



By: TA | AP Brief

Algerians vote in parliamentary elections



Voters in Algeria are casting ballots Thursday in parliamentary elections overshadowed by cost-of-living concerns and bans on candidates challenging the government.

Nearly 25 million voters across Africa's largest country by territory are choosing among 1,235 candidates for 407 seats with five-year terms in the lower house of Parliament.

Turnout is a big concern after voters largely snubbed campaign events. The government declared Thursday a paid national holiday to encourage turnout.

Rather than electoral politics, many people seem more concerned with everyday problems such as purchasing power and the decline of public services against a backdrop of shrinking political, media and union freedoms.

Many soccer-obsessed Algerians also are focused on the **World Cup**, where their national team faces Switzerland in a knockout match early Friday.

The outgoing pro-government majority holds some 300 seats, while the Islamist MSP party is the second largest political force with 64 seats.

Some MSP candidates were among 269 candidates barred from running, which notably included former leaders and activists of the Hirak pro-democracy movement that helped push out long-serving autocratic President **Abdelaziz Bouteflika** in 2019.

The government has increasingly squeezed freedoms under his successor, President **Abdelmadjid Tebboune**, who was reelected to a second term in 2024.

The electoral authority said the rejected candidates were banned because of "links to illicit financial networks" and "suspicious political activities."

Security measures

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Wednesday in front of polling stations in the capital Algiers.

In southern Algeria and Sahara Desert regions, voting was brought forward by 48 hours to allow the nomadic population to cast ballots in boxes transported in off-road vehicles belonging to the administration and escorted by police in Land Rovers.

In the Algerian diaspora, which numbers approximately 854,225 registered voters, particularly in France, home to the largest foreign community, voting took place Saturday and Sunday at various consular offices.

There was high turnout and a "family atmosphere," according to state news agency APS.

The government also moved up dates of end-of-year school exams to free classrooms and teachers, who are usually called upon to staff polling stations in exchange for a daily allowance.

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In a widely viewed video broadcast last week, the head of a political party is seen trying — and failing — to convince a young man to vote.

Parties campaigned anyway. The presidential majority, led by the long-serving FLN party, is urging broad turnout to strengthen Algeria domestically in the face of geopolitical challenges.

The Trotskyist opposition Workers' Party is campaigning for increased pensions and wages and against a mining sector reform favoring

foreign investors.

The head of the Socialist Forces Front, the main party of the democratic movement, is urging the release of political prisoners and freer media and telling voters that boycotting the elections would only serve the government.