

A Critical Reading of Algerian Criminal Policy

قراءة نقدية في السياسة الجنائية الجزائرية

Ouabri Farid ♦

University of Algiers 1/ ALGERIA, Laboratory of Criminal Sciences

f.ouabri@univ-alger.dz

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Abstract:

This study evaluates Algeria's criminal policy in response to criminal phenomena. It examines the legislative and institutional frameworks, identifying their strengths and limitations. The central research question concerns the actual effectiveness of this policy. The research hypothesis posits that, despite the reforms undertaken, certain weaknesses persist. The objective is therefore to assess this policy and propose avenues for improvement. The study employs descriptive, analytical, critical, and comparative methods, drawing on the analysis of legal texts, crime data, and foreign experiences. The findings reveal relatively effective repression, but excessive centralization and insufficient prevention, highlighting the need for innovative approaches.

Keywords: criminal policy, evaluation, prevention, repression, Evidence-Based Policy.

الملخص:

تتلم هذه الدراسة بتقييم السياسة الجنائية في الجزائر في مواجهة الجريمة، حيث تبحث في الأطر التشريعية والمؤسسية، وتحدد نقاط قوتها وضعفها. وتتمحور الإشكالية حول الفعالية الحقيقية لهذه السياسة. وتفترض الدراسة أنه على الرغم من الإصلاحات المنجزة، تظل هناك هشاشات قائمة. ومن ثم، يهدف البحث إلى تقييم هذه السياسة واقتراح سبل لتحسينها. وتستخدم الدراسة المنهج الوصفي والتحليلي، وكذلك المنهج النقدي والمنهج المقارن، من خلال تحليل النصوص القانونية والبيانات الجنائية والخبرات الأجنبية. وتظهر نتائج الدراسة فعالية ردعية نسبية، لكن مع وجود مركزية مفرطة، ووقاية غير كافية، مما يستدعي اتباع مقاربات مبتكرة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: السياسة الجنائية، التقييم، الوقاية، الردع، السياسة القائمة على الأدلة.

Introduction:

Criminal policy is defined as the rational and organized implementation of institutional and community-based measures aimed at addressing criminal phenomena. It constitutes a component of state public policy. For several years, Algeria has sought to address issues of crime and security through an extensive legislative framework and adapted institutional structures.

However, the emergence of new criminal phenomena, the increase in the prison population, and persistent challenges related to recidivism raise questions about the actual effectiveness of this policy. This leads to the central research question: **to what extent does criminal policy in Algeria succeed in effectively preventing and repressing various forms of crime?**

Our hypothesis asserts that, despite recent reforms, certain weaknesses persist, hindering the fight against crime and calling for innovative approaches to improve criminal policy. The objective of this study is thus to provide a critical assessment of the criminal policy currently in force in Algeria. The aim is to present a comprehensive overview of existing measures, highlighting both their strengths and limitations. Such an approach remains underdeveloped in national research. Rather than being exhaustive, the study seeks to identify the salient features of this policy, the factors that undermine it, and those that could enhance its effectiveness.

To achieve this objective, we will employ descriptive and analytical methods to outline the existing measures and understand their overall functioning, complemented by critical and comparative methods, allowing for an evidence-based evaluation, particularly in comparison with criminal policies in other countries.

The primary research tools include the analysis of legal texts, studies, and criminal data, as well as, on an exploratory basis, the review of reports and foreign experiences. The ultimate goal is to draw lessons that can inform the improvement of criminal policy in Algeria.

The study is organized into three sections. The first section presents the achievements and progress of Algeria's criminal policy. The second section analyzes its limitations and weaknesses. Finally, the third section examines the extent to which this policy can be enhanced to achieve greater effectiveness.

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1. Achievement and Progress

Since its independence in 1962, Algeria has continuously improved its criminal policy in response to social, economic, and political transformations. Considering delinquency as a major obstacle to the country's development, successive reforms have been implemented to address it. Over time, this dynamic has led to the emergence of a modernizing legislative and institutional framework, as well as the development of a relatively effective repressive capacity.

1.1. A Modernizing Legislative and Institutional Framework

In recent years, criminal policy in Algeria has undergone remarkable evolution, reflected in the adoption of a series of legislative and institutional reforms. Indeed, faced with the alarming emergence of new forms of criminality, such as the formation of neighborhood criminal gangs, the proliferation of economic and financial crime, and the development of organized crime (drug trafficking, arms trafficking, illegal immigration, corruption, etc.), it has become necessary to move beyond traditional means of control. To this must be added the adverse effects of terrorism during the 1990s, which in some cases also led to the emergence of acts of banditry and kidnapping¹.

This evolution in criminal policy first involved strengthening the legislative framework structured around the Penal Code, the Code of Criminal Procedure, and specific laws. In fact, this movement began in the 1990s with the emergence of armed groups. Ordinance No. 95-11 of 25 February 1995 introduced into the Penal Code a new Section IV bis entitled "Crimes classified as terrorist or subversive acts," punishable by severe penalties, including the death penalty (Art. 87 bis et seq.)². Smuggling in all its forms (goods, weapons, products, etc.) was also criminalized, with sanctions that may extend to life imprisonment³.

Other reforms to the Penal Code have also concerned criminal liability and penalties. Thus, since Law No. 04-15 of 10 November 2004, legal persons have become criminally liable (Art. 51 bis)⁴. Alternative sanctions have also been introduced, such as community service through Law No. 09-01 of 25

¹ On kidnapping, see for example: Ouabri Farid., « Regard criminologique sur le phénomène de kidnapping en Algérie », *Revue internationale de criminologie et de police technique et scientifique*, n° 3, 2017, pp. 288-305.

² Official Journal of the Algerian Republic, No. 11, March 1, 1995, p. 7.

³ Ordinance No. 05-06 of August 23, 2005 on the fight against smuggling, Official Journal of the Algerian Republic, No. 59, August 28, 2005, p. 3.

⁴ Official Journal of the Algerian Republic, No. 71, 10 November 2004, p. 7.

February 2009 (Art. 5 bis 1)¹, and, since 2024, electronic monitoring² (Art. 5 bis 7). Similarly, alternatives to criminal prosecution have been introduced with the inclusion of mediation in the Code of Criminal Procedure (Art. 59).

