



Thousands of Algerians Protest Against Recent Election Results

Thousands of anti-government protestors gathered in the Algerian capital of Algiers to refute the results of the country's election, in which an ally of ousted leader Abdelaziz Bouteflika came to power. Former Prime Minister Abdelmadjid Tebboune won 58% of the vote, but turnout was listed at 40%, as a majority of Algerians boycotted the election. Keen observers have noted that the actual turnout is likely far lower, as there were extraordinarily few voters in major cities such as Algiers. Protestors are calling for the entire political establishment to be removed, and the election boycott was a demonstration of their disgust with the political status quo in Algeria.

Former President Abdelaziz Bouteflika stepped down after losing the support of Algeria's powerful military amid mass anti-government demonstrations, leading to this election. However, Abdelmadjid Tebboune is a close ally of army chief of staff Ahmed Gaid Salah, who supported him during the campaign. Salah was the de facto leader of Algeria after Bouteflika's removal from office, and he is seen as being the driving force behind much of Algeria's policy. Tebboune was Prime Minister of Algeria in 2017, but his tenure lasted only seven months before he fell out with influential businessmen and was dismissed from office. Protestors have demanded the removal of every official linked with the Bouteflika government, and Tebboune was deemed as being too close to his predecessor.

While Tebboune is extremely unpopular with Algeria's electorate, he has promised to take steps to curb the corruption that has long plagued the North African country. Tebboune pledged to identify tax evaders who took money overseas and return the money to Algeria. He also promised to not interfere with any ongoing corruption trials. This is significant because there is a large contingent of Bouteflika loyalists currently involved in trials over corruption. This includes Abdelaziz's brother, Said Bouteflika, who had a great deal of influence over Algeria while his brother was ill.

Protestors have used a strict schedule to demonstrate across the country on every Friday since February. They are demanding "real elections" that are not overseen by the military, or the political elite that have ruled the country since independence from France in 1962. During the elections, protestors overran two polling stations in Algiers, and another one in the region of Kabylie. The protests have been overwhelmingly peaceful, although there were twenty demonstrators arrested for waving a flag in support of Algeria's minority Berber population.

Unlike protests in other countries in the region, Algerians have not yet mobilized to negotiate with the military or ruling government. The protests have been limited to primarily street demonstrations, but have been growing bigger recently, first in rebellion of the election, and now in defiance of Abdelmadjid Tebboune. Moving forward, the protestors have shown no signs of slowing down, and have only been reinvigorated with the election of Tebboune. The demonstrations will likely continue until some of the protestors' demands are met.