquired in all particular situations, thus providing an overview of the evolution of this fundamental document for the country and the women through the years. Two years of investigation followed where the themes of Advocacy and Activism, Legal and Religious Base, Communications, and their understanding were deeply studied. Women for Development resulted as a natural addition needed to complement the movement's "*life women in particular*". Some of the analyzed movements are not specific and they do not advocate the extension of rights only for women. Therefore, for an eventual extension of the circle of women's organizations, this document is needed to reveal in detail the women's involvement in the feminist struggle as women in a Muslim country for the period (1991-2011), where these movements and organizations acquired legitimacy.

4.4. Leadership and Decision-Making

In preventing the implementation of all the existing tools to ensure preferential access of women to all decision-making bodies, these blockages give the impression that they reflect either will or negligence from male leaders, either of the society, in their will to ensure stable development, including access to absolutely equal power between men and women, to establish a solid, developed, and democratic rule-of-law with respect for human rights, and to fully operate the emancipation and awareness of his society. The problems engendered by the restrictive conception of women's leadership and decision-making power are related to the management of Algerian society, characterized by certain blockages, among which one can list: the predominance of male leadership in all decision-making bodies both in the state and

the party; a lack of understanding of the importance of women's presence in state bodies, since even the recent institutions set up by His Excellency the President of the Republic only have 5 women out of 363 members; the perpetuation of the belief in the inability of women to access power and the acceptance of relegating women to the decision support and decision-making sectors instead of paying, including by the means of numerical parity, a real and significant contribution within decision-making bodies; and finally, the difficulties of combining family and professional life which are always heavier than those of men and which considerably slow down the natural career development of women.

5. Challenges and Opportunities

5.1. Legal and Policy Framework

The holding of free and regular elections allows the people, whether women or men, to appoint their legitimate ruler. Thus, democracy, which is the exercise of power by the people represented by elected officials, is established. In Algeria, women can easily occupy this role, albeit in smaller quantities than men. Although the constitutional and legal texts do not contain specific quotas for women, the latter manage to obtain significant access to this practice of democracy which is an impressive example of their involvement in the political administration of the country. The legal and policy framework relating mainly to the promotion of women's participation in democracy in this important political process is so focused on giving women the necessary tools to guarantee access to the most important of these freedoms, allowing them to fully realize their participation in the development of their country. This legal situation of the democracies of the Algerian woman allows us to draw their role at the level of the two indicators which are universal suffrage and the holding of free and regular elections.

Table 1. Situation of Algerian women²³

Statistic	Year	Value
Population Composition (Women as % of Total)	2021	50.5 %
Economic Participation (Women as % of Labor Force)	2021	19.5 %
Educational Attainment (Women over 25 with Secondary Education)	2021	79.3 %
Political Representation (Women in Parliament)	2021	8.11 %
Literacy Rates (Women vs. Men)	2005	59.6 % vs. 78 %
Gender Inequality Index (Global Ranking)	2021	0.499 (126 th)
Participation in Social Movements	2019-2021	Active in Hirak protests

First of all, the democratic process includes several stages such as access to fundamental freedoms, universal suffrage, and the holding of free and regular elections. From a legal point of view, the Algerian Constitution grants certain fundamental freedoms to all its citizens, while in international texts, women have the same rights as men to all the fundamental rights mentioned in the various United Nations conventions. Data shows that, in Algeria, as in the rest of the world, more than half of the population is made up of women who make a

²³ United Nations (1998), “CEDAW Country Report—Algeria”, 01.09.1998, Date of Accession: 26.10.2024 from <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/cedaw20/algeria.htm>; Feriel Lalami (2017), “Women in Algeria: A Picture of Contrasts”, *Les Cahiers de l’Orient*, 2017/4, pp. 83-90; Seréna Nilsson Rabia, “Women and the Algerian Hirak: Resistance and Negotiation”, Project on Middle East Political Science, Date of Accession: 27.10.2024 from <https://pomeps.org/women-and-the-algerian-hirak-resistance-and-negotiation>.

significant contribution to social, economic, and democratic change, and whose full participation in this process is to be sought. In this study, the legal and policy framework in Algeria has been explored, focusing on identifying the privileged legal tools and the place of these women in the two areas for which the symposium is held: democracy and human rights.²⁴

5.2. Gender Discrimination Laws

The Family Code (FC), which follows the principles of the Maliki School, was changed in July 1984, and the unfair provisions were augmented and intensified, while the minorities received new penalties in the face of new signs of androgynous equality between men and women. The ‘beastling’ of women and their ‘rightlessness’ signified a reversal of a woman’s dignity; they were likened to a minor in a perpetual minority continuously hunted without cease. Essentially, in the succession, the daughters receive only half of what their brothers do; in the marriage law, the woman is a minor, unable to contract and conclude contracts; in her capacity as a wife, she has no right to manage property during the marriage; while polygamy is permitted to the man in question if the first wife agrees, the rules are relaxed and turned into ones that favor the man. In Algeria, the dominance of traditional culture is far from being a reaction to the requirements that the principles provided by the 1989 CEDAW Convention or the Beijing Declaration can be met. It goes without saying that there is a mineral called institutional discrimination against women. For example, this is quite evident in the Constitution which sees a man and his gender as demeaned by the amendment that was made in 2016, the Family Code that continues to uphold discriminated situations. At the moment, no rule in Algeria’s legislation would answer the question of gender inequality or provide a guarantee for women’s rights and equal rights for men and women in general, which, according to the fundamental principles of the country’s national legislation, must be protected and provided. The debate on gender equality, women’s rights, and quotas for