Reforms in the fight against money laundering, the financing of terrorism, and corruption have also strengthened the legislative and institutional framework. These include Law No. 05-01 of 6 February 2005, which established a specialized body (Financial Intelligence Processing Unit)³, and Law No. 06-01 of 8 March 2006, as amended and supplemented, which created a “National Body for the Prevention and Fight against Corruption”⁴, which since 2020 has become the “High Authority for Transparency, Prevention and Fight against Corruption,”⁵ as well as a “Central Office for the Repression of Corruption” established in 2010⁶.

The fight against cybercrime has also received considerable attention since Law No. 09-04 of 5 August 2009 on special rules relating to the prevention and suppression of offenses linked to information and communication technologies. The objective of this law is twofold: first, to prevent attacks on computer systems (hacking, obstruction or disruption of the functioning of computer systems, etc.), attacks on data (deletion, modification, alteration), the dissemination of illegal content, fraud, scams, and cyber blackmail, etc.; second, to punish criminal behaviors in the digital space. Finally, on the structural level, this law establishes a “National Body for the Prevention and Fight against Offenses Related to Information and Communication Technologies” to strengthen the fight against cybercrime (Arts. 13 and 14)⁷.

Law No. 06-06 of 20 February on urban policy orientation also marks an important step in the process of modernizing criminal policy in Algeria. This law aims to establish an integrated urban policy that goes beyond the classical sectoral approach. It is based on several guiding principles, notably coordination and consultation, deconcentration and decentralization, proximity management, good governance, etc. (Art. 2). The prevention of urban delinquency is also among the objectives stated in this policy (Arts. 6

¹ Official Journal of the Algerian Republic, No. 15, 8 March 2009, p. 3.

² Law No. 24-06 of 28 April 2024 amending and supplementing Ordinance No. 66-156 of 8 June 1966 establishing the Penal Code, Official Journal of the Algerian Republic, No. 30, 30 April 2024, p. 4.

³ Official Journal of the Algerian Republic, No. 11, 9 February 2005, p. 3.

⁴ Official Journal of the Algerian Republic, No. 14, 8 March 2006, p. 4.

⁵ Articles 204 and 205 of the Constitution of the People’s Democratic Republic of Algeria, Official Journal of the Algerian Republic, No. 82, 30 December 2020, p. 4.

⁶ Ordinance No. 10-05 of 26 August 2010 supplementing Law No. 06-01 of 20 February 2006 on the prevention and fight against corruption, Official Journal of the Algerian Republic, No. 50, 1 September 2010, p. 14.

⁷ Official Journal of the Algerian Republic, No. 47, 16 August 2009, p. 4.

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and 10). Finally, this law also creates a new structure, the “National Urban Observatory,” to monitor the implementation of urban policy (Art. 26)¹.

In the area of juvenile delinquency, Law No. 15-12 of 15 July 2015 on child protection also brings a new impetus and reaffirms a commitment to modernizing criminal policy. This law enshrines the fundamental rights of the child, introduces a central concept, the “child in danger” (children who are victims of physical or psychological violence, neglected or abandoned children, children exposed to danger, etc.), and establishes new institutional mechanisms, notably the National Delegate for Child Protection. This law also strengthens the role of the juvenile judge and social and judicial protection measures².

Domestic violence was also criminalized by Law No. 15-19 of 30 December 2015, marking the transition to a specialized criminal law for the protection of women, who are most affected by this type of violence. Thus, any physical (beatings, injuries, etc.), verbal, or psychological violence between spouses (insults, humiliation, attacks on honor, etc.) is subject to criminal sanctions (Arts. 266 bis and 266 bis 1 of the Penal Code)³.

More recently, the revision of the Penal Code by Law No. 24-06 of 28 April 2024 also demonstrates a desire to strengthen the protection of women against violence, allowing the judge to prohibit any contact between the aggressor and the victim and to require, depending on the situation, psychological treatment (Arts. 17 bis and 23 of the Penal Code). Other provisions of this law also toughen measures against the illicit use of sensitive equipment (Art. 175 bis 2), criminal networks, and transnational organized crime (Art. 176 bis). Even acts of witchcraft and charlatanism are criminalized and punished (Art. 303 bis 42)⁴.

Similarly, recognizing the link between drugs and crime, the new criminal policy has also strengthened the prevention and repression of drug-related delinquency by establishing a system combining prevention, treatment, and enforcement. This is reflected in the latest reform introduced by Law No. 25-03 of 1 July 2025, which provides, under preventive measures, a national strategy for the prevention of narcotics and psychotropic substances developed by the National Office for the Fight Against Drugs and Drug Addiction (Art. 5 bis), and, under curative measures, alternatives to criminal prosecution, allowing the user to be directed towards medical treatment and

¹ Official Journal of the Algerian Republic, No. 15, 12 March 2006, p. 14.

² Official Journal of the Algerian Republic, No. 39, 19 July 2015, p. 4.

³ Official Journal of the Algerian Republic, No. 71, 30 December 2015, p. 3.

⁴ Official Journal of the Algerian Republic, No. 30, 30 April 2024, p. 4.

a detoxification program (Art. 5). Furthermore, this new reform toughens penalties against drug traffickers (Arts. 9, 10, and 11)¹.

At the procedural level as well, a new Code of Criminal Procedure was recently adopted by Law No. 25-14 of 3 August 2025, also marking a profound modernization of criminal procedure through the pursuit of a balance between repressive efficiency and the guarantee of individual rights and freedoms. Among other measures, this new reform strengthens the rights of the defense, enshrines a fair trial, and protects human dignity (Art. 1). Among the modern procedural mechanisms introduced are appearance under prior admission of guilt, intended to accelerate the handling of certain cases (Art. 539). One can also add the digitization of judicial procedures for certain formalities, the strengthening of the role of the public prosecutor (Arts. 43 et seq.), the introduction of a penal warning (Art. 57), and the partial decriminalization of management acts (Art. 8)².

More recently, the fight against neighborhood delinquency has received particular attention in the new criminal policy, which was reflected in Ordinance No. 20-03 of 31 August 2020, which also created a National Commission and Wilaya Commissions for the prevention of neighborhood gangs (Arts. 8 and 11)³.

The same applies to the fight against kidnapping, with the creation of a national strategy and local strategies for the prevention of abduction offenses under Law No. 20-15 of 30 December 2020 (Art. 5)⁴.

