

**Mechanisms for the Prevention and Combat of Neighborhood Gangs in
Light of Ordinance No. 20-03 Dated August 30, 2020**

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Abstract:

This study aims to shed light on the phenomenon of neighborhood gangs, which represent one of the most dangerous forms of criminal activity affecting all countries, including Algerian society. Due to the severe impact these gangs have on public safety and social stability, the Algerian legislator intervened to curb this serious threat by issuing Ordinance No. 20-03 on the prevention and combat of neighborhood gangs. This ordinance includes several measures—some preventive, others punitive. We found that the Algerian legislator dedicated a specific law to this phenomenon, placing strong emphasis on the preventive aspect in order to limit its spread. The study also provides a set of recommendations that we consider essential for preventing and countering this dangerous issue.

Keywords: Neighborhood gangs, prevention, combat, deterrence, crimes.

INTRODUCTION

The issue of neighborhood gangs¹ is a relatively new and emerging phenomenon. Criminal activity within residential areas has evolved due to the formation of groups of individuals into gangs that seek to spread fear and terror among neighborhood residents (Mazhoud, 2021, p. 13). These gangs resort to physical and psychological assaults using bladed weapons, showing no regard for rights or neighbourly relations. The phenomenon has notably spread, especially in major cities.

Neighborhood gangs represent a serious social dilemma on an international scale, prompting public institutions to sound the alarm because these criminal groups pose a grave threat to societal security and stability—whether viewed from a security, judicial, or criminological perspective.

These gangs have imposed a grim reality that has terrified Algerians, with the situation further exacerbated by frequent clashes between neighborhoods. These confrontations are often about asserting dominance or supremacy over a nearby group or settling disputes that escalate into full-blown street wars among youths. Security forces struggle to put an end to these confrontations due to several reasons, the most critical being:

1- A neighborhood is defined as a district or a residential community within a city, a university campus, or a commercial area. A residential neighborhood is a geographical zone located within a larger city or municipality. It consists of a group of adjacent sub-districts, the number of which varies from one neighborhood to another.

A gang is defined as a group of people, neighbors, or even birds. Today, the term commonly refers to an organized group of criminals. For example, one may say: a gang of thieves was arrested, or gang warfare.

These gangs often possess Molotov cocktails or dangerous flares, and such clashes may result in serious violent crimes. The use of bladed weapons such as swords, incendiary bottles, and trained attack dogs threatens citizens' lives and property, as well as public peace and safety.

This situation led the Algerian legislator to enact specific legal provisions to address and respond to the phenomenon. These provisions aim to counter the associated criminal realities through the issuance of a dedicated law targeting neighborhood gang activity, which includes a set of preventive and deterrent mechanisms.

Accordingly, the Algerian legislator intervened to confront such crimes following an in-depth study of the phenomenon and by drawing on the experiences of foreign countries. This resulted in the issuance of Ordinance No. 20-03 dated August 30, 2020, concerning the prevention and combat of neighborhood gangs. The ordinance consists of six chapters and forty articles, and it clearly defines the concept of neighborhood gangs ([Government of Algeria, 2020](#)).

The Algerian legislator defined neighborhood gangs in Article 2 of Ordinance No. 20-03 as: *Any group—under any designation—composed of two or more individuals belonging to one or more residential neighborhoods, that commits one or more acts with the aim of creating an atmosphere of insecurity in residential areas or in any other physical space, or with the aim of asserting control over such areas, through moral or physical assaults on others, endangering their lives, freedoms, or safety, violating their property, or by carrying or using visible or concealed bladed weapons. Moral assault includes any verbal attack likely to instill fear or terror in others, such as threats, insults, defamation, intimidation, or the denial of a right.*

The legislator then outlined preventive mechanisms and methods for protecting victims by establishing specialized national and provincial committees, providing them with powers, material resources, and human capabilities to fulfill their mission effectively. In addition, legal texts were enacted to protect victims of these criminal acts and to provide them with legal and procedural tools to restore their sense of security and ensure judicial follow-up, concluding with the criminal provisions and penalties prescribed.

Based on the above, this study seeks to answer the following research question:

To what extent has the Algerian legislator succeeded in establishing effective mechanisms for preventing and combating neighborhood gang crimes?

To address this question, the study is divided into two main topics:

- First Topic: Toward a national strategy for the prevention of neighborhood gangs
- Second Topic: Establishment of national and provincial committees for the prevention of neighborhood gangs

THE FIRST TOPIC: TOWARD A NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR THE PREVENTION OF NEIGHBORHOOD GANGS

The Algerian Constitution, in Article 28, states that the state is responsible for the security of individuals and property ([Lazazga, pp. 04-05](#)). It is observed that various residential neighborhoods in Algeria, both old and new, suffer from the spread of various social scourges and the emergence of new crimes committed by groups known as neighborhood gangs. Accordingly, the state undertook the preparation of a national strategy for the prevention of neighborhood gangs with the aim of maintaining public security and tranquility, and protecting individuals and their property, in accordance with Article 03 of Presidential Ordinance No. 20-

03. The state, public administrations, public institutions, and local authorities also take the necessary measures to prevent neighborhood gangs (Saadi & Karroudj, 2021, p. 02).

