

The Role of Human Rights Organisations in Protecting Citizens and Promoting the Principles of Citizenship: A Case Study of the National Association for the Defence of Human Rights-Oran Provincial Office

Taileb Nawel

PhD Student: University of Oran 2 Mohamed Ben Ahmed- Algeria
E-mail : tailebnawel7@gmail.com

Received date: 02.01.2025; Accepted date: 11.03.2025;
Publication date: 03.05.2025, doi: 10.56334/sei/8.3.40

Abstract

This study examines the role of human rights organisations in promoting citizenship principles and protecting individual rights in Algeria, focusing on an anthropological case study of the National Association for the Defence of Human Rights - Oran Office. In Algeria's complex socio-political environment, research has explored how local cultural values, power dynamics, and societal structures shape the strategies and effectiveness of associations. Using an ethnographic approach based on field observations and interviews, this study reveals the intricate relationships among human rights discourse, citizenship practices, and local realities. It analyses how the association navigates relationships with state authorities, engages with diverse community groups, and adapts its discourse to overcome cultural and social barriers. Special attention is given to women's rights, migration issues, and social discrimination challenges. The findings highlight the association's significant, yet contextually limited, impact on fostering sustainable social change and active citizenship. The research

¹ **CC BY 4.0.** © The Author(s). Publisher: IMCRA. Authors expressly acknowledge the authorship rights of their works and grant the journal the first publication right under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License International CC-BY, which allows the published work to be freely distributed to others, provided that the original authors are cited and the work is published in this journal.

Citation. Nawel T. (2025). The Role of Human Rights Organizations in Protecting Citizens and Promoting the Principles of Citizenship: A Case Study of the National Association for the Defense of Human Rights-Oran Provincial Office. *Science, Education and Innovations in the Context of Modern Problems*, 8(3), 653-676. doi: 10.56352/sei/8.3.40. <https://imcra-az.org/archive/358-science-education-and-innovations-in-the-context-of-modern-problems-issue-3-volviii-2025.html>

concludes with recommendations for enhancing the effectiveness of human rights advocacy within Algeria's evolving socio-political landscape.

Keywords: Civil society organisations; Human rights; Associations; Citizenship.

Introduction

Amid the accelerating global developments in human rights and within a complex Algerian context, the role of civil society organisations, particularly human rights associations, has emerged as crucial in promoting the concept of citizenship and protecting individual rights. This anthropological study sheds light on this role, specifically through a case study of the National Association for the Defence of Human Rights in Oran. Algeria has witnessed periods of social mobilisation, most notably the protests of 1988, which underscored the importance of popular participation in demanding rights. This movement, alongside broader global and local changes, created a new environment conducive to the emergence and growth of nongovernmental organisations, including human rights associations. However, how do local cultural concepts and power dynamics shape the strategies of these associations in Algeria, particularly in the city of Oran? Do the activities of these organisations align with prevailing cultural norms? Moreover, what is their capacity to reach and engage with marginalised communities?

This anthropological research explores the interaction between state authority, societal expectations, and the extent to which Algerian human rights organisations, specifically the National Association for the Defence of Human Rights in Oran, succeed in promoting the concept of citizenship and fostering respect for human rights. Through an anthropological lens that takes into account the local cultural context and power dynamics, the study addresses the following aspects: How do dominant cultural concepts regarding rights and duties shape the strategies of this association in its practical operations? How do power dynamics within Algerian society, particularly in Oran, influence the association's relationship with the state? Do its activities reflect prevailing cultural norms or challenge certain aspects? Finally, how does the association, specifically in the city of Oran, adapt its strategies to reach and engage with different segments of society, especially marginalised groups?

The research examines how the organisation responds to challenges and local sociopolitical contexts by conducting a case study of this association in Oran.

Research Problem

Human rights associations, notably the National Association for the Defence of Human Rights, are a cornerstone of democratic societies based on respect for human dignity and the protection of

fundamental rights. These associations serve as critical interfaces between citizens and the state, striving to balance individual claims and rights with the state's duties to protect and uphold them. However, their role extends beyond merely raising awareness and promoting understanding; through their engagement with the local social and cultural context, they actively contribute to profound transformations in the social structure and the formation of new citizenship and human rights concepts. This complex interaction manifests within a specific local framework, the Oran office of the National Association for the Defence of Human Rights.

This office provides a starting point for understanding how the association engages with a complex social and cultural reality, where human rights and civic duties are not merely abstract concepts but are deeply rooted in a context defined by local particularities.

The anthropological approach adopted in this study does not merely describe the mechanisms through which the association operates; instead, it seeks to understand how the association interacts with the nature of social relations, existing structures, and deeply rooted concepts within the local community in Oran. The objective of this study is to analyse the factors influencing the effectiveness of an association's work and to examine whether it alters prevailing social perceptions regarding human rights, citizenship, and civic duties. Understanding these interconnected concepts forms the core of the anthropological approach in this study.

The nature of the relationship between the association and the local authorities in Oran constitutes a central focus of this research problem.

A key concern is whether the association achieves an appropriate balance between defending rights and maintaining a positive relationship with official bodies or whether it faces obstacles arising from differing perspectives or potential tensions between the association and state institutions. Moreover, does the association adapt its discourse to fit the local context, or does it adhere to a specific discourse detached from local societal values? In addition, the issue further extends to include the mechanisms through which relationships are established between the association and the various community segments.