Finally, it should be recalled that since Executive Decree No. 06-108 of 8 March 2006, there has been a “National Committee for the Coordination of Anti-Crime Actions”, to coordinate the State’s efforts in crime prevention and repression of crime⁵. Here too, the new criminal policy clearly marks the transition from a fragmented and scattered fight to coordinated, comprehensive, and strategic governance at the national level.

Thus, in view of all these examples, the efforts to modernize criminal policy in Algeria, which began in the 1990s and continue to this day, are clearly visible. The authorities have indeed become aware of the need to adapt criminal policy to new forms of delinquency by strengthening the legislative arsenal and creating new structures. These efforts have even produced positive effects in terms of repression.

¹ Official Journal of the Algerian Republic, No. 43, 13 July 2025, p. 3.

² Official Journal of the Algerian Republic, No. 54, 13 August 2025, p. 7.

³ Official Journal of the Algerian Republic, No. 51, 31 August 2020, p. 5.

⁴ Official Journal of the Algerian Republic, No. 81, 30 December 2020, p. 4.

⁵ Official Journal of the Algerian Republic, No. 15, 12 March 2006, p. 19.

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1.2. A Relatively Effective Repressive Capacity

The repression of delinquency has always occupied a central place in criminal policy in Algeria. It refers to all the means that intervene in response to committed offenses and threats to public order. In this respect, the State has a structured and experienced security apparatus, capable of responding relatively quickly to certain forms of crime. This apparatus relies mainly on the national police and the national gendarmerie, not to mention the role of customs officers, as well as the efforts of the People's National Army and criminal intelligence agents.

Regarding the national police, their competencies cover urban areas, particularly cities. This security force carries out its missions within the framework of the judicial police, responsible for recording offenses, gathering evidence, investigating, and apprehending perpetrators (Art. 20 of the Code of Criminal Procedure). The police include specialized brigades (juvenile delinquency, narcotics, cybercrime, illegal immigration, prostitution, etc.). They also use modern tools (computerized databases, criminal analysis, surveillance cameras, DNA analysis, ballistics, etc.)¹. Moreover, thanks to the experience gained in the fight against terrorism in the 1990s, the police have highly professionalized their services through the implementation of advanced intelligence techniques, new investigation methods, and coordination between services, particularly during crises². More recently, Presidential Decree No. 25-258 of 25 September 2025 transformed the "Judicial Investigation Service" into the "Central Judicial Police Service" to ensure rapid and coordinated coverage of investigations throughout the territory³.

Several indicators show a progressive improvement in the repressive capacities of the police. For example, in 2024, the clearance rate for criminal cases reached 81% (394,189 cases recorded, 319,669 cleared)⁴. Of these, 141,497 cases were related to narcotics, 85,698 to offenses against persons, and 96,371 to property offenses⁵. The clearance rate was 74% in 2022 and

¹ Presidential Decree No. 04-432 of 17 Dhou El Kaada 1425 corresponding to 29 December 2004 establishing the National Institute of Criminal Research (I.N.R.C), Official Journal of the Algerian Republic, No. 84, 29 December 2004, p. 22 et seq.

² Bennouar Abdelhakim, *Les techniques spéciales d'enquête et d'investigation en Algérie*, Master 2 Professional Thesis, Cyberlaw, Faculty of Legal, Political and Social Sciences, University of Lille 2, 2009.

³ Official Journal of the Algerian Republic, No. 66, 7 October 2025, p. 4.

⁴ Bakhtini Rafik, « Lutte contre la criminalité : la DGSN expose son bilan », *La Patrie News*, 27 octobre 2025, Available at: <https://lapatrienews.dz/lutte-contre-la-criminalite-la-dgsn-expose-son-bilan-annuel/> (accessed 23 March 2026).

⁵ *Ibid.*

77% in 2023¹. These relatively high resolution rates suggest a notable repressive efficiency.

The same applies to the national gendarmerie, which has extended jurisdiction in rural and peri-urban areas. This security force is also responsible for repressing serious forms of crime through its specialized operational units, which manage with some effectiveness acts of terrorism, street crime (thefts, assaults, public order disturbances), and criminal networks (dismantling trafficking networks, seizure of narcotics, arrests of organized criminal groups, etc.). It is also equipped with a National Institute of Criminalistics and Criminology, outfitted with the most advanced investigative techniques². Regular activity reports testify to the repressive efforts deployed and highlight significant results. Thus, in its 2024 activity report, the national gendarmerie dismantled 1,473 criminal associations and 102 neighborhood criminal gangs³. For the same year, it also succeeded in seizing considerable quantities of drugs (26.6 tons of kif, 147 kg of cocaine, and nearly 10 million psychotropic tablets)⁴.

To increase their repressive capacities, security forces—police and gendarmerie—have in recent years had access in Algeria to new devices, notably special investigation techniques (interception of correspondence, audio and image monitoring, and infiltration)⁵. Video surveillance also plays an important role in their repressive actions. Beyond its preventive functions, video surveillance allows them to detect offenses in real time in public spaces, identify perpetrators, and direct interventions quickly and in a targeted manner⁶.

In addition to the repressive actions of the police and gendarmerie, there are also the efforts of customs agents and units of the National People's Army, especially in border areas with neighboring countries, notably those experiencing security instability, such as Libya, Mali, or Niger. This situation facilitates drug trafficking, smuggling (fuel, goods), illegal migration, arms trafficking, the development of armed militias, human trafficking, the

¹ General Directorate of National Security. Annual Report on the Activities of the Operational Services of National Security 2023. Available at: <https://www.dgsn.dz/IMG/pdf/dpj.pdf> (accessed 23 March 2026).

² Presidential Decree No. 04-183 of 26 June 2004 establishing the National Institute of Criminalistics and Criminology of the National Gendarmerie and defining its status, Official Journal of the Algerian Republic, No. 41, 27 June 2004, p. 16.

³ Ministry of National Defense. Activity Report of the National Gendarmerie Units for the Year 2024. Available at: https://www.mdn.dz/site_cgn/sommaire/sec_pub/pol_jud/pol_jud_en.php (accessed 23 March 2026).

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Bennouar Abdelhakim, *Les techniques spéciales d'enquête et d'investigation en Algérie*, op. cit.