²⁴ Meriem Aissa (2023), “Gender Quotas, Constituency Service, and Women’s Empowerment”, in Francesco Cavatorta & Valeria Resta (eds) *Routledge Handbook on Elections in the Middle East and North Africa*, London: Routledge, pp. 222-234.

political representation often involves the democratization process. A growing number of developing countries have adopted affirmative action policies which require a minimum number of parliamentary seats to be reserved for women. Women's quotas imply an obligation, an incentive, or an encouragement to the government to encourage women's participation in political, social, and economic life and eradicate gender discrimination. Despite the impetus gained by gender quotas in promoting women's political empowerment and advancing their gender rights, gender quotas have led to mixed results. Nonetheless, gender quotas continue to be an important strategy to promote women's participation in political life, especially in emerging democracies like Algeria.²⁵ The political representation of women is necessary to ensure that their rights are promoted and protected, so the effective participation of women in political life is one of the essential conditions for promoting democratic systems. Women's representation in the political decision-making process is essential to achieving the genuine empowerment of women through democratic values. Therefore, in the case of the Empty Quarter (the Arab countries) and many other countries, feminist activists have paid special attention to the issue of women's quotas in all decision-making bodies. This women's presence can be interpreted as an alternative means of promoting women's rights in fields where they are less involved or even absent. The question is whether women's presence can ensure the promotion of women's rights in general.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the indispensable role of Algerian women in promoting democracy and human rights cannot be overstated. As agents of change and champions of equality, Algerian women have been at the forefront of efforts to advance democratic governance, social justice, and human rights within their country. Their resilience, courage, and unwavering commitment to principles of equality and justice have made invaluable contributions to the fabric of Algerian

²⁵ OECD/CAWTAR (2014), *Women in Public Life: Gender, Law and Policy in the Middle East and North Africa*, Paris: OECD Publishing, pp. 125-156.

society, shaping its past, present, and future. Restating the thesis, it is clear that the empowerment and inclusion of women are not only imperative for advancing gender equality but are also intrinsic to the consolidation of democracy and the promotion of human rights in Algeria.

Throughout this case study, we have explored the myriad ways in which Algerian women are involved in promoting democracy and human rights, from their participation in civil society organizations, politics, journalism, and activism to their significant contributions to the struggle for social justice and political reform. Summarizing the main points, we have highlighted the multifaceted roles played by Algerian women in advancing democracy and human rights, drawing upon examples of key figures and movements within the country. Despite facing numerous challenges, including barriers to participation, violence, discrimination, and societal norms, Algerian women continue to defy the odds and push for progress toward a more inclusive and equitable society. Looking toward the future, some promising developments and trends suggest potential advancements in women's roles in Algerian democracy and human rights. As Algeria undergoes political transitions and societal transformations, there is an opportunity to build upon the gains made by women thus far and to further amplify their voices and agency in shaping the nation's future. This may entail reforms to legal frameworks, institutional mechanisms, and societal attitudes to ensure greater gender equality and women's empowerment across all spheres of life. In light of these opportunities, we must heed the call to action and prioritize support for women's rights and empowerment as a cornerstone of its democratic aspirations. This requires concerted efforts by the government, civil society, and international partners to enact policy reforms, allocate resources, and create enabling environments that foster gender equality, protect women's rights, and promote inclusive participation in decision-making processes.

In conclusion, the journey towards democracy and human rights in Algeria is intrinsically linked to the empowerment and inclusion of women. By embracing the leadership and

contributions of Algerian women, the nation can chart a path towards a more just, equitable, and democratic future for all its citizens. The enhancement of the role of the Algerian women shows that radical changes in Algerian society have taken place which opens new possibilities to align new efforts towards the rebuilding of Algerian society. These continuous activities are crucial to shaping the process of democratization and promotion of human rights as well as social justice which are the realities in shaping society. Despite this, Algerian women are determined to open a new world for future generations of women and keep on working and fighting for change. It is time for Algeria to recognize the vital role of women in its democratic journey and to take decisive action to support their rights and agency in shaping the nation's destiny. Nevertheless, the independence achievement has been accompanied by other aspects of Algerian women's lives such as gender role socialization regulation, legal barriers, and politics that hinder their democratic engagement. The relative period following the Arab Spring has revealed directions towards and obstacles to democratic government and gender equity. In the process, the role of women will continue to be crucial in the creation of a better society with concrete attempts at social justice in North Africa. Together with such actions, more contributions from the international community towards the reinforcement of human rights and democracy will prove vital in sustaining improvement. Algeria and the region can nurture more stable, more egalitarian, and more democratic societies for every woman and man to exercise her/his rights and responsibilities in democracy. It is not too far to imagine a future where Algeria and the whole of the Middle Eastern and North African region embrace democracy and respect rights of one's own gender and sexual orientation as many Arab Spring activists were actively fighting for these values. It is because of this that they will be able to call for such a future where democratic values are institutionalized, and human rights are respected resulting in societal justice for equality.

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