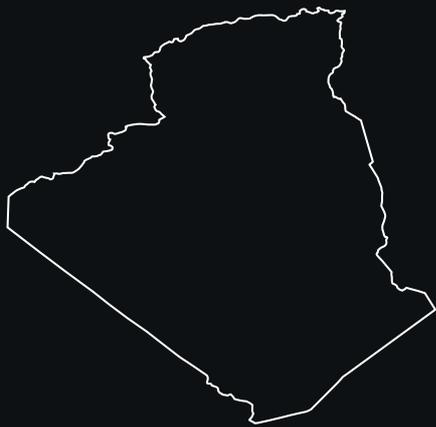




IOM International Organization for Migration



ALGERIA

MAPPING EXERCISE
LONDON, SEPTEMBER 2007

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The aim of this Mapping Report is to guide IOM's outreach activities and communications strategies. The report does not purport to be exhaustive. The mapping consultant who conducted the exercise and wrote the report on behalf of IOM has taken every effort to ensure accuracy in his/her reporting and the views expressed in this report are his/hers. IOM cannot be held responsible for any omissions or inaccuracies.



INTRODUCTION

AIM OF THE MAPPING EXERCISE, TARGET GROUP AND METHODOLOGY

The aim of the mapping exercises carried out by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) was to identify the main channels of information used by potential beneficiaries of IOM's voluntary return programmes, which are open to asylum seekers and irregular migrants. The aim was also to identify the locations of their communities in the UK. The ultimate goal of the mapping exercise is to help IOM to improve its communications with diaspora communities in the United Kingdom through media articles, advertisements and presentations to community groups.

The Algeria mapping exercise was part of a third round of exercises, which were carried out following the success of the Brazil mapping report in December 2005.

IOM designed a questionnaire translated into Arabic and French. Arabic is the official language of Algeria and French is particularly used by educated Algerians. The questionnaire was divided into two sections. The first section asked about information channels and other sources of information (i.e. voluntary organisations, religious organisations, and meeting places) available to Algerians in the UK. It also enquired about the geographical location of the Algerian communities across the UK. The second section of the questionnaire requested specific data from each respondent about their age, gender, and length of stay in the UK.

A French-speaking consultant was employed to engage with the Algerian community in order to collect the necessary information. The mapping exercise used a number of approaches to collecting data, including in-depth interviews with multipliers¹ and the distribution of questionnaires.

Extensive networking was carried out to identify media, community organisations, religious leaders and individuals that interact with Algerians. The field work took place between April and July 2006. The mapping consultant interviewed individuals directly in order to complete the questionnaires, given the very small number of Algerian organisations that could be identified. Thirty-one interviews took place with randomly selected people in areas and meeting places with a high density of Algerians. These were areas in London, such as Finsbury Park, Leyton, Walthamstow, Edgware, and Fulham, and religious centres, such as Regent Park Mosque and Parsons Green Mosque. Contacts with the leaders of a few established organisations also helped inform the mapping exercise. The convergence of answers across different interviews helped shape the results collected in this report.

The report includes tables and charts that present the results of the interviews and questionnaires. An extensive list of contacts has been created, which merges data gathered directly from completed questionnaires with information provided by the multipliers during in-depth interviews. This resource will be used by the Information team at IOM to disseminate information on the voluntary return programmes to Algerians across the country².

¹ This term is used to indicate individuals or organisations that are well known amongst diaspora groups and could therefore play a key role in delivering information.

² This document is confidential and does not form part of this report.