⁶ For a critical review of this framework, see Ouabri, Farid. "La réglementation de la vidéosurveillance en Algérie : une myopie juridique aux conséquences indésirables." *The Annals of the University of Algiers* 1, vol. 1, No. 27, July 2015, pp. 16–34.

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establishment of terrorist groups, and kidnappings. For example, in 2025, as part of the fight against terrorism and organized crime, the National People's Army managed to neutralize 67 terrorists¹, and in 2026 it seized significant quantities of processed kif, psychotropic tablets, and cocaine.

Finally, the contribution of the judicial system to strengthening the repressive capacities of criminal policy should not be overlooked. Despite constraints related to workload, criminal courts handle a considerable number of criminal cases with some regularity. Moreover, in recent years, penal policy in Algeria has been rather oriented toward firmness, protection of public order, and the fight against impunity. Available data mainly come from addresses and reports published at the opening of judicial years and relayed by the press. In its 2024–2025 annual report, the Court of Tipaza, for example, adjudicated more than 400 criminal cases on appeal². A significant number of these cases were related to drug trafficking, property offenses, and economic and financial crimes³.

Even international indicators highlight the improvement of security in Algeria. According to the latest Global Peace Index – GPI 2025, Algeria ranks 92nd globally out of 163 evaluated countries, with a score of 2.042, placing it among countries enjoying relatively strong internal security, despite some persistent threats (terrorist risk, internal tensions, etc.)⁴. The same applies to the latest Global Safety Report 2025: Law and Order Index, which measures the perception of personal safety, where Algeria achieved a score of 88/100 for 2024, indicating that the majority of Algerians feel secure in their daily lives, especially when walking at night, and have confidence in the police and public order management⁵. However, threats related to organized crime persist in Algeria, as the Africa Organized Crime Index 2025 ranks Algeria 33rd out of 54 African countries for organized crime, with a score of 4.97/10 and a resilience score of 4.25/10, suggesting the presence of active criminal markets (human trafficking, drug trafficking, financial crimes, smuggling) and an average institutional response capacity⁶.

¹ Ministry of National Defense. Operational Report of the People's National Army for the Year 2025 and Operational Report of the People's National Army for the Year 2026. Available at: https://www.mdn.dz/site_principal/sommaire/actualites/fr/actualites_fr.php (accessed 23 March 2026).

² Lebbal, Amirouche. "Plus de 400 affaires criminelles jugées en appel à Tipaza." Horizons, 18 October 2025. Available at: <https://www.horizons.dz/2025/10/horizons-dz-societe-plus-de-400-affaires-criminelles-jugees-en-appel-a-tipaza/> (accessed 23 March 2026).

³ For judicial cases related to narcotics, see for example: National Office for the Fight Against Drugs and Drug Addiction. Anti-Drug and Drug Addiction Activities: Annual Report 2023. Ministry of Justice, 2024.

⁴ Global Peace Index 2025, Institute for Economics & Peace, 2025, p. 9.

⁵ Gallup, Global Safety Report 2025: Law and Order Index, 2025, p. 19.

⁶ Africa Organized Crime Index 2025: Algeria country profile, Institute for Security Studies, 2025, p. 12.

2. Persistent Limitations and Fragilities

Despite the previously presented modernization efforts, criminal policy in Algeria remains fragile and faces several limitations, both at the structural level, and in terms of prevention.

2.1. Rigid and Centralized Structures

One of the characteristics of criminal policy in Algeria is that it is rigid and excessively centralized. Indeed, the fight against delinquency in Algeria relies mainly on two central institutions: on one side, the General Directorate of National Security (Ministry of the Interior/urban areas), and on the other, the National Gendarmerie (Ministry of National Defense/peri-urban and rural areas). All decisions, programs, and initiatives must necessarily originate from these two institutions. Thus, decisions travel up and down the hierarchy, passing through several levels of approval. This creates slowness, and sometimes delays in complex interventions (organized crime, neighborhood violence, etc.). This operational logic is reinforced in laws and political decisions¹, and has been in place since independence².

However, at the operational level, this structural centralization creates several difficulties and makes the fight against delinquency uncertain. First, it is not adapted to address the criminal specificities of each region in Algeria. Indeed, the type of crime present in the South (smuggling, human trafficking, illegal migration, etc.) is not comparable to the crime found in the North in large cities and urban areas (neighborhood gangs, violence, thefts, burglaries, assaults, etc.). Yet, the current criminal policy model standardizes responses and poorly anticipates local phenomena or territorial dynamics. Second, this structural centralization prevents local actors from taking initiatives and paralyzes any willingness to innovate. As a result, the role of the wali, for example, or the President of the People's Municipal Assembly, who are the primary officials responsible for maintaining order in their territories, is reduced to executing rather than deciding³. Finally, this structural centralization reinforces institutional compartmentalization at a time when the fight against delinquency requires, on the contrary, the sharing of information and experiences between different security and justice services.

¹ For matters concerning the police, see Executive Decree No. 94-247 of 10 August 1994 defining the responsibilities of the Ministry of the Interior and Local Authorities, Environment, and Administrative Reform, Official Journal of the Algerian Republic, No. 53, 21 August 1994, pp. 10–14.

² For more details, see Ouabri Farid, *Cours de criminologie*, Tome 2, la criminologie appliquée, Office des Publications Universitaires, 2018, p. 61 et seq.

³ Article 114 of Law No. 12-07 of 21 February 2012 on the Wilaya, Official Journal of the Algerian Republic, No. 12, 29 February 2012, p. 4; and Article 94 of Law No. 11-10 of 22 June 2011, Official Journal of the Algerian Republic, 3 July 2011, p. 4.

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In comparison with other countries, criminal policy there is, on the contrary, flexible, adaptable, and more open to civil society (associations, neighborhood communities, local initiatives). In Canada, for example, the organization of the fight against crime is decentralized (federal police – RCMP, provincial police, local police). This creates strong local autonomy and advanced coordination between services, integrating innovative systems such as SALVAC (System for Analysis of Links in Crime-Associated Violence). As a result, security policies are better adapted to local communities and socio-cultural realities¹. The same applies in the United States, where the model is highly decentralized. In this country, where criminal profiling was born, there are approximately 18,000 different police agencies, divided among federal police (FBI, DEA, Secret Service, etc.), state police (e.g., State Troopers), county sheriffs, local police (NYPD, LAPD, etc.), and specialized police forces. The advantage of this model is that it allows very high responsiveness to criminal threats and interventions adapted to local security problems, relying in particular on advanced technologies (VICAP, CompStat, Big Data, predictive policing, etc.)².

