

## Algeria green electricity

Founded shortly after Algeria achieved independence in 1962, Algeria's national oil and gas company Sonatrach has played a central role in the country's political, social, and economic transformation. With the 10th largest reserve of natural gas in the world, oil and gas exploration and extraction offered a lucrative and speedy means to develop the country. The nationalized oil and gas sector became emblematic of the country's independence and sovereignty.

With the Sahara desert covering 86 percent of the country, Algeria has impressive, year-round solar energy capacity, and is ranked 21st in terms of potential solar energy capacity. As such, Algeria has the potential to compete with its neighbor Morocco, to become the solar energy sector leader in the region.

In recent years, these plans have begun to bear results, with a number of promising solar plants scheduled. Recently, the Algerian company Zergoun Green Energy commissioned its solar panel production plant in Ouargla. The plant, which has a production capacity of 180 MW of solar panels, will equip the clean energy plants being developed in Algeria. This \$12 million project will be implemented by the Spanish company Mondragon Assembly which is currently building a similar factory in Egypt, and is expected to create 150 direct jobs.

If Algeria's solar power regulatory and fiscal framework has begun to attract foreign investment in the country's green sector, it pales in comparison with recent foreign interest in the country's oil and gas sector. Since the beginning of the war in Ukraine, European countries such as Spain, Italy, Portugal, and France have all looked across the Mediterranean to make up for lost supply from Russia.

In 2019, new legislation--Law No. 19-13 of December 11, 2019--was enacted that intended to attract foreign investment and implement more attractive regulatory and contracting structures. Significantly, the law included legislation for shale gas exploitation and enabled foreign companies to enter the sector as 49 percent minority stakeholders. Coinciding with the 2019 Hirak movement, a mass movement against President Abdelaziz Bouteflika's fifth term, the law attracted significant mobilizations, with protesters arguing the law undermined national sovereignty and opened the door to new forms of colonial exploitation in the country's south.

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