

## Testimony for USCIRF

My name is **Nourredine Benzid**. I am a pastor from **Kabylia, Algeria**, born and raised in a Muslim family.

In **June 1993**, I encountered Jesus Christ, and my life was transformed. Through Him, I found salvation and purpose. From that day forward, my faith became central to my life, even though following Christ in Algeria carries a high cost.

In **2004**, I founded the **Spring of Life Church** in **Makouda**, in the province of **Tizi Ouzou**. The church grew despite constant pressure. In **2010**, I was elected **General Secretary of the Algerian Protestant Church Association (EPA)**, a role I held until **2021**.

In **2011**, after I resigned from my position as a high-school teacher in Makouda to serve full-time as a pastor, persecution intensified. From that moment on, intimidation by security forces and administrative authorities never ceased.

Various methods were used to frighten and discourage us. Islamists were sent to threaten me at the doors of the church during worship services, and sometimes at night. Surveillance became constant. Pressure increased year after year.

In **June 2019**, complaints were filed against our church by the Makouda urban planning authorities. In **October 2019**, the local governor ordered the closure of our church. My legal appeal was rejected. Later, in **2023**, the governor filed another complaint, followed in **2024** by a complaint from the **Minister of the Interior**. These cases are still frozen at the **Supreme Court in Algiers**, without any legal resolution.

The situation for Christians in Algeria continues to deteriorate. **Forty-six Protestant churches have been closed** by the government without valid justification. Authorities rely on **Law 03-06 of February 2006**, which effectively criminalizes the Christian faith for Algerians. Under this law, Algerian Christians are treated as criminals for owning a Bible or Christian literature.

The **National Commission for Non-Muslim Religions**, created in 2006 to regulate religious affairs, has **never met** since its creation. It has **never accepted or reviewed our complaints**. Furthermore, the Christian community is **forbidden** from building a church, renting a place for worship, or receiving donations from Christians to support places of worship.

As the **Algerian Protestant Church (EPA)**, we have done everything possible to work legally with the government. We followed procedures, submitted requests, and sought dialogue. The government has consistently refused to listen.

The real issue is clear: the authorities do not want **Algerian Christians**, because we come from a Muslim background. They claim to protect the national identity based on **Article 2 of the Algerian Constitution**, which states that **Islam is the religion of the state**. As a result, Algerian Christians are treated as a threat simply for existing.

Today, Christians in Algeria live under constant pressure: arrest, imprisonment, surveillance, professional exclusion, and permanent security files. Yet despite all of this, believers continue to stand firm in their faith.

I share this testimony not to seek pity, but to **bear witness**, to persecution, to injustice, and to the faithfulness of God even in suffering. Though the cost has been very high, I remain committed to Christ and to the truth of the Gospel.

Thank you for listening.

**Pastor Nourredine Benzid**