These two countries, and many others, also have criminal justice models that do not exist in Algeria and have proven effective, such as Problem-Solving Courts. These are courts that operate according to a logic very different from traditional courts. Thus, these courts do not simply punish, but address the root causes of crime. They are characterized by a single judge who pronounces the sentence and regularly monitors its execution by the defendant (treatment orders, monitoring compliance with therapeutic programs, etc.). Coordination between the judge, the prosecution, the police, and social services is ensured, as the approach is comprehensive: addressing all causes related to criminal behavior (unemployment, therapeutic treatment, housing, vocational training, etc.). Several domains are involved: Drug Courts, Mental Health Courts, Domestic Violence Courts, Juvenile Courts, Veterans Courts. The final goal is the reduction of recidivism, the decrease of prison overcrowding, and better social reintegration of convicted persons³.

Finally, still in comparison with the experiences of foreign countries, the structural centralization of criminal policy in Algeria also results in weak participation from local authorities and civil society. In Scandinavian

¹ Curt T. Griffiths, *Canadian Police Work*, 5th ed. Toronto: Nelson Education, 2019.

² Samuel Walker, Charles M. Katz, *The Police in America: An Introduction*. 9th ed. New York: McGraw-Hill Education, 2018.

³ Berman Greg, John Feinblatt, "Problem-Solving Courts: A Brief Primer", *Law & Policy*, 23(2), 2001, pp. 125-140; Mitchell Ojmarh, Doris B. Wilson, Doris L. MacKenzie, Andrew Eggers, "Assessing the Effectiveness of Drug Courts on Recidivism: A Meta-Analytic Review of Traditional and Non-Traditional Drug Courts", *Journal of Criminal Justice* 40, no 1: 2012, pp. 60-71.

countries such as Sweden, security is co-managed by local authorities, associations, and police services. This approach relies on several tools, such as local committees and neighborhood councils, restorative justice and community mediation, educational programs, and participatory digital systems that allow reporting of nuisances and criminal incidents and collaborative monitoring between citizens and law enforcement¹. In France as well, structures such as the Local Security and Crime Prevention Councils (CLSPD) play an important role in defining local priorities and monitoring Local Security Contracts. These Councils are chaired by the mayor and bring together several actors: local elected officials, the prefect, the prosecutor, public services, associations, and private security companies². The same applies in the United States, where the concept of Community-Oriented Policing Services is implemented, through which the police work with citizens and local authorities, and communities participate in identifying criminal problems. Research results show that this approach reduces crime and increases public trust in the police³.

In Algeria, it seems that this operational logic is not sufficiently institutionalized. Certainly, Law No. 06-06 of February 20, 2006, as already mentioned, provides principles of decentralization and local management. It also specifies that "The State ensures that the conditions and mechanisms are in place to effectively involve citizens in programs and actions concerning urban policy" (art. 17). But in practice, the mechanisms that would "truly" achieve these objectives are difficult to find. Thus, according to Article 13 of the same law, urban policy is initiated and conducted solely by the State, that is, decided from "above," leaving very little initiative to local authorities. As proof, state funding for urban policy actions follows a logic of constraint and dependence, not a logic of participation and partnership (art. 25, para. 2).

Ultimately, the rigid and centralized nature of criminal policy in Algeria makes it difficult to combat delinquency, which is also reflected in the field of prevention, where insufficiencies are evident in several respects.

2.2. Insufficient Prevention

In recent years in Algeria, several legal texts have been adopted introducing crime prevention through the creation of bodies and strategies specifically dedicated to this purpose. Examples include the establishment in 2020 of a National Strategy and local strategies for the prevention of

¹ Tapio-Lappi-Seppälä, "Penal Policy in Scandinavia", *Crime and Justice*, vol. 36, n° 1, 2007, 217-295.

² Articles L132-4 to L132-7 and D132-7 of the Internal Security Code (France).

³ Julia A. Yesberg, Francesca Costi, Angus Chan, Ben Bradford, "A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of the Relationship between Policing and Collective Efficacy", *Journal of Experimental Criminology* 20, no. 4, 2024, pp.1147-1173.

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abduction offenses¹, the National Commission and Wilaya Commissions for the prevention of neighborhood gangs², as well as the National Body for the Prevention and Fight against Offenses Related to Information and Communication Technologies³.

However, some of these measures produce limited effects in practice, either due to insufficient implementation or because of their ineffectiveness, as is the case with the “National Committee for the Coordination of Crime Control Actions,” about whose activities no information is available⁴. Other measures are still awaiting implementing legislation, such as the National Strategy and local strategies for preventing kidnapping offenses⁵.

Moreover, it is difficult to know the work carried out by all these bodies or the results of their actions, which makes it impossible to assess their effectiveness. With the exception of a few bodies, such as the National Office for the Fight Against Drugs and Drug Addiction, most of the others do not provide public information tools, published reports, or activity summaries. Yet, the Algerian Constitution states in Article 55, paragraph 1, that “Every citizen has the right of access to and obtaining information, documents, and statistics, as well as their circulation.”

The insufficiency of crime prevention is also evident at the local level. Municipalities, for instance, are not fully involved in the process of shaping criminal policy, as previously explained, nor is civil society through the associative sector. Central authorities tend to decide first and consult afterward. Admittedly, there are some local actions and occasional awareness initiatives addressing violence, drug use, and compliance with traffic regulations⁶. However, Presidents of Municipal People’s Assemblies lack the means to enforce police regulations within their municipalities, simply because there is no effective municipal police in Algeria, unlike in other countries, despite the provisions of Article 93 paragraph 1 of the Municipal Code. Indeed, after having been used as a force to contribute to the fight against terrorism during the 1990s, the municipal guard was gradually dissolved, and its personnel redeployed across various administrations and public institutions, particularly following the decisive blow delivered by Executive Decree No. 14-100 of March 9, 2014, concerning the redeployment

¹ Official Journal of the Algerian Republic, No. 81, 30 December 2020, p. 4.

² Official Journal of the Algerian Republic, No. 51, 31 August 2020, p. 5.

³ Official Journal of the Algerian Republic, No. 47, 16 August 2009, p. 4.