The recent history of Algeria provides a context for the Algerian community in the UK. By the early 1980s, an Islamist movement provided a greater rallying point for opposition elements than did secular leftists. In a pattern of escalating violence during the early 1980s, religious extremists became increasingly active. Serious demonstrations to protest against commodity shortages and high prices broke out in October 1988. The French Islamique du Salut party (FIS) emerged in 1989 as the primary instrument of the Islamic movement. The FIS achieved rapid success in local elections, especially in the working-class districts of Algiers and other cities. However, the party was banned in March 1992 and thousands of its officials and supporters were arrested under the state of emergency. After that, the FIS appears to have shifted to a policy of armed response, declaring that the "state violence" of the authorities justified recourse to "means other than dialogue." After the government's crackdown against the FIS in 1992, various other activist Islamist organisations sprang up, with units operating in groups of two to five and without any apparent unified command. These groups, difficult to distinguish from each other, targeted police posts, courthouses and other public buildings, and they selected public figures. In some cases, assassination targets were announced in advance. After the banning of the FIS in Algeria, many FIS leaders escaped to France, where they reportedly continued to recruit new fighters and collect funds and supplies to pursue the armed struggle in Algeria. The FIS, as a foreign political party, was prohibited from operating on French soil but it was represented by the Algerian Brotherhood in France, set up by Algerian students.

The available information shows that the Algerian community in the UK is largely composed of relatively recent waves of migration. Due to the instability in Algeria, the visa section of the UK embassy remained closed until the summer of 2002. During interviews, various individuals said that this closure was one of the causes of their undocumented entry.

Until the early 1990s, Algerians living in the UK formed a relatively small community. Over the last 10-15 years, the number started to rise significantly due to the civil war in Algeria. New arrivals in the UK come from a range of very different sections of the Algerian population. It should be emphasised that, although Algerians living in the UK gather with their fellow citizens for religious and cultural events, and for leisure, they have generally not created well-defined organisations that can represent their interests.

Bonds of solidarity can sometimes be very strong between them but there is very little sense of a unified community. The nature of the conflict back home has meant that the community is characterised by a constant state of mutual suspicion.

The absence of leaders within the community made it difficult to obtain information easily for the mapping exercise although, as noted, interviews with individuals were conducted wherever possible. Consequently, the information collected during interviews may not be a complete picture of the community although it is a fairly up to date one.

1 INFORMATION CHANNELS

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The first section of the questionnaire was intended to identify the main channels of information used by the Algerian diaspora in the UK. The questions were divided into four categories:

- media (most common media sources uses by community members);
- use of services (transport, phone, local services);
- preferred sources of information; and
- community groups and other organisations (voluntary and religious organisations).

The contact details for these categories were merged with the contact details provided by the multipliers. This list of contacts constitutes an action plan for IOM and contains details of organisations and agencies with which IOM should liaise to increase awareness of the voluntary return programmes among the Algerian community in the UK³.

