

## **Algerian-American Relations**

Algeria and the United States of America share a long history of friendly relations dating back to September 5, 1795, at which time the two countries signed their Treaty of Amity and Peace. Algeria was among the very first countries to recognize American independence and has since continuously worked to strengthen relations of peace and friendship with the United States.

The city of Elkader, Iowa, established as a tribute to Emir Abdelkader, an Arab and Muslim man, is the perfect illustration of the excellent relations that have existed for centuries between Algeria and the United States. The values and history shared by the two nations occupy a special place in their peoples' collective memories. They also continuously feed a strong commitment among their leaders to raise Algerian-American relations to a level truly reflecting their great potentialities and the strong aspirations of the peoples of both countries.

In 1860, Emir Abdelkader, the emblematic figure of Algerian resistance to French colonization who was later exiled to Syria, became the symbol of Muslim tolerance when he sheltered and saved thousands of persecuted Christians and Jews fleeing for their lives, including American diplomats and their families holed up in the American General Consulate in Damascus. Emir Abdelkader's brave demonstration of humanity and selflessness earned him appreciation and honors from U.S. President Abraham Lincoln and recognition as a pioneer standing for humanitarian intervention.

Similarly, the city of Santa Monica, California, is named after Monica of Hippo, an early Christian Saint and mother of St. Augustine, the great Algerian theologian and philosopher who greatly influenced Western Christianity. Elkader and Santa Monica not only carry strong symbolism as connectors between Algeria and the United States, they also stand for the shared values and common histories that give their relationship an exceptional character.

The peoples of Algeria and America have both always cherished and fought for the values of liberty, independence and justice. They have also supported each other, standing shoulder to shoulder in difficult and trying times in their respective histories. For instance, the steadfast and courageous defense by then-Senator John F. Kennedy in support of the determined struggle for independence by the Algerian people earned him the deep and everlasting gratitude of that people.

By the same token, Jan. 20, 1981, will no doubt remain as a highlight and remarkable episode in the relations between the two countries. On that date, Algerian diplomats had succeeded in gaining freedom for 52 Americans held hostage in Iran. Algeria's mediation elicited the admiration of the American Administration and the U.S. Congress as they thanked the Algerian negotiators for their successful resolution of the hostage crisis.

In 2012, Algeria and the United States established a Strategic Dialogue. As bilateral mechanism for cooperation and regular consultations, the Strategic Dialogue enables the two countries to meet on a regular basis and take an in-depth look at their level of coordination and consultation over a wide array of political and security issues of mutual interest. Having by now expanded the panoply of cooperation between the two countries as an instrument of political rapprochement, the Algeria-United States Strategic Dialogue makes a significant contribution to the advancement of Algerian-American cooperation in the economic, cultural, technical and scientific areas as well.

On January 28-29, 2019, Minister Messahel visited Washington to chair jointly with his American counterpart Michael Pompeo the 4<sup>th</sup> session of the Algeria-United States Strategic Dialogue convening in Washington. For his part, Mr. Lamamra co-chaired in Washington the 3<sup>rd</sup> session of the Strategic Dialogue with Mr. Kerry on April 8 and 9, 2015.

The outcomes of the four sessions of the Strategic Dialogue held in Algiers in 2014 and Washington in 2012, 2015, and 2019 have shown it to be an efficient instrument providing a framework and guidance for bilateral relations. Both Algeria and the United States are now focused on expanding the scope of this instrument to help further strengthen and develop the Algerian-American relationship.

Algeria and the United States also hold convergent views on a number of regional and international issues of mutual interest. In that respect, the United States has supported and greatly appreciated Algeria's role in the outcome of inter-Malian peace negotiations. Moreover, Algeria and the United States coordinate their efforts in combating terrorism and violent extremism in the framework of the Military Dialogue and Security Dialogue sessions.

With regards to economic cooperation, a legal framework being implemented between Algeria and the United States contributes to the development of their trade and economic relations. In that respect, the two countries have signed a number of economic agreements, including the Trade and Investment Framework Agreement

(TIFA) on July 13, 2001, which seeks to promote trade and investment between the two countries. TIFA's 6th session convened on October 3, 2018, in Washington. Algeria and the United States also signed a Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act (FATCA) Agreement in October 2015.

Both countries are now focused on increasing the number of reciprocal trade missions to further develop their trade and economic relations. In that regard, Algerian economic operators have traveled to the U.S. in 2014, 2015 and 2016 to take part in trade road shows intended to explore with the U.S. business community new partnership and investment opportunities and to promote Algeria's economic assets and potentialities.

Moreover, Washington hosted, from September 10 to September 13, 2018, the Algeria economic and cultural week. Very first to be held, this week have been a success in the way that it allowed the numerous Algeria businessmen to exhibit to a neophyte, but nevertheless curious American public, a range of Algerian manufactured and agricultural products. That was an opportunity for them too to acquaint themselves with the American market, and to prospects business opportunities and partnerships.

While number of MoU have been concluded between professionals of both sides during that week, wide audience tasted Algeria food and enjoyed two shows of the Algeria National Ballet, in which the cultural diversity and the ancestral heritage of Algeria have been brightly portrayed.

The US-Algeria Business Council, a trade organization including Algerian and American businesses, contributes greatly to further development of business partnerships between the two countries.

Algerian-American cultural cooperation gained in quality as the two countries signed on December 28, 2015, an agreement creating in Algiers an American international school, which will certainly contribute to further strengthening cultural cooperation between the two countries and greater understanding between the Algerian and American peoples.

In august 15, 2019, there were another cornerstone in the cultural cooperation. Indeed, Algeria and the United States of America signed a Memorandum of Understanding concerning the imposition of import restrictions on categories of cultural property of Algeria, which aims to combat trafficking and protect cultural heritage.

On the legislative side, the U.S House of Representatives created in 2014 the Algeria Caucus, while its Algerian counterpart, the National People's Assembly, created on December 12, 2015, an Algerian-American Friendship Parliamentary Group. Both groups act as bridges between the two countries and will no doubt contribute to boosting the dynamic and promising Algerian-American relationship.