⁴ Executive Decree No. 06-108 of 8 March 2006 establishing the National Committee for the Coordination of Anti-Crime Actions, Official Journal of the Algerian Republic, No. 15, 12 March 2006, p. 19.

⁵ Official Journal of the Algerian Republic, No. 81, 30 December 2020, p. 4.

⁶ United Nations in Algeria. “Youth 4 Impact: A Program to Strengthen Youth Resilience Against Drugs, Violence, and Crime,” 10 May 2023.

of municipal guard personnel¹. Curiously, however, in the new draft law for the Communal Code, the communal police is maintained (Article 119).

The same observation applies to urban policy, which continues to struggle to achieve its objectives. It is true that Law No. 06-06 of February 20, 2006 includes “the prevention of urban delinquency” within its social component (Article 10). To achieve this objective, it provides for the creation of a “City Development Contract,” defined as an agreement concluded by one or more territorial collectivities and one or more economic actors or partners within the framework of actions and programs implemented under urban policy (Article 3). Nevertheless, it must be noted that contractualization, as well as partnership and the co-production of security, are not yet fully entrenched practices in the management of public affairs in Algeria. These practices remain insufficiently mature, as the State tends to involve social partners only as a last resort. All of this explains why preventive approaches remain underdeveloped in Algeria.

With regard to the prevention of juvenile delinquency, responses are also most often judicial and procedural in nature. This observation becomes evident upon examining Law No. 15-12 of July 15, 2015 on child protection, where two-thirds of its content (namely from Article 48 to Article 150) is devoted to the judicial treatment of juvenile offenders, that is, those who have already committed an offence². Consideration of “children in danger” remains insufficient, despite the introduction of new social protection measures, to the extent that the actions of the National Body for the Protection and Promotion of Children, as well as those of open environment services, have limited impact on reality. Specialized child protection centers are also insufficient in number³. Moreover, the lack of human and material resources is regularly highlighted⁴, as are problems of institutional coordination⁵, and the overcrowding of reception structures (for the first quarter of 2025 alone, 2,246 children were taken into care in specialized institutions⁶, while listening

¹ Official Journal of the Algerian Republic, No. 13, 9 March 2014, p. 19.

² Official Journal of the Algerian Republic, No. 39, 19 July 2015, p. 4.

³ Executive Decree No. 25-308 of 16 November 2025 setting the conditions and procedures for the creation, organization, and operation of Specialized Child Protection Centers, Official Journal of the Algerian Republic, No. 79, 27 November 2025, p. 4.

⁴ UNICEF (Algeria) – Child Protection. Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/algeria/protection-de-lenfance> (accessed 26 March 2026).

⁵ G. A. “Protection de l’enfance : vers un renforcement global du dispositif national.” *Algérie Confluences*. Available at: <https://algerieconfluences.dz/protection-de-lenfance-vers-un-renforcement-global-du-dispositif-national/> (accessed 26 March 2026).

⁶ Derbal, Yasmine. “L’Algérie renforce ses dispositifs pour la protection de l’enfance : cadre juridique renforcé et accompagnement multisectoriel.” *L’Echo d’Algérie*, 31 May 2025. Available at: <https://lechodalgerie.dz/lalgerie-renforce-ses-dispositifs-pour-la-protection-de-lenfance-cadre-juridique-renforce-et-accompagnement-multisectoriel/> (accessed 26 March 2026).

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centers receive between 5,000 and 10,000 reports per day via the toll-free number¹. Recent indicators point to an upward trend in juvenile delinquency in Algeria, particularly drug-related offences².

Finally, it is also important to emphasize the lack, if not the absence, of scientific evaluations of prevention policies in Algeria, in contrast to Anglo-Saxon countries³. Most legal texts in Algeria merely provide for activity reports or administrative accounts of what has been carried out. As for police statistics, as well as those of the courts or the prison administration, they only reflect the repressive activity of the criminal justice system. Consequently, they do not make it possible to determine whether any observed decrease in delinquency is genuinely the result of preventive actions or of other factors. In short, Algeria needs an effective criminal policy grounded in empirical evidence, and one that prioritizes innovation, specialization, and coordination.

3. Towards a More Effective Criminal Policy

Despite its limitations and fragilities, criminal policy in Algeria nevertheless remains open to improvement. In order to enhance its effectiveness, it is necessary, on the one hand, to integrate the Evidence-Based Policy approach, and on the other hand, to promote innovation, specialization, and coordination between institutions and communities.

3.1. Integrating Evidence-Based Policy

One of the key measures to improve the effectiveness of criminal policy in Algeria is to base crime prevention programs on empirical evidence, an approach referred to in Anglo-Saxon countries as Evidence-Based Policy. This approach seeks to replace criminal policies founded on intuition, ideology, and “common sense” with policies that are scientifically tested and rigorously evaluated. It introduces a different logic: what actually works? under what conditions? and at what cost? Evidence-Based Policy is grounded in three pillars: empirical evidence (scientific evidence), comparative policy analysis, and impact assessment, that is, the measurement of the real effects of interventions. To produce reliable findings, this approach relies on various

¹ Ferial, T. “Protection de l’enfance : 5000 à 10 000 appels par jour sur le numéro vert .” Algérie Presse, 15 April 2025. Available at: https://algeriepresse.dz/?p=13298&utm_source=chatgpt.com (accessed 26 March 2026).

² Abi, Sofiane. “La criminalité urbaine a rebondi de 5 % en 2024 dans un bilan opérationnel dévoilé par la DGSN.” La Nouvelle République, 20 January 2026. Available at: <https://www.lnr-dz.com/2025/03/17/la-criminalite-urbaine-a-rebondit-de-5-en-2024/> (accessed 1 May 2025). Dehiles, Karima. “Réinsertion des jeunes délinquants, une priorité pour la société.” Horizons, 20 January 2026. Available at: https://www.horizons.dz/?p=197382&utm_source=chatgpt.com (accessed 1 May 2025).

³ Welsh Brandon C., et al., « What Do We Know About Crime Prevention?” International Annals of Criminology 40, no. 1-2, 2025, pp. 11-31; Sherman Lawrence W., David P. Farrington, Brandon C. Welsh, & Doris Layton MacKenzie (eds.), Evidence-Based Crime Prevention, New York: Routledge, 2002.

methods such as meta-analyses, randomized controlled trials, social experiments, systematic reviews, and longitudinal analyses. The indicators considered within this framework include recidivism rates, crime rates, perceptions of safety, and cost-effectiveness. Evidence-Based Policy has been institutionalized in several countries, including the United States (its country of origin), the United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia¹.