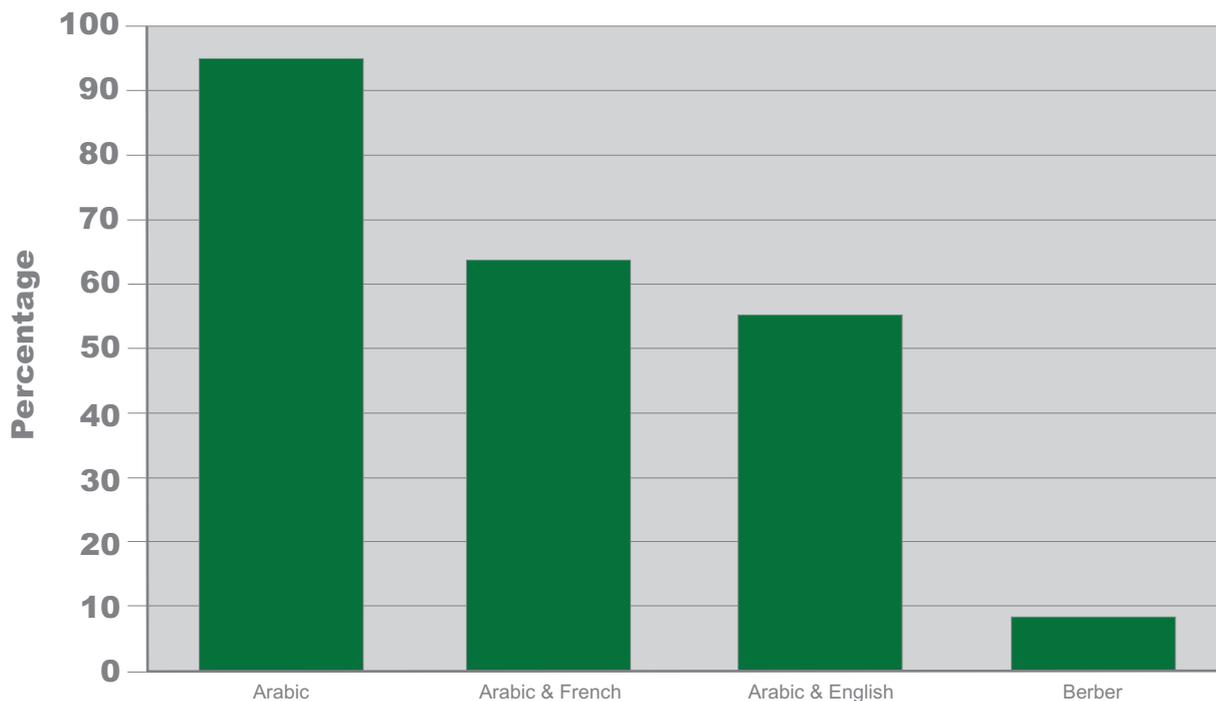
1.2 MEDIA

Respondents were asked in which language they best understood information material such as newspapers, leaflets, radio, and television. Algerians who have been in the UK for a longer time speak English well or fluently but it is still common for people who have arrived recently to speak better French than English. 60% of the respondents showed a preference for Arabic as the language to receive information. A small minority (8%) chose the Berber Tamaziyt. Algerians with at least secondary level education speak some French. English is widely spoken among those educated to a higher level. Most respondents ticked a least two languages with Arabic coming first and French second.

The mapping exercise has identified no newspaper or any other similar publication, based in the UK, which is solely aimed at the Algerian community. People with satellite TV watch TV channels broadcast from Algeria to get news directly from their home country. Others resort to foreign Arabic channels, such as *Al Jazeera*, *Rotana Europe* on Sky Digital Satellite Channel 168 and *Canal Algerie*. They also turn to Internet websites like <http://www.arabmediawatch.com>. Word of mouth, although accompanied by its inherent inaccuracies, is a popular channel of information within the community. In particular, Algerians who gather at places like cafes and food shops disseminate information in this way.

³This document is confidential and does not form part of this report.

Figure 1: Preferred Language



1.3 USE OF SERVICES

Transport

Respondents were asked what means of transport they used most often. As is the case with most migrant workers on a low income, Algerians usually rely on buses, followed by the Underground and mainline trains. Irregular migrants who work as cleaners or on construction sites, for example, are often picked up by an employer's van. A smaller number uses personal transport such as a car.

Phone Calls, Money Transfer and Food Stores

Algerian nationals maintain strong ties with their country of origin. The interviews suggested that the most common way of keeping contact is through phone calls using a landline or mobile phone. Algerians use the numerous pre-paid international cards that are available on the market. Algerians in the UK often also support their relatives back home financially and use services such as money transfer and goods dispatch. The widespread Western Union and Money Gram are among the most popular businesses in this field.

Local Services

Many Algerians are employed in low-skilled jobs obtained through Job Centres and local councils. These centres are potential places to reach Algerian nationals. The respondents interviewed during the mapping exercise did not mention any other local service.