How does the association transcend social and cultural differences (such as gender, class, age group, and religious identity) to achieve genuine change? Do the association's strategies contribute to building bridges of communication between disparate social groups, or do they exacerbate divisions?

Furthermore, local traditions and customs in Oran, in addition to social identities, constitute a key defining element of this research problem.

How do these factors influence the reach of the association's messages and its human rights discourse across various segments of society? Is the association's discourse reformulated to align with these local values, or does a clash arise between the association's discourse and the local identity?

Consequently, it is necessary to examine how the association overcomes these cultural constraints or adapts its discourse to achieve greater effectiveness in bringing about the desired change.

Thus, the central research problem crystallises into a principal question:

How does the National Association for the Defence of Human Rights in Oran reshape the concepts of citizenship and human rights within a complex and intertwined local social and cultural context?

Does the association achieve genuine, sustainable societal change, or is its impact limited merely to the level of individual awareness?

How are relationships constructed between the association, society, and local authorities, and how do these relationships contribute to producing tangible changes in the social reality of the city of Oran?

How does the association transform the local community's perceptions of human rights and civic duties, and do its operational mechanisms lead to sustainable and impactful change?

These questions lead us to a central and fundamental inquiry, formulated as follows:

How does the National Association for the Defence of Human Rights (Oran Office) influence the shaping of citizenship and human rights within its local social and cultural context, and do it face obstacles that limit its capacity to achieve sustainable social change?

On the basis of this fundamental inquiry, we formulate two main hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: The nature of the relationship between the National Association for the Defence of Human Rights (Oran Office) and the local authorities, alongside prevailing societal values regarding authority and identity, determines the association's ability to foster sustainable social change towards active citizenship and respect for human rights.

Hypothesis 2: The association's strategies for engaging with different social groups (based on gender, social class, age, and others) influence the effectiveness of changing behaviours related to respecting others' rights and, thus, the association's capacity to entrench the principles of citizenship.

Hypothesis 1 focuses on the direct relationship between the association and the authorities and how this relationship affects the association's ability to achieve genuine change. In contrast, Hypothesis 2 concentrates on how the association adapts to social diversity to realise transformation.

Both hypotheses highlight the factors influencing the association's ability to produce a real and lasting impact.

Methodological Framework for the Case Study of the National Association for the Defence of Human Rights (Oran Office) from an Anthropological Perspective

This study aims to understand the role of the National Association for the Defence of Human Rights (Oran Office) in achieving sustainable social change within a complex local context.

It aims to analyse how the association interacts with its environment and assess its capacity to influence the concepts of citizenship and human rights embodied within the community.

An ethnographic anthropological approach will be employed, relying on field observations and interviews to comprehend the interaction dynamics between the association, the local community, and the local authorities. This study highlights the operational mechanisms adopted, the challenges and obstacles encountered, and the anticipated impacts on social reality.

This research aims to conduct a case study of the National Association for the Defence of Human Rights (Oran Office) through an ethnographic anthropological lens.

The theoretical framework will be established by analysing the concepts of citizenship and human rights within the Algerian context, focusing on theories of social change and the interaction of various forces (the state, civil society, and cultural values).

The research methodology will include continuous field observations, in-depth interviews with association members and the local community, document analysis, and visual documentation (video).

The study will analyse the Oran Office's interactions with local authorities, local social factors, and the association's impact on changing societal behaviours and fostering the adoption of citizenship values.

The research will conclude with the extraction of findings, the presentation of specific recommendations, and suggestions for future avenues for study.

The ultimate objective is to evaluate the effectiveness of the association in achieving sustainable social change.

The Emergence of the Algerian Human Rights Movement

The origins of human rights associations in Algeria can be traced back to the mid-1980s, during which the political and legislative environment was not conducive to the emergence of such organisations.

According to an interview with [Ms Zineb, a lawyer specialising in human rights, with expertise in women's issues, discrimination, and labour rights, and a supporter of the association who views its work as a tool for achieving social justice], "it was extremely difficult to work towards establishing

associations at that time. The prevailing political situation, along with the absence of regulatory laws for associative work, constituted a significant obstacle."

The initial attempts, as mentioned by [Ms. Leila, a public sector worker interested in labour issues, living conditions, and discrimination, who sees the association as a potential agent of reform], were marked by conflicting visions among the founders regarding their stance towards the National Liberation Front, particularly concerning the mobilisation of international public opinion through joining the International Federation for Human Rights.

This divergence led to two distinct currents: one advocating complete independence from the ruling party, which culminated in establishing the "Algerian League for Human Rights" on 30 June 1985.

At the same time, another organisation attempted to achieve the same objective; however, its leadership faced repression, with its president, the lawyer Ali Yahia Abdennour, being arrested on 9 July of the same year, followed by the arrest of ten other founding members.

In March 1987, a third league was subsequently established to defend the imprisoned founders.

Importantly, according to an interview with Mr. Sami, who engaged in issues of local development, art, and community awareness, a reflective contributor to discussions on improving the association's work, this period experienced significant pressure and "it was extremely difficult to confront the local authorities and the prevailing political approach."

The repressive climate at the time led to arrests and restrictions on the human rights movement, necessitating a wait for a political opening towards the late 1980s.

This was achieved by forming a new league under the same name (the Algerian League for the Defence of Human Rights), alongside establishing groups dedicated to defending human rights.