In Algeria, it is to be feared that criminal policy measures are still initiated under the influence of implicit ideologies, intuitions, or by mere mimicry². As evidence, one observes in recent years an excessive use of the term “strategy”: national strategy to combat violence against women, national strategy to combat drugs and drug addiction, national strategy for the prevention of kidnapping offences, national strategy for the prevention of neighborhood gangs, and so on. As if the mere use of the term “strategy” could in itself produce a kind of magical effect. In any case, this terminological repetition alone is indicative of a lack of innovation and inspiration. If one adds to this the lack of collaboration between policymakers and researchers, the shortage of empirical data, and the absence of scientific evaluations, it becomes clear to what extent criminal policy in Algeria requires a profound structural and cultural overhaul

The Evidence-Based Policy approach gave rise to the “What Works” movement in the United States in the 1990s, following the report by Professor Lawrence Sherman and his research team, and since the 2000s to a new formulation, namely “best practices”³, promoted by international institutions that regularly publish guides and databases on effective interventions to guide policymakers (UNODC, Council of Europe, European Union, World Bank, etc.)⁴. Likewise, “best practices” refer to interventions that are scientifically validated, replicable, positively evaluated, and transferable to other contexts⁵. In Algeria, the country still remains far removed from these developments.

That being said, the advantages of Evidence-Based Policy are considerable. It is an approach that allows for a rational and economical use of public resources by prioritizing only those measures that have demonstrated their effectiveness in combating delinquency (theft, assaults, drug trafficking and

¹ Sherman Lawrence W., *Evidence-Based Policing*, Washington, DC: Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice, 1998.

² Ouabri Farid, *Cours de criminologie*, Tome 2, la criminologie appliquée, op. cit., pp.63-72 et pp. 170-174.

³ Wyvekens Anne, « De « What Works » en « bonnes pratiques », Y a-t-il un bon usage du pragmatisme anglo-saxon ? », *Les Cahiers de la sécurité intérieure*, 54, 4^{ème} trimestre, 2003, pp.7-19.

⁴ Conseil de l'Union européenne, *L'action de l'UE contre la criminalité organisée*, 2024 ; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (ONUDC), *Annual Report 2024*, Vienne, 2025.

⁵ Weisburd David, David P. Farrington, & Charlotte Gill (eds.), *What Works in Crime Prevention and Rehabilitation: Lessons from Systematic Reviews*, Springer, 2016.

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use, cybercrime, violence, etc.). Thus, by making rational decisions based on solid empirical evidence, greater operational effectiveness of the envisaged actions can be achieved. Moreover, legislative and structural reforms would no longer constitute merely symbolic responses driven by purely repressive approaches or political imperatives, but would instead be grounded in proven scientific data. Finally, Evidence-Based Policy contributes to strengthening the transparency of public action and the accountability of decision-makers vis-à-vis citizens and oversight institutions¹. The integration of Evidence-Based Policy into criminal policy in Algeria therefore represents a major strategic opportunity, provided that it is adapted to the local context.

Among the areas of application of Evidence-Based Policy that have proven effective, one may cite, in the policing domain, Hot Spots Policing, or the concentration of police patrols in high-crime areas; Focused Deterrence, which targets identified criminal groups by combining prevention and repression; and Problem-Oriented Policing, which addresses the root causes of crime through tailored responses (Sherman et al., 1997; Sherman et al., 2002). Scientific evaluations have shown that all of these methods contribute to reducing crime and violence². Evidence-Based Policy has also made it possible to identify other effective preventive measures (early prevention programs, support for at-risk families, situational prevention strategies, cognitive-behavioral interventions), as well as measures that are ineffective (general sentence enhancement, non-targeted “zero tolerance” policies, short-term incarceration of juveniles without support, random police patrols, school-based drug prevention programs led by police, and certain forms of social prevention)³. In short, by drawing on Evidence-Based Policy, criminal policy in Algeria would be all the more effective if it also places emphasis on innovation, specialization, and coordination.

3.2. Investing in Innovation, Specialization, and Coordination

Following the diffusion of Evidence-Based Policy and “best practices” in recent years, new trends in criminal policy have emerged. The current direction is toward the adoption of a new generation of Evidence-Based Policy, which increasingly combines with the logic of Data-Driven Policy, that is, policy guided by data. This approach consists of collecting, analyzing,

¹ Sherman Lawrence W., Evidence-Based Policing, op. cit.

² Sherman Lawrence W., Doris Layton MacKenzie, David Gottfredson, John Eck, Peter Reuter, Shawn Bushway, Preventing Crime: What Works, What Doesn't, What's Promising, Washington, DC: National Institute of Justice, 1997. Sherman Lawrence W., David P. Farrington, Brandon C. Welsh, & Doris Layton MacKenzie (eds.), Evidence-Based Crime Prevention, op. cit.

³ Sherman Lawrence W., Doris Layton MacKenzie, David Gottfredson, John Eck, Peter Reuter, Shawn Bushway, Preventing Crime: What Works, What Doesn't, What's Promising, op. cit., Sherman Lawrence W., David P. Farrington, Brandon C. Welsh, & Doris Layton MacKenzie (eds.), Evidence-Based Crime Prevention, op. cit.

and extensively exploiting real-time data (Big Data) in order to design, adjust, and optimize criminal policy interventions. It also involves relying on artificial intelligence to detect criminal trends, predict risks, and guide policing actions. The advantage of this new approach lies in its ability to correct, refine, and adapt preventive measures in real time, without waiting for the end of a program or its formal evaluation. In this way, decisions become proactive and targeted, enabling a more rational use of resources and enhancing the effectiveness of interventions¹.

