

Countries of Africa

BY RON WEBER/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Land of petroleum and turmoil

Like many African countries, Algeria has waged a long struggle for independence. Early European explorers took claim to the country starting around 960 AD, as they did just about any place a ship would sail.

The country suffers from the turmoil and conflicts between Muslims and Christians. Each group has spent centuries trying to claim land and dominate the landscape. Humans have lived in Algeria for more than 40,000 years, but in more recent times, the area has been under Roman, Ottoman, Arab and French rule.

The French first took control around 1830. The Germans briefly ruled after defeating the French during World War II. However, allied forces returned Algeria to French rule by the end of the war.

A 1963 revolution finally gave the country independence. However, internal strife

kept the country on edge for most of the 20th century. Political organizations such as the National Liberation Front and the Islamic Salvation Front have fought bitterly. Small bands of militants create terrorist havoc throughout the country.

High unemployment and a shortage of housing have also caused unrest. Economists agree that Algeria needs to diversify itself economically. Too much economic reliance on petroleum exports has divided people and politics into groups representing the very rich and the very poor.

Algeria, the second largest country in Africa, is roughly three and a half times the size of Texas. It sits between Morocco and Tunisia in northern African with nearly a thousand miles of coastal property along the Mediterranean Sea.

In 2001, census figures reported that 99 percent of the population of 35 million

people was Muslim and one percent Christian and Jewish. Also, less than one percent of the population is European. The balance is Arab-Berber in origin.

Much of the country has mild and damp winters with hot and dry summers. During the wet seasons, mountainous regions are highly susceptible earthquakes and mudslides. Although petroleum products are the largest export, iron ore, phosphates, uranium, lead, and zinc can be found here. Agriculture is also a large and sustaining industry in the country. Oil waste, raw sewage, farm fertilizer runoff and soil erosion from Algeria are causing much contamination in the Mediterranean coastline.

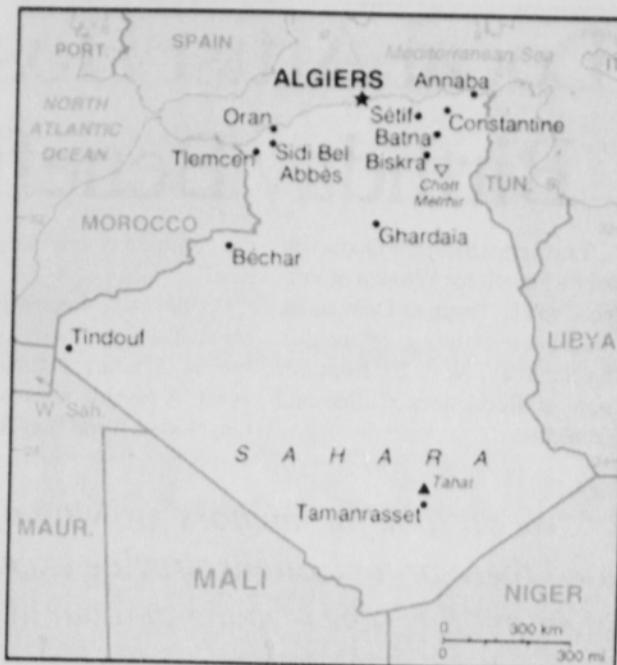
An inadequate supply of potable water, a high infant mortality rate, and poor living conditions in much of the region make health care a challenge. AIDS alleg-

edly is very low in the country. In 2000, it was reported that only one-tenth of one percent of the population was infected with HIV. However, since 2001, no specific HIV figures have been posted by Algeria and medical experts suspect the figure may be much higher.

Almost 25 percent of the population is at or below the poverty level and the unemployment rate is over 25 percent. But with petroleum production and agriculture exports on the rise, hopes for economic improvement look better.

Interestingly, Algeria has only 25 AM

radio stations and only one FM station. Few people in the country use the Internet. Like much of Africa, Algeria is a bit slow in high-tech growth. Government officials vow to change that over the next decade.



Dear Deanna!

It upsets me when Christians try to "out give" everybody during the holidays. They make a show of the money they've spent, how much they've given to the poor and then they brag. I don't have much, but I also give during the holidays. This year, I want to confront a few of these show offs at my church about the flaunting and let them know they're not the only ones who can give and buy. --Paulette T.; Decatur, Ill.

Dear Paulette:

You're probably not the only one in church with these feelings. This may be the braggers reward on earth whereas a Christian should store riches in heaven. Don't lower yourself to this level and make sure you abide by the teaching of Matthew 6 Verse 2: When you give something to a needy person, don't make a big show of it as the hypocrites do in the houses of worship and on the streets. Plain and simple, just keep it moving.

Dear Deanna!

Recently I pledged a sorority and I feel it's the biggest mistake of my life. These girls perpetrate as if they promote unity and bonding to get you in the group then the story changes. Now that I'm in the



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sorority, I see a lot of loose sex, back stabbing, drinking and phony people. I'm ashamed and want out of the sisterhood but don't know how to get out. --Pam; Spartanburg, S.C.

Dear Pam:

You would be surprised at the number of girls who pledge sororities just for popularity. Then over half of them don't finish college and if they do, they don't do any-

thing in the community or maintain their membership or represent the sorority. Revoke your membership by writing a letter to the sorority's headquarters, cancel your dues and burn your Greek stuff. Next time, stay in the right group—Me Phi Me.

Dear Deanna!

I'm 22 and learned that the man who raised me is not my real father. I feel empty as I look at him as just another man instead of my dad. How do I deal with this and keep from hurting his feelings? --Signed N.T.; Boise, Idaho

Dear N.T.

All Daddies can't be classified as fathers. Your step dad may not be the sperm donor, but he's the one that fed you, clothed you and kept a roof over your head. Look at him for the good he has done. Don't cheapen his efforts because he lacks the official title of "real daddy." You must care for him if you are concerned about his feelings. Be glad he was in the home for you and not on a child support poster.

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