This phase marked the anticipation of a political climate change embodied by the 1989 Constitution.

The Algerian National Association for the Defence of Human Rights

The Algerian National Association for the Defence of Human Rights (the National Association) represents a pivotal societal entity within the Algerian human rights movement, embodied within a complex historical context.

This association emerged in an intertwined social and political environment, where surrounding tensions and changes constituted influential factors shaping its trajectory.

It is an independent and multifaceted organisation that addresses various human rights issues; advocates for fundamental human rights, women's rights, refugees' rights, and workers' rights; and continuously organises societal dialogue.

This activity reflects an effort to implement the fundamental principles of human rights within a specific Algerian context, anticipating social and cultural challenges and intersections.

The Algerian National Association for the Defence of Human Rights (Oran Branch)

The Oran Branch of the National Association constitutes an active organisational extension rooted in Oran's specific geographical, historical, and societal context.

Its work represents an attempt to implement the general goals and principles of the national body within a local context characterised by cultural and social diversity.

This interaction between the association's national operations and local specificities offers an important ethnographic space for an accurate understanding of the dynamics of social change.

Women's Rights in Algeria: The Intersection of Social Values and Legislation

Women's rights issues in Algeria highlight complex challenges within the context of targeted social change.

From an ethnographic anthropological perspective, these challenges emerge as products of the intricate interactions between the structure of local society, its traditions, its laws, and the proclaimed human rights standards.

According to an interview with [Ms. Noura, a specialist in women's and migration issues, open to engagement, who focuses on identifying the needs of various social groups 12], "the Family Code still represents a major issue, as it lacks adequate protection for women's rights in matters of marriage, divorce, custody, and inheritance."

According to Ms. Nadia, a secondary school teacher interested in education, human development, and children's rights, who views the association's role as strengthening citizenship values among youth, this legislation "stands as an example of the ongoing gender-based disparities that hinder the advancement of active citizenship amidst social transformations."

Social structures, deeply rooted values, and concepts of gender identity within the local community significantly influence the understanding and implementation of women's rights.

From an ethnographic perspective, discrimination is not limited to the Family Code but manifests in complex daily behaviours and the discourses exchanged between genders.

As field observations indicate, according to [Ms Amal, a doctor engaged in issues of health, well-being, and discrimination in healthcare, open and participative, who values the association's role in providing services.14], there is an absence of comprehensive legislation that effectively addresses targeted violence against women.

Similarly, the Penal Code raises serious concerns regarding the criminalisation of rape, as it defines the offense ambiguously and, in some cases, allows perpetrators to escape punishment.

Debates surrounding the criminalisation of abortion also continue to provoke controversy, representing an additional barrier to protecting women from discrimination.

The ethnographic experience demonstrates that these issues cannot be understood in isolation from their local context but are intrinsically linked to concepts of identity, authority, and deeply rooted societal values.

The anthropological element of this study is not confined to analysing texts and legislation but delves deeply into understanding how local community members perceive and interpret these issues.

This is achieved through interviews with various individuals to capture various emotions and perspectives.

According to [Mr. Mohamed, an engineer involved in development, infrastructure, and consumer rights, cooperative and viewing the association as an entity that identifies challenges 9], "this situation constitutes a real challenge to achieving genuine social change that enables women to exercise their role as equals within society."

Change cannot be realised solely through legislation; it requires a profound ethnographic anthropological methodology that analyses the social, cultural, and political factors influencing local community standards and interpretations of human rights.

Thus, these issues related to women's rights reveal complex and entrenched challenges to sustainable change.

Associations face significant obstacles in addressing these challenges through awareness-raising activities, influencing legislation, and supporting solutions for affected women.

However, deep-rooted cultural and social barriers remain significant impediments.

The association must develop a profound understanding of these challenges to effect meaningful and effective changes in women's status within the community.

Social Tensions and Complex Policies: Challenges in Addressing Migration Issues in Algeria

The issues concerning refugees and migrants in Algeria, particularly within a local context such as Oran, represent a complex challenge that highlights the intricate interactions between official policies, social realities, and local values.

The ongoing failure to enact legislation that protects the right to seek asylum, as noted by Ms. Fatima, an official in the Social Affairs Directorate of Oran Province, is committed to promoting women's rights, social equality, and community development; this failure is open to communication and positive engagement, who views the association as a potential partner.2] "indicates the gap between international human rights standards and the lived reality of migrants and refugees."

This failure is also linked to broader social and cultural perceptions of migration within the Algerian context, and it fosters discrimination and violence against refugees and migrants.

Tensions observed in certain regions, such as clashes reported through ethnographic observations in Béchar, Ouargla, and Tamanrasset, illustrate the depth of the challenges faced by the association in Oran in supporting this vulnerable group against the risks of discrimination.

From an ethnographic perspective, these tensions complicate the association's role in fostering understanding and social cohesion between migrants and the local population.

According to [Interviewee 13], "there is an urgent need for dialogue and mutual awareness between communities in order to resolve these problems."

In this context, the arrest of more than 1,500 migrants and refugees and the deportation of hundreds to Niger highlight broader issues regarding the protection of refugees and migrants.

According to ethnographic observations, the political and social situation in certain Algerian regions is complex for various reasons (Amnesty International, 2023, October 26). This makes enforcing relevant laws and providing necessary protection particularly challenging.