Conclusions and Recommendations

- IOM should distribute leaflets where community members tend to gather for leisure or cultural events (Finsbury Park, Leyton, Walthamstow, Edgware, and Fulham in London); and at religious centres, such as Finsbury Park Mosque, Regents Park Mosque and Parsons Green Mosque.
- IOM should advertise on the Arabic radio stations and TV channels that were identified above.
- IOM should advertise the voluntary return programmes in Algerian food shops and cafes, particularly those in the Finsbury Park area in London. This appears to be the best way to reach Algerians, who tend to frequent the same Algerian shops even if they are scattered in different areas of their city of residence.
- IOM should advertise its programmes in the most popular money transfer businesses, such as Western Union and Money Gram. The former is strongly recommended.
- IOM should advertise on international pre-paid phone cards.

1.4 PREFERRED SOURCE OF INFORMATION

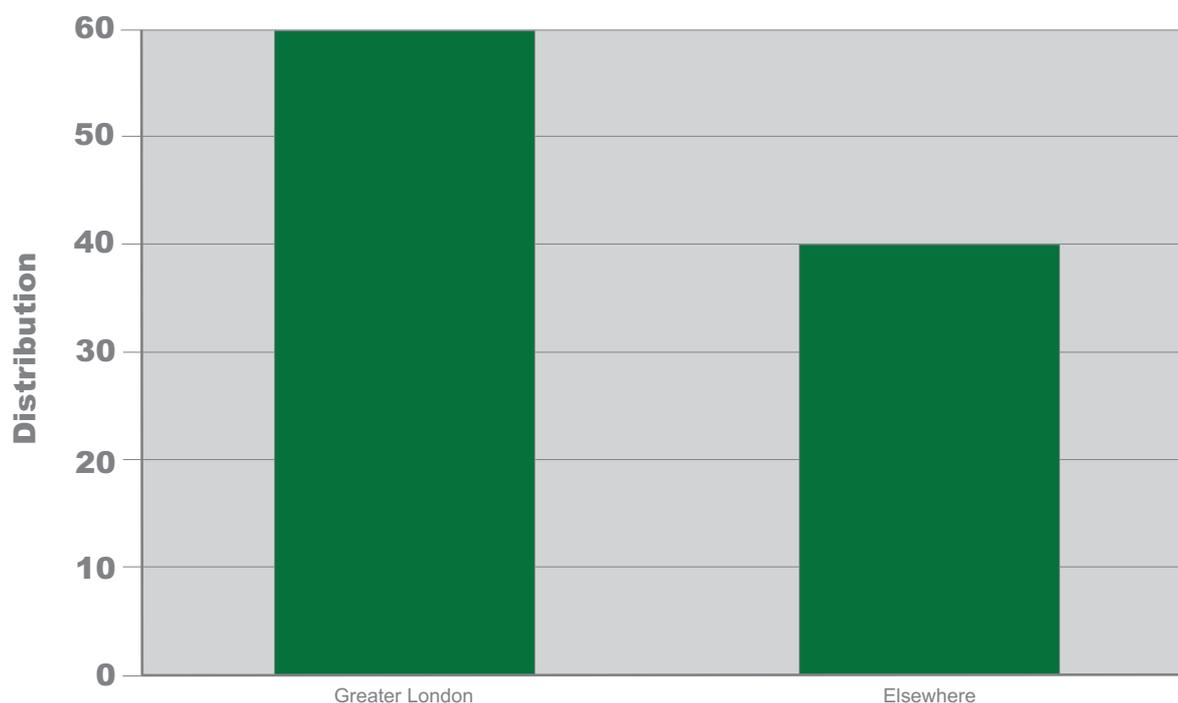
Algerian nationals in the UK often hear information by word of mouth at popular places such as mosques, cafes and food shops. News is quickly spread during social events and meetings. When asked where information would be more accessible to them, most people indicated Algerian food shops and mosques. Leaflets with text translations are seen as an effective way to make information available to them.

