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MARIA VOLODINA. THE KABYLE ISSUE IN ALGERIA: FROM HISTORY TO THE PRESENT

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Abstract. This article critically examines the role of the Berbers in Algeria, with a particular focus on the complexities of coexistence between the

country's two principal ethnic communities – the Berbers, the autochthonous population of North Africa, and the Arabs. It analyzes the key stages in the evolution of Berber particularism in Algeria, including the historical foundations of the Kabyle tradition, the significance of the Kabyle factor in Algerian resistance to French colonial rule, and the contemporary socio-political and cultural engagement of the Kabyle community within Algerian society. Special attention is given to the ongoing efforts to standardize the Berber language, as well as the dedicated activism within the Berber cultural movement. Furthermore, the article examines the growing concerns among both Algerian authorities and the international community regarding the emergence of the Movement for the self-proclamation of the Kabyle State.

Political processes in complex, multi-ethnic societies are always of great interest to researchers. In this regard, Kabylia in Algeria is of particular interest; local voters regularly boycott elections, seeing no point in casting a ballot. Kabylia is a region with a long tradition of fierce resistance – both against foreign domination and in favour of independence from the Algerian state. The Kabyles actively opposed the 2019 presidential election, with their public outrage escalating to the point where they locked polling stations, destroyed ballot boxes, and scattered ballots on the ground. Voter turnout in the Kabylie region was approximately 0.18 per cent. Central authorities immediately took punitive measures intended to intimidate the population of the entire region: the Ministry of the Interior announced that individuals found guilty of "destroying or seizing ballot boxes, interfering with the voting process, or disrupting the election" would face up to 20 years in prison, while mayors and heads of the provinces (walis) who incited residents to boycott the election or obstructed the electoral process would be prosecuted [1].

Presidential elections were held in Algeria on September 7, 2024. Three presidential candidates were included in the final ballot. Abdelmadjid Tebboune (an independent candidate) enjoyed the support of four leading political forces that had formed an alliance, including the former sole ruling party, the National Liberation Front (*Front de libération nationale,* FLN), and the Islamist National Construction Movement (*Mouvement El Bina*; founded in 2013) led by Abdelkader Bengrina, who placed second in the 2019 presidential election.

The second candidate was Abdelaali Hassani Cherif, a 57-year-old engineer and chairman of the moderate Islamist party Movement of Society for Peace (*Mouvement de la société pour la paix,* MSP; founded in 1990), which did not participate in the 2019 elections. The party did not