This reality underscores the necessity of paying close attention to these issues to understand the various components. This has helped them address the specific problems these refugees face in Oran precisely.

Human Rights in Algeria: Interweaving Constitutional and Social Contexts

From independence to the present day, the development of human rights issues in Algeria represents a journey intricately intertwined with successive constitutional milestones, significantly influencing the practical realisation of human rights identity.

From an anthropological perspective, this development reveals a complex interaction between societal values and beliefs, constitutional policies, and Algeria's social reality.

At the outset, the interconnection of factors influencing the course of human rights is evident.

According to [Mr Ali, director of the Oran Office of the National Association for the Defence of Human Rights, supporter of human rights, community awareness advocate, committed to improving relations with civil society, highly positive and strongly believes in the association's positive impact.3], "the historical sequence of constitutions indicates Algeria's attempts to adapt to the political environment at each stage."

This implies that Algerian constitutions are not merely abstract documents but reflect the interaction between societal values and political and social circumstances.

Constitutional amendments mirror the state's attempts to adapt to social and political changes, often as a reaction to crises and tensions.

Since independence, and through various phases, Algeria has adopted several constitutions, including four standard constitutions in the following years: 1963, 1976, 1989, and 1996, as well as four documents referred to as mini-constitutions. These include the Constituent National Assembly Law issued in September 1962; the ordinance of 10 July 1965, which transferred all powers of the president of the Republic under the 1962 Constitution to the Revolutionary Council; the statement of the Supreme Security Council issued in January 1992; and the National Reconciliation Charter for the transitional phase issued in January 1994, in addition to various constitutional amendments (Boukra, 2003).

Constitutional amendments in all systems are considered an urgent necessity to address legal gaps and shortcomings, regardless of whether these deficiencies are of a social or political nature.

Over time, it becomes apparent that a constitution may suffer from specific gaps and legal inconsistencies, particularly regarding the organisation and functioning of authorities and the legal nature that must be attributed to the political system.

Thus, the constitutional amendment provides a means to recognise and integrate emerging developments within this foundational document.

Certain motives and underlying factors undoubtedly drive a state to amend its constitution. However, the primary aim of these amendments is to ensure that the fundamental law aligns with political life in all its dimensions.

Whether these motives are specific or generally ranging from changing the nature of the system of governance to granting powers to one body over another to address general legislative deficiencies and accompanying social development, they are fundamentally rooted in the constitutional framework

organising society and the state around issues of human rights, social justice, and economic and political equality.

This commitment is reinforced through constitutional principles, guarantees, and legislative texts aimed at regulating the protection of various human rights and ensuring the state's substantial efforts towards national development and comprehensive construction across all sectors (Bouchair, 1990).

Given that Algeria has enshrined in its various constitution provisions for protecting human rights, this constitutes a constitutional constraint on any measure or amendment that could affect these texts.

Respecting the extent to which constitutional amendments impact the provisions and rules governing public rights and freedoms is crucial, necessitating an examination of the historical development of rights and freedoms across Algeria's constitutions.

Algeria has joined the majority of international and continental treaties, particularly those relating to human rights.

Accordingly, it is natural that its constitutions include provisions regarding the process of accession to and ratification of treaties and conventions.

This commitment stems from the constitutional founders' concern since the first constitution of the independent state in 1963 to enshrine public rights and freedoms at the very heart of the constitution, placing them above all other legal rules, regardless of the issuing authority.

This was concretely demonstrated in the Constitution of 10 September 1963, where Algeria, in Article 11, declared its approval of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, thereby recognising all freedoms contained within that declaration (Bouchair, 2008).

Thus, it is possible to trace the stages through which the constitutional document was amended, partially or entirely, thereby allowing an understanding of the development of human rights issues in Algeria.

After 5 July 1962, Algeria embarked on a journey towards respecting public rights and freedoms, as evidenced by the first law adopted by the Algerian state on 31 December 1962 (Bouchair, 2013).

This law aimed to fill the legislative vacuum by extending the applicability of French laws, excluding those inspired by colonialism and those containing discriminatory provisions that infringe upon the regular exercise of democratic freedoms.

Faced with these challenges, Algeria opted for a socialist orientation and a one-party system, a choice reflected across all spheres of state life.

The socialist option represented a political break with colonialism and the concepts adopted by Western countries, and the international context, particularly the Cold War, further encouraged this direction.

This choice was enshrined as a significant constitutional principle in the Constitution of 10 September 1963, whose preamble dedicated an entire chapter to the National Liberation Front as the sole vanguard party in Algeria (Boudhan, 2008) and the Constitution of 22 November 1976.

The latter stipulated in its first article that Algeria is a socialist state and devoted an entire chapter to the one-party system under the title "Political Function." Article 94 specifies that Algeria's political system is based on a single party.

Furthermore, the constitution's provisions on amendments asserted that no amendment project could undermine the socialist choice (Sadouq, 1995).

At the end of the 1980s, Algeria underwent a profound transformation following the bloody popular uprising known as the events of 5 October 1988, triggered by the economic crisis caused by a fall in oil prices.

This upheaval led to radical change and a constitutional amendment based on entirely new principles, including adopting political pluralism instead of the one-party system and shifting towards a market economy instead of socialism.