1.5 COMMUNITY GROUPS AND OTHER ORGANISATIONS

There are a few Algerian organisations in the UK but they are not necessarily representative of the population as a whole. Bonds can be quite strong between Algerians but the diffused atmosphere of mutual suspicion within the community, due to the nature of the conflict in Algeria, undermines the development of community organisations that can bring a sense of unity. Recent waves of Algerians have not found a cohesive community when they have arrived in the UK.

The lack of a structured community made it difficult to gather information about the exact size of the Algerian community. There is no umbrella organisation in the Algerian community that collects reliable figures on the community. Community leaders and some religious leaders collaborated in providing estimates for these figures, where possible. Most of them estimated that the community has about 30,000 people. These figures are above the estimate from the Home Office of around 20,000 members. As many as 50%-60% of them are concentrated in Greater London. The rest of the Algerian community is in dispersal accommodation in Glasgow, Sheffield, Birmingham and Manchester. Bournemouth and Leicester also have a significant number of Algerian asylum seekers.

Figure 2: Algerian Community Areas of Settlement in the UK



Help, Advice, and Support

Given the mutual suspicion within the community, Algerians tend to seek help from very close friends or family members. Advice and support on issues related to their staying in the UK is usually given by the organisations the consultant met during the mapping exercise. They act as intermediaries and direct them to the appropriate local services. The Algerian League, the Algerian Refugee Council, the Yemeni and Arab Cultural and Social Centre, and the British Arabs Resource Centre were among those organisations.

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Algerians



Arabic & French

Arabic & F

Religious Centres

Islam is the religion of Algeria. The majority of Algerians are Sunni Muslims and the Malki judicial school is the most important authority. By contrast, most Muslims in the UK are Sunni from the Hanafi judicial school (considered less conservative by Malkis), Algerians worship at a large number of mosques in the UK.

Most Algerian political parties and Islamic groups are inspired by movements such as the Muslim Brotherhood, founded in Egypt.

In London, the North London central mosque is frequented by the Algerian community, especially men. There, they have access to the different activities of the Arabic community through the documentation provided in the reception of the mosque. The Finsbury Park Mosque in London is the religious centre that is closest to the largest Algerian community. Regents Park, Parsons Green and Golborne Rd mosques also receive a considerable number of Algerian worshippers.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Fieldwork confirmed that the mosques represent a very important point of reference for new, as well as old Algerian migrants in the UK. The consultant did not come across a mosque focused particularly on Algerians. Many Algerians were interviewed in mosques with a general following.

- IOM should liaise with the organisations identified during the mapping exercise, such as The Algerian League, the Algerian Refugee Council, the Yemeni and Arab Cultural and Social Centre, and the British Arabs Resource Centre, to implement outreach activities, especially in view of the fact that word of mouth is the most common way respondents hear information.
- IOM should continue to produce leaflets in Arabic and French and distribute them to the organisations mentioned above.
- Most importantly, IOM should discuss with mosques the possibility of giving presentations and of setting up information stalls, if possible, during special events.
- More work should be done to estimate the Algerian population in the UK. Systematic searches through local council databases, the National Asylum Support Service (NASS) database and greater questioning of religious organisations across the country should be undertaken.

2 DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

The second section of the questionnaire was designed to gather baseline data from each respondent about their age, gender and length of residence in the UK.

2.1 GENDER

Interviews with community leaders, and with individuals met during the mapping exercise, suggested that the Algerian population in the UK is overwhelmingly male. The UK Census 2001 reported that 70.5% of Algerians were men. Organisations contacted during the mapping exercise report that about 8-10% of Algerians were women. One explanation for this imbalance may be that a man without documents is more likely to be able to reach the UK than a woman.