Several examples of this new trend can be highlighted, which could be integrated into the Algerian context. This is the case of “PredPol” (Predictive Policing), or predictive policing, which makes it possible to organize police patrols in a proactive manner in order to prevent crimes before they occur. In India, for instance, the police deployed in 2024 the MARVEL system (Maharashtra Advanced Research and Vigilance for Enhanced Law Enforcement), which integrates artificial intelligence to improve crime resolution and predict acts of violence². In the same country, since 2025, police officers have also been equipped with a mobile application, “Smart Prahari,” featuring updated hot spots and capable of recalculating patrol routes in real time in an optimized manner³. In the United States, “PredPol” (now rebranded as Geolitica) has been developed in certain states, such as Los Angeles, California, and Washington, since the 2000s⁴. Other countries have also adopted this form of policing, including China, Argentina, Canada (GeoDash in Vancouver for predicting burglaries), Belgium, the Netherlands, and Switzerland (Precobs, Gotham software)⁵.

In the field of justice as well, the creation in Algeria of Problem-Solving Courts would constitute a sound measure to address the issue of recidivism. One also refers to predictive justice. The Psychopathy Checklist-Revised (PCL-R), for example, is used in the United States within judicial and penitentiary settings (assessment of dangerousness, prediction of recidivism, support for parole decisions)⁶. The same applies in the United Kingdom with the “Murder Prediction Tool” project, which uses data on individuals known

¹ Greg Ridgeway, *Policing in the Era of Big Data*, Washington, DC: National of Institute of Justice, 2017.

² Ankita Deshkar, “To fight crime using AI, Maharashtra Police create MARVEL”, *The Indian Express*, Jul 18, 2024.

³ Ved Ghulghle, “Smart Prahari Predicts Crime Before It Happens”, *The Times of India*, Dec 07, 2025.

⁴ Purves Duncan, “Fairness in Algorithmic Policing”, *Journal of American Philosophical Association*, vol. 8(4), 2022, pp. 741-761.

⁵ Minji Yan, Luye Mou, Li Chen, “Digital Innovation and Legal protection in China’s predictive policing”, *Computer Law & Security Review*, vol. 60, April 2026, Article 106273. Mugari Ishmael, Emeka E. Obioha, “Predictive Policing and Crime Control in the United States of America and Europe: Trends in a Decade of Research and the Future of Predictive Policing”, *Social Sciences* 10, no. 6, (2021): 234.

⁶ Hare Robert., *Manual for the Revised Psychopathy Checklist*, 2nd Edition, Multi-Health Systems, Toronto, 2003.

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to judicial authorities in order to identify those most likely to become homicide offenders¹. Finally, the integration of neurosciences to better understand and prevent criminal behavior also offers promising perspectives for improving the justice system and the treatment of offenders, from which Algeria could benefit by incorporating it into its criminal policy. Neurotherapeutic interventions on hardened offenders have already produced encouraging results².

In addition to innovation and specialization, criminal policy in Algeria must also prioritize coordination between services. Such coordination implies the sharing of data and information among judicial authorities, police and gendarmerie services, customs services, and all bodies involved in combating delinquency. It also entails the creation of integrated databases, the centralization of criminal information, and the harmonization of data recording formats. The modernization of digital infrastructure is equally necessary, as is the training of personnel specialized in data analysis. All of this must be carried out within a legal framework that protects personal data and guarantees fundamental freedoms.

Finally, coordination must also involve local authorities and the broader community. Municipalities will have an important role to play in identifying local security issues and in designing preventive policies that are adapted and context-specific. Citizens' concerns must also be taken into account through intermediary bodies (associations, neighborhood committees, etc.). Even private security companies, which have expanded in Algeria in recent years, can contribute their expertise in the protection of persons and property. In short, the objective is to establish a participatory and inclusive criminal policy.

Conclusion:

At the conclusion of this study, it clearly appears that criminal policy in Algeria has undergone significant progress since the reforms initiated in the 1990s. Numerous legislative texts have been adopted, and many specialized institutions have been established to address criminal phenomena. Whether concerning economic and financial crime, terrorism, or ordinary crime (theft, violence, homicide, kidnapping, juvenile delinquency, organized crime, cybercrime), public authorities have consistently demonstrated a willingness to strengthen response mechanisms, both through repressive measures and

¹ Vikram Dodd, "UK creating murder prediction tool to identify people most likely to kill", *The Guardian*, Tue 8 April 2025.

² Choy Olivia, Adrien Raine, Roy A. Hamilton., "Stimulation of the Prefrontal Cortex Reduces Intentions to Commit Aggression: A Randomized Double-Blind, Placebo-Controlled, Stratified, Parallel-Group Trial", *Journal of Neuroscience*, 2018, 38(29): 6505-6512.

preventive frameworks. From this perspective, the achievements are undeniable: they are reflected in a modern legislative and institutional framework, which has yielded encouraging results, particularly in terms of crime clearance rates and repression of criminal activity.

However, our critical assessment highlights persistent limitations and structural weaknesses. First, this criminal policy remains highly centralized, which restricts the autonomy of local actors, delays interventions, and in some cases appears ill-suited to territorial specificities. Second, existing prevention mechanisms remain underdeveloped, or even ineffective. Likewise, coordination between institutions and the monitoring of implemented actions remain partial, making it difficult to objectively assess the effectiveness of programs. Finally, unlike foreign experiences (Canada, the United States, Scandinavian countries), the involvement of local authorities and communities in the design and implementation of criminal policy remains limited, thereby reducing the effectiveness of community-based security and mediation efforts.

Consequently, in order to improve the effectiveness of criminal policy in Algeria, this study proposes several strategic directions:

Strengthening decentralization and local autonomy: granting greater authority to local governments to design and implement strategies tailored to local specificities.

Enhancing prevention: developing community-based prevention programs and integrating new forms of prevention, particularly early prevention and situational prevention.

Institutional innovation: integrating the Evidence-Based Policy approach, so as to ground criminal policy programs in empirical evidence derived from scientific research, through the implementation of systematic evaluations using established methods such as randomized controlled trials, meta-analyses, and impact assessments.

Integrating advanced technologies: adopting Data-Driven Policy approaches through the use of Big Data, predictive analytics systems, integrated databases, and artificial intelligence in order to anticipate and effectively counter criminal phenomena.

Encouraging civil society participation: ensuring meaningful involvement of associations, citizens, and private actors in identifying criminal issues and designing local solutions, in line with the principles of Community-Oriented Policing.

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In the longer term, the implementation of these reforms could enable Algeria to transform its criminal policy into a more integrated model, grounded in participation, innovation, and scientific evaluation. Such an evolution would make it possible to move beyond a predominantly reactive approach toward a proactive, sustainable, and effective model, better aligned with contemporary security challenges.

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