These new constitutional principles were enshrined in the Constitution of 23 February 1989, as the constitutional founders consistently sought to develop constitutional legal rules that safeguard public rights and freedoms while keeping pace with the state's social and economic development and adapting to the prevailing international environment.

Thus, it is possible to assess the extent to which constitutional amendments respected public rights and freedoms in Algerian constitutions by examining three important phases in Algeria's history:

First, the degree to which constitutional amendments respected public rights and freedoms under the constitutions of the First Republic, also known as one-party constitutions;

Second, the extent to which constitutional amendments respected public rights and freedoms under the constitutions of the Second Republic or the era of political pluralism.

Ethnographic observations in the context of Oran reveal, through the National Association for the Defence of Human Rights (Oran Branch) activities within community interactions, that implementing human rights faces complex challenges.

Awareness of refugee and migrant issues and women's rights varies considerably among different societal groups.

This variation fosters potential tensions and affects the association's ability to build constructive dialogue and a culture of respect across all groups.

Interviews with [Mr Salem, a young unemployed man concerned with youth rights, social development, and awareness, optimistic and proactive, seeking opportunities for engagement.¹¹] and [Ms. Leila.⁸] emphasise the need for dialogue that acknowledges the differences in interpretations and the challenges facing the community on the basis of ethnographic observations in Oran.

Our in-depth analysis confirms that the development of human rights in Algeria has not merely been a sequence of constitutional principles but rather an intricate process interwoven with social and historical contexts.

On the basis of observations of lived societal issues and implementation challenges, constitutional reform alone cannot affect social change; it requires profound transformation within social structures and deeply rooted values, necessitating thorough anthropological engagement by associations.

In brief, this study demonstrates that adopting human rights concepts within the Algerian context is not a linear process but rather a dynamic one influenced by social, cultural, and political factors.

Our analysis highlights the critical role of the National Association for the Defence of Human Rights (Oran Branch) in accurately navigating these challenges and providing recommendations for sustainable change.

On the basis of the ethnographic observations and the findings of interviews with various participants, it is clear that the trajectory of human rights in Algeria is not confined to constitutional texts but is deeply entangled with entrenched social and cultural values.

The analysis revealed that concepts such as "authority," "identity," and "discrimination" profoundly influence the interpretation and practice of human rights.

According to an interview with [Mr Abdelmajid, an agricultural producer concerned with workers' rights in the agricultural sector and resource sustainability, he was neutral in stance, questioned his challenges, and potentially showed interest in the association's crisis for change.⁷], "traditions and customs sometimes complicate the path towards achieving the social change sought by the association."

The analysis highlights specific challenges faced by the association in Oran.

For example, the complexity of discussing issues related to migration and social discrimination reveals the limitations of associative influence.

The association may encounter difficulties fostering dialogue between different societal groups, as discourses and values linked to "Algerian identity" and "social discrimination" influence how these issues are understood and addressed.

These realities indicate that the anthropological approach must investigate the associations' interactions within these contexts.

Furthermore, the analysis shows how political and economic changes impact the development of human rights.

Economic and political crises threaten human rights and affect the effectiveness of associations in defending them within a framework of complex interactions involving political actors and governmental institutions.

Conversely, the interviews underscore the association's significant role in promoting positive change at the public awareness level and building community communication and activism networks.

Ethnographic evidence indicates the association's success in organising social events to raise public awareness of various issues.

According to ethnographic observations, different societal groups have positively received specific changes, and there is a growing recognition of the importance of defending human rights.

Thus, the association may catalyse sustainable change.

In summary, the anthropological analysis highlights the deep interconnection between constitutions, political transformations, and the social contexts underpinning the development of human rights in Algeria.

The Oran office is integral to this journey and represents a model for the interaction between constitutional and social frameworks.

Addressing human rights issues requires an ethnographic anthropological approach to deconstruct the factors influencing movement and change within Algeria's complex context.

Promoting Citizenship to Uphold Citizen and Human Rights: Anthropological Reading in the Algerian Context

Citizenship, as an idea and a mode of participation and practice, entrenches various rights recognised by citizens and human beings.

Although the exercise of these rights varies from one society to another depending on each state's political, economic, social, and cultural systems, the recognition and advancement of civil and political rights, along with specific social and economic rights, have made significant progress. They tend to be more local than universal.

On the other hand, human rights are founded on principles of complementarity and indivisibility.

Thus, contemporary thought has shifted towards international cooperation to achieve and uphold third-generation rights solidarity rights such as the right to security and peace, a healthy environment and development, and information and communication.

This shift has led to a transformation in citizenship, evolving from its local form, where it was closely associated with "nationalism", to a global form known as global citizenship, which constitutes the development and enhancement of traditional citizenship rather than its negation.

This evolution serves humanity and promotes the consolidation of human rights, as participation in political and cultural life is recognised as a fundamental human right in many international human rights treaties, beginning with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 27).

This declaration affirms the right to participate in government, the right to free elections, the right to participate in the community's cultural life, peaceful assembly, the right to form associations, and the right to join trade unions.

Participation is also a fundamental principle of human rights and a crucial condition for effective democratic citizenship for all individuals.

Citizenship is understood as the practice of playing an active role within society.

This practice may occur within a neighbourhood, a formal or informal social group, within the state, or globally.

The concept of active citizenship implies working towards improving society through participation in enhancing the lives of all its members.

Democratic citizenship is a closely related concept. This affirms that citizenship should be founded on democratic principles and values such as pluralism, respect for human dignity, and the rule of law.