Figure 3: Algerian Community Gender Distribution (2001 Census)

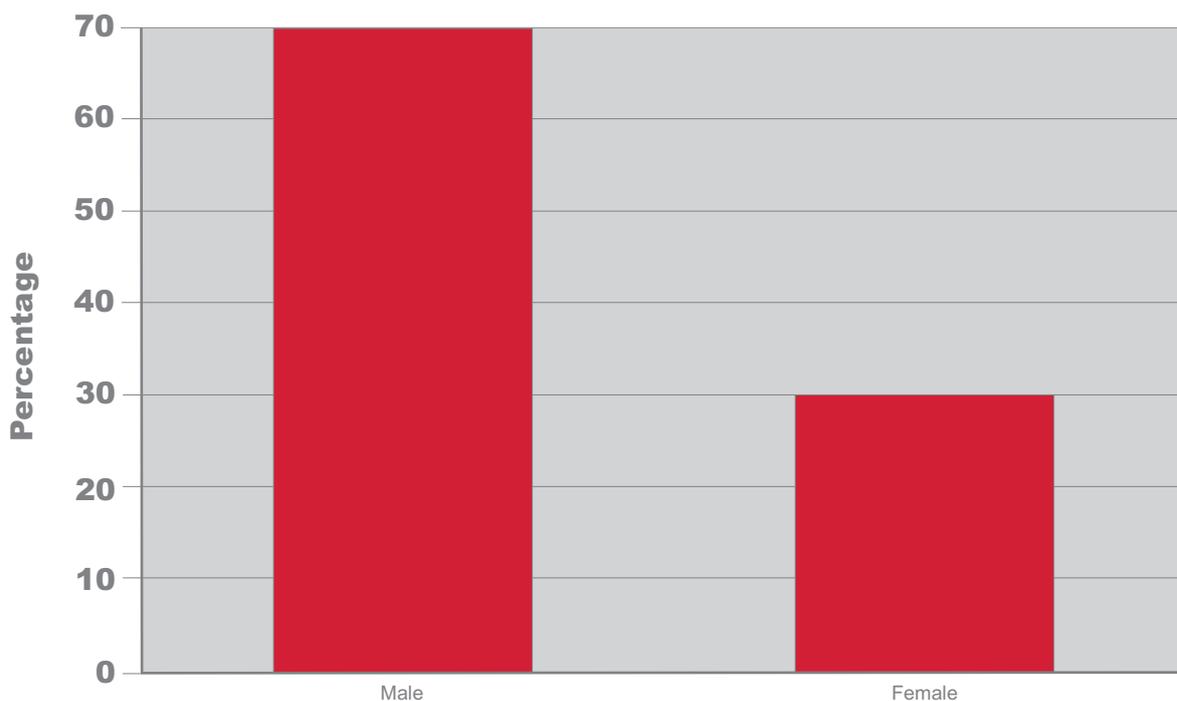
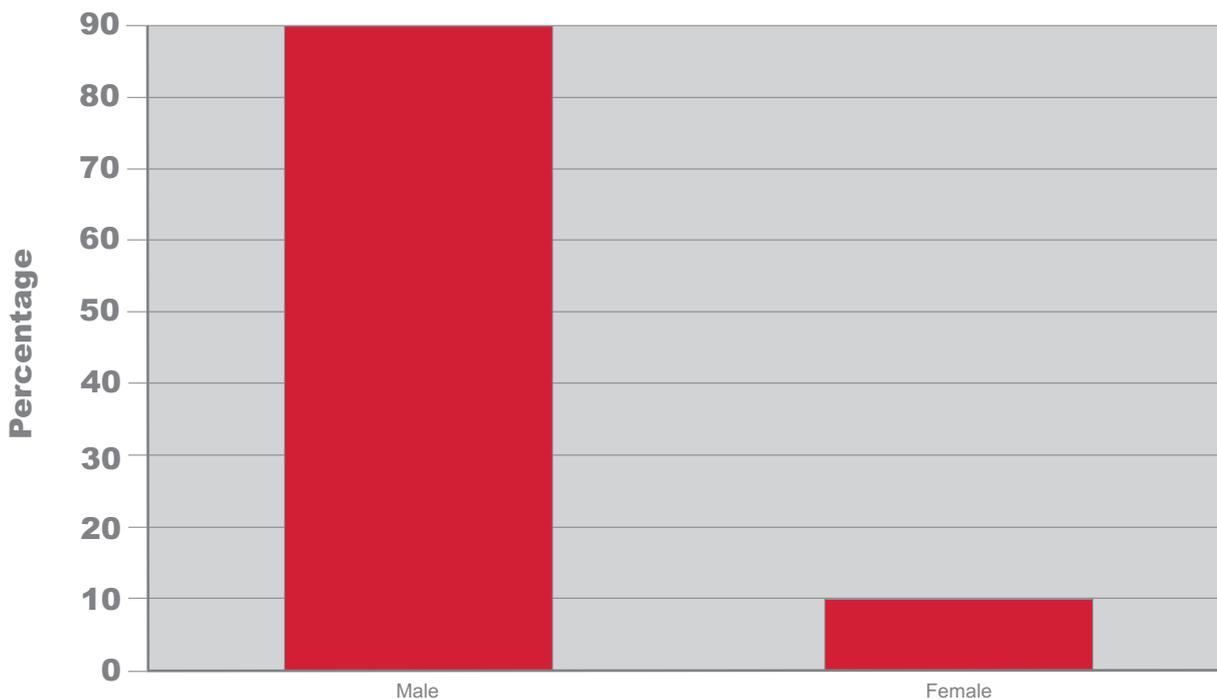


