

Ministry of Tourism and Craft Industry. Ahmed Merrani, a dissident from the former FIS, was given the Religious Affairs portfolio. This is Algeria's first ever pluralist cabinet.

Since the presidential elections, the armed opposition has radicalized around a hard core of the GIA, which accuses the FIS of seeking to achieve political reintegration, and stands against the AIS, the armed wing of the FIS. Although marginalized, the terrorist opposition is still capable of inflicting heavy damage, thereby complicating the human rights situation. Security in general is threatened by the continuation of Algeria's domestic conflict.

CANADIAN POSITION

Canada condemns the escalating violence and terrorism in Algeria and is concerned about the numerous human rights abuses cited by the international organizations. Canada is convinced that a sustained, coherent message in favour of human rights in Algeria will inevitably be echoed among moderates in all camps. However, Canada realizes that its human rights advocacy interventions in Algeria will have no significant impact as long as the political scene there is dominated by extremism. Canada has clearly expressed its desire -- most recently at UNGA's Third Committee to see a political solution to the present crisis, and has encouraged the Algerian authorities to engage in a political dialogue with all parties opposed to the use of violence as a political tool. In this regard, Canada considers the holding of presidential elections, the advent of a moderate opposition in the government and the priority placed on holding legislative elections as soon as possible as important steps toward democracy.