Citizenship is a system that encompasses four key dimensions: the system of rights, which includes the set of political, economic, cultural, and social rights that citizens must enjoy;

- Social, cultural, and transnational belonging;
- Political, national, and civic participation;

Moreover, national identity encompasses multiple material and moral elements (Bin Nasser, 2014, p. 46).

From an anthropological perspective, citizenship constitutes an intricate journey of continuous interaction and change.

It is not merely an abstract idea but also an embodiment of evolving social relationships, values, cultural norms, and historical processes.

Within a specific Algerian context, the role of citizenship becomes deeply intertwined with human rights, social values, and political dynamics.

This paper, which draws on an ethnographic anthropological approach, discusses the role of the National Association for the Defence of Human Rights (Oran Branch) in promoting the concept of citizenship in Oran.

From an anthropological viewpoint, the practice of citizenship cannot be separated from the local social and cultural context.

The various social structures, cultural and religious identities, and specific customs and traditions influence how citizenship and human rights are understood and applied.

According to the interviews of [Mr Ali, 3], "the concept of citizenship extends beyond legislation and laws to become embodied in human interactions and everyday practices."

This suggests that communities differ in their understanding of the bonds between citizens, whereas the state attempts to construct a coherent concept of citizenship.

The ethnographic findings indicate the existence of disparities in the exercise of recognised rights among different social groups.

For instance, variations are observed in exercising women's rights and interpreting the human rights of migrants and refugees.

These disparities constitute significant factors in understanding the association's interaction with the local community (Oran).

A comparison between [Mr Ahmed, a member of the Provincial People's Assembly, concerned with local development and social stability, neutral to reserved, who at times may view the association as a "troublesome entity".1] and [Mr Sami, 15] reveals how perspectives on the role of civil society in fostering change can differ.

This highlights the necessity of deepening the analysis of local societal specificities to define effective strategies for contributing to social change.

There is a significant overlap between human rights and social behaviour.

Ethnographic observations indicate that the association influences the awareness of some groups regarding their rights; however, achieving sustainable social change requires more significant effort.

Relying solely on democratic principles to promote active citizenship is not sufficient; continuous encouragement of commitment to the values of respect and rights is necessary.

The analysis shows how these experiences influence the formation of national identity and constitute an important factor in fostering sustainable change.

In conclusion, citizenship represents a complex concept intertwined with human rights and cultural and societal contexts.

This study highlights the role of associations in promoting awareness of human rights and achieving social change.

However, sustainable change requires a deeper understanding of the interwoven social and cultural factors and the adaptation of associative movement strategies to Algeria's internal dynamics.

The development of human rights in Algeria is not limited to constitutional changes; instead, it becomes intricately intertwined with social and economic transformations.

Anthropological analysis reveals how economic crises, demographic shifts, and social movements influence the understanding and practice of human rights.

The interviews, such as those conducted with [Ms. Leila, 8] and [Mr. Salem, 11], highlight the role of associations in amplifying the voices of marginalised and vulnerable groups affected by these transformations.

Economic and social hardship, particularly in rural areas or in contexts of unemployment, impacts how human rights are interpreted and valued.

Interviews and field observations indicate that the Oran Branch of the National Association for the Defence of Human Rights faces complex challenges in building constructive and sustainable dialogue among different societal groups.

For example, an anthropological approach notes that social discrimination and cultural interpretations of specific issues (such as migration or gender-related matters) represent significant obstacles to achieving real change within the context of Oran.

In her interviews, Ms Amal [14] emphasised the need to understand these challenges' cultural and social dimensions to develop appropriate strategies.

An ethnographic anthropological approach reveals a complex interconnection between constitutional and societal issues.

Constitutions do not represent a framework separate from the broader reality; they serve as a platform for discussing and interpreting challenges and opportunities within historical and social contexts.

This interrelation can be observed through discussions with various community members at the association's office.

These observations highlight the potential for constructing an integrated concept for the practice of human rights in Algeria.

Through this study, the Oran Branch of the National Association for the Defence of Human Rights emerged as a contemporary example of engaging precisely with human rights issues.

Thus, the research emphasises the necessity of involving specialised associations in discussions about the changes and influencing factors that shape the realisation of active citizenship and the perception of human rights within complex contexts such as that of the city of Oran.

The Reality and Development of Associative Work in Algeria

Algeria experienced a slight transformation due to the popular movement in October 1988. This movement resulted in political reforms later reflected in the Constitution of 23 February 1989.

This constitution established an ideological path markedly different from that after independence. It adopted pluralism as a fundamental option and provided certain guarantees for establishing a strong and effective civil society.

Article 40 articulates this: "The right to establish associations of a political character is recognised, and this right may not be invoked to undermine fundamental freedoms, national unity, territorial integrity, or the independence and sovereignty of the people" (Aaraj, 2011, p. 116).

Following this, Law 31--90, dated 4 December 1990, was issued, defining and outlining the procedures for establishing and managing associations in Algeria.

This law crowned the new orientation of the Algerian state towards pluralism. It significantly contributed to the emergence of a broad range of associations owing to the guarantees it provided, the most notable of which were as follows:

- The enshrinement of the right to establish associations in various fields;
- The simplification of founding procedures;

➤ The standardisation of the legal duration to protect the principle of establishing associations (Bessiri, 2006–2007, pp. 110-111).