Figure 4: Algerian Community Gender Distribution (Support Services)



2.2 AGE

Estimates were based on the Algerians who were interviewed and suggest a quite young population. Around 44% of the respondents were 30-39 years old. Algerians who moved to the UK a long time ago were older but there were fewer of them.

2.3 LENGTH OF RESIDENCE IN BRITAIN

Algerians registered during the 1991 census make up approximately 20% of Algerians born in the UK and 30% of those registered in the 2001 census. Most Algerians have therefore arrived in the last 12 years. These figures must be increased further because Algerians really started applying for asylum in significant numbers from 1995. The large number of Algerians without documents means they often do work below their level of qualification.

2.4 GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION

Most Algerians are concentrated in Greater London. Finsbury Park in London is nicknamed “Little Algiers”. Walthamstow, Edgware, and Leyton also have a significant Algerian presence. Outside London, cities such as Glasgow, Sheffield, Birmingham, Manchester, Leicester and Bournemouth have a relatively important Algerian population.

3 CONSTRAINTS

This mapping exercise has been made difficult by the absence of established community networks among Algerians, in contrast to those which exist within other refugee populations. The uncertainties of the conflict in Algeria have undermined trust within the UK diaspora, hampering the development of Algerian organisations. Necessarily, the information in this report has been collected from direct interviews with individuals in popular Algerian gathering places and has used data from the Home Office and the Information Centre About Asylum and Refugees (ICAR). Figures reported by some organisations were often a “best guess”.

This lack of identified organisations is even more striking outside London and it has slowed down the survey in other cities. The consultant could not find any organisation that could identify Algerian nationals living in other parts of the UK.

One major observation was that Algerians in the UK were often unaware of IOM's work. This means the ground is favorable for an extensive campaign of information about IOM voluntary return programmes.



4 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations emerged from the implementation of the mapping exercise.

- IOM should distribute Arabic and French leaflets in cafes and food shops frequented by Algerians in London.
- IOM should try to organise meetings with organisations aimed not only at the Algerian diaspora community but also at Arabic-speaking communities.
- IOM should advertise on buses, along routes crossing areas with a higher population of Algerian nationals.
- IOM should liaise regularly with religious leaders in mosques, given that they are often in contact with Algerians. Particular attention should be paid to mosques with a predominantly North African presence.
- IOM should advertise on international pre-paid phone cards.

A large section of the population has not been contacted due to time constraints but IOM should continue to widen its network by using this report as a stepping stone for future outreach activities. This is particularly important for organisations outside Greater London.

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