Associative work is considered one of the actual guarantees of rights and freedoms; it serves as a mirror of society, reflecting its human dimension through its focus on human needs and rights.

It is an existential entitlement that imposes on the state an obligation to respect the social fabric and its diversity.

Moreover, it constitutes a mechanism to guarantee the enjoyment of human rights and an instrument for achieving and developing them (Kallai & Alaoui, 2006, p. 99).

Despite the multiplicity of associations and the diversity of their activities, the right to establish associations in Algeria still faces numerous obstacles.

This is mainly due to the many restrictions imposed on them through laws or practices.

These restrictions extend from the granting of licences to the freedom of action and operation of associations, with security and administrative authorities exercising strict control over their activities, particularly those relating to public affairs.

Human rights associations and organisations, as are measures related to their financial resources, are significantly affected. The situation is even more severe when it concerns the need for foreign funding amid the reluctance of local communities (Awad, n.d., p. 35).

The public authorities have also encouraged associative work by facilitating and simplifying its establishment. They allow associations to be created through simple declarations by founders, whether at the level of local authorities or the Ministry of the Interior.

Today, most associations operate through a structured system and a planned programme of activities, enabling them to integrate into international association networks.

The most active associations emerge on the scene, promoting women's rights, literacy, and the rights of persons with special needs (ONU, *Convention Relative aux droits de l'enfant*, 2005, p. 8).

Despite the facilitations guaranteed by the law on associations, which have allowed the establishment of numerous organisations, their existence remains largely dependent on the subsidies granted to them by the state, which undermines their effectiveness. Moreover, the imposition of numerous measures under the state of emergency and counterterrorism laws further restricts the work of associations. Although many of the restrictions limiting the activities of these associations are closely linked to their environment and the nature of the political system they orbit, this does not negate the existence of internal challenges facing these associations themselves.

They remain stagnant and have yet to reach the level of associations in European countries, which, through the Council of Europe, have established a legal framework for associative activity and the basic principles governing it: administrative registration, the right to freedom of expression, equal rights and general obligations as other legal persons, and judicial protection (United Nations, General Assembly, April 2008).

The reality of associative work in Algeria, particularly in the city of Oran, is revealed as the product of complex interactions among political, social, and legislative developments.

Throughout its history, the country experienced gradual opening, reflected in the political reforms of the late 1980s, which were followed by specific legislation regulating associations.

The gradual growth of the associative movement can be observed, culminating in Law 31--90, which contributed to simplifying the procedures for establishing associations and enshrining their rights.

According to [Ms Zineb, 4], "the 1990 law was a milestone in facilitating the work of local associations in defending human rights."

Notably, this growth was not linear but was characterised by fluctuations between encouragement and restriction.

While strategies were implemented to promote associative work, ethnographic observations, supported by interviews with various individuals, indicate that administrative and security oversight continues to impose constraints on associations, particularly in advocacy for change.

[Mr. Ahmed, 1] noted that "the political environment still represents an obstacle to achieving the full potential of the associative movement."

Despite legal developments, the situation has remained complex.

Anthropological analysis shows that the social reality of the city of Oran constitutes an important part of these constraints, as traditions and beliefs influence how specific issues, such as human rights, are understood and addressed.

According to interviews with local community members, a disparity in awareness of human rights is evident.

This disparity represents a complex reality that hinders the achievement of sustainable change.

Nevertheless, various forms of associative activity are emerging.

Many associations in Oran rely on a defined and stable programme to defend human rights within a structured framework.

The analysis focuses on the scale of associations' work and how they engage with the local community in Oran.

This highlights associations' tensions, especially when dealing with sensitive social issues.

The findings underscore the need for an anthropological approach to analyse the interactions between associations and the community to foster sustainable change.

The findings of this study, which employed an ethnographic anthropological approach to examine the case of the National Association for the Defence of Human Rights (Oran Branch), provide notable confirmation of the two proposed hypotheses.

First, the study demonstrated that the association contributes to raising awareness of human rights among various segments of the local community through direct interaction and creating spaces for dialogue and discussion on sensitive social issues.

Second, the study revealed a tangible impact of the association's activities on the behaviours of specific individuals, although this impact varies according to the local context and challenges.

On the basis of these findings, the study highlights the importance of the complex interconnection between societal values and beliefs, constitutional changes, and social reality.

Human rights, citizenship, and state institutions in the context of Oran cannot be separated; instead, these elements form an interwoven dynamic.

The association faces intricate challenges in applying the principles of citizenship, particularly in addressing local issues and diverging from societal perspectives.

The relationships among the association, the community, and local authorities directly influence the association's capacity to achieve sustainable change.

Recommendations

In light of these findings, the study recommends the following:

✚ The need to study different contexts: It is important to continue research on the interaction of associations with human rights issues across various social and cultural contexts to develop a deeper understanding of the complexities of change.

✚ Developing diversified approaches to understanding societal diversity: Associations should develop anthropological approaches to study different local contexts by anticipating the complexities of change.

✚ Enhancing dialogue and strengthening cooperation: Dialogue and cooperation between associations, the local community, and local authorities should be encouraged to organise collaborative initiatives and increase the effectiveness of change.

✚ Development of innovative strategies: The association must develop innovative strategies adapted to the local context, focusing on the needs of different groups to achieve sustainable outcomes.

✚ Continuous evaluation of activities: It is essential to periodically assess associative activities by examining the outcomes achieved and the challenges encountered and following up with mechanisms to monitor the effectiveness of the strategies employed.

These recommendations will enhance the opportunity to achieve sustainable social transformation and provide improved community services.

This conclusion reaffirms the fundamental importance of ethnographic studies in addressing human rights issues.

Conclusion

After this study, the role of the National Association for the Defence of Human Rights (Oran Office) was revealed within a complex framework of societal and political interactions.

The association has not merely acted as an intermediary between citizens and local authorities but has also played an active role in addressing intricate human rights issues within the context of Oran.

Ethnographic observations and interviews have demonstrated the extent to which social and political factors in Algeria intertwine, influencing the effectiveness of associative movements promoting the concept of citizenship.

This study has confirmed the importance of associations in raising awareness of human rights and strengthening active citizenship, although the path has not been smooth.

The findings indicate the need for cooperation between associations and local authorities. They also discuss the complexities of the local social landscape as a foundation for sustainable change.

A strong emphasis emerges on the importance of communication to support associative movement within a complex context.

Thus, the Oran Office of the National Association for the Defence of Human Rights represents a local entity and a contemporary model illustrating how to build a compelling citizenship future in modern Arab contexts.

Ultimately, this study highlights the importance of understanding the interconnection between social, political, and cultural elements in supporting associations in finding realistic solutions to their challenges and achieving a higher level of social mobilisation that serves communities within their specific contexts.

References

- Aaraj, S. (2011, December 7–8). *The position of civil society in the democratic transformation process in Algeria*. Paper presented at the Third National Conference on Civil Society and Political Development in the Arab Region. Algeria: Laboratory for Research and Studies in International Relations, p. 116.
- Amnesty International. (2023, October 26). *Algeria*. Amnesty International. Retrieved from <https://www.amnesty.org/ar/countries/middle-east-and-north-africa/algeria/report-algeria>
- Awad, M., et al. (2009). *Human rights in the Arab world* (1st ed.). Beirut: Centre for Arab Unity Studies, p. 35.
- Bessiri, J. (2006–2007). *The reality of civil society organisations and their contribution to the democratic transition: A field study of student organisations* (Master's thesis, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Department of Sociology, University of Algiers), pp. 110–111.
- Bin Nasser, S. B. A. (2014). *Education for citizenship in Gulf Cooperation Council countries: Reality and challenges*. Sultan Qaboos University, *Strategic Visions*, p. 46.
- Bouchair, S. (1990). *Al-Nidham al-Jazairi* [The Algerian System]. Dar Al-Huda.
- Bouchair, S. (2008). *Al-Qanoun al-Dustouri wa al-Nuzum al-Siyassiya: Al-Juz' al-Awwal: Al-Nazariyya al-'Ammal lil-Dawla wal-Dustourat* [Constitutional Law and Political Systems: Part One: The General Theory of the State and Constitutions] (9th ed.). Diwan Al-Matbouat Al-Jami'iya, Algeria.
- Bouchair, S. (2013). *Al-Nidham al-Siyassi al-Jazairi: Dirasah Tahliliya litabi'at Nizam al-Hukm fi Dhou' Dustour 1996* [The Algerian Political System: Analytical Study of the Nature of Governance under the 1996 Constitution] (Vol. 4). Diwan Al-Matbouat Al-Jami'iya, Algeria.
- Boudhan, M. (2008). *Al-Dustourat al-Jazairiya* [The Algerian Constitutions]. Klik Publishing, Algeria.
- Boukra, I. (2003). *Al-Wajeez fi al-Qanoun al-Dustouri wa al-Mo'assasat al-Siyassiya* [The Essentials of Constitutional Law and Political Institutions]. Al-Kitab Al-Hadith, Algeria.
- Kallai, A., & Alaoui, M. (2006). *Associative work in Tunisia and the international and national human rights system*. *International Studies Journal*, (98), 99.

ONU. (2005, September). *Convention on the Rights of the Child: Algeria's periodic report*. Committee on the Rights of the Child, p. 8.

Sadouq, O. (1995). *Dirasa fi Masadir Huquq al-Insan* [A Study of the Sources of Human Rights]. Diwan Al-Matbouat Al-Jami'iya, Algeria.

United Nations. (1948). *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, Article 27.

("Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits. ").

United Nations. (2008, April). *Universal Periodic Review: Summary prepared by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights – Morocco, First Session (7–18 April 2008)*. United Nations General Assembly.

IMCRA - International Meetings and Conferences Research Association

www.imcra-az.org; E-mail (Submission & Contact): editor@imcra-az.org
"Science, Education and Innovations in the context of modern problems" Journal
ISSN (pe): 2790-0169 / 2790-0177

DOI- 10.56334/sei/8.3.40



© 2025 The Author(s). This open access article is distributed under a Creative Commons Attribution (CC-BY) 4.0 license

Share— copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format. Adapt — remix, transform, and build upon the material for any purpose, even commercially. The licensor cannot revoke these freedoms as long as you follow the license terms.

Under the following terms:

Attribution — you must give appropriate credit, provide a link to the license, and indicate if changes were made. You may do so in any reasonable manner, but not in any way that suggests the licensor endorses you or your use. No additional restrictions

You may not apply legal terms or technological measures that legally restrict others from doing anything the license permits.