Ordinance No. 20-03 related to the prevention and combat of neighborhood gangs was enacted. It is based on two pillars: the first is the establishment of preventive mechanisms involving various institutions, public bodies, civil society associations, and specialists within a regulated legal framework; the second is deterring and suppressing these gangs through criminalization and punishment of all related acts, extending to anyone who assists gang members in any way, and criminalizing even the failure to report their crimes, with stricter penalties (Mazouzi, p. 02). In order to implement this strategy, the Algerian legislator established two bodies for the prevention of neighborhood gangs: a national body and a provincial body. The national committee consists of various ministerial departments at the central level, security services, civil society, and specialists in criminology and psychology. The provincial committee consists of representatives of various institutions, security services, and criminology experts at the local level (Brahimi, 2023, p. 37).

First Requirement: Measures Taken by State Institutions to Prevent Neighborhood Gangs

Given the severity and threat this phenomenon poses to the security and safety of society—and the panic, fear, and lack of security and stability it causes—it becomes necessary to highlight newly established mechanisms to confront it.

Article 4 of Presidential Ordinance 20-03 emphasized the necessity for the state, public administrations, public institutions, and local authorities to take the necessary measures to prevent neighborhood gangs by carrying out the following (Barakat & Messika):

- Adopting vigilance, alert, and early detection mechanisms for neighborhood gangs.
- Raising awareness and informing the public about the dangers of joining neighborhood gangs and the consequences of using information and communication technology tools to glorify them and spread their ideas.
- Promoting institutional cooperation.
- Ensuring balanced security coverage of residential neighborhoods.
- Developing a general policy for the implementation of housing programs that takes into account the requirements of crime prevention and control.

Second Requirement: Strengthening the Partnership Between Civil Society and the Private Sector in the Development and Implementation of the National Strategy for the Prevention of Neighborhood Gangs According to Article 05

The state has adopted mechanisms of vigilance and early detection of neighborhood gangs, awareness-raising about the risks of joining such gangs, and the effects of using information and communication technology tools to glorify them and spread their ideas. It also promotes institutional cooperation, provides balanced security coverage in residential areas, and involves civil society and the private sector in the development and implementation of the national strategy for the prevention of neighborhood gangs. Additionally, the media is mobilized to play its role in informing public opinion about the dangers posed by these gangs to public security and social peace (Boualrouayeh, 2020).

First section: Vigilance

Michel Cather defined it as “the activity that enables us to stay informed of all developments in the sector in which we operate.” Vigilance also expresses the level of caution a given institution exercises regarding its changing environment, and it is defined as “the function related to the management of information resources, making the institution more intelligent and competitive” (Omar & Lamine, 2017, pp. 04-05).

In support of this, the United Nations emphasized the importance of strengthening partnerships with the private sector and cooperating with civil society organizations by establishing programs aimed at helping crime victims and reducing recidivism, such as social reintegration programs and plans to provide job opportunities for vulnerable members of society, including victims and released prisoners (Merjan & Sarih, 2021, p. 59).

Vigilance is also defined as “a continuous collective process carried out voluntarily by a group of individuals, through monitoring and tracking anticipated information related to possible changes in the institution's environment.” There are several types of vigilance, including: social vigilance, institutional vigilance, competitive vigilance, and technological vigilance (Boukelkoul, 2014, p. 102).

Second section: Definition of Media

(Article 06) These are the public and private, for-profit and non-profit means, institutions, and technologies that carry out the task of exchanging information and news. Media has become a fundamental requirement for individuals and society in order to achieve the desired level of living and communication. It opens the doors of interaction among individuals by providing written, audio, and visual communication, and it also offers educational and instructional tools to elevate the level of individuals.

Third section: Balanced Security Coverage of Residential Neighborhoods

The state seeks to involve the national police in the planning of new residential neighborhood projects to ensure close-proximity security coverage for citizens. Regional Inspector of Central Police and Police Controller Ben Sheikh Farid Zine El Abidine clarified that new urban projects should be planned in partnership with national police services to ensure neighborhood security coverage for citizens. He added that the national police was the first to advocate for the allocation of designated areas for police units, with consideration for construction methods and respect for spacing between buildings to facilitate the movement of security personnel and control of shared public spaces among residents (Boukelkoul, 2014, p. 102).

Large residential complexes and new neighborhoods have been strengthened thanks to security and intervention efforts to combat theft, crime, violence, and confront various forms of criminality. In addition, youth protection units have been established and are being generalized across all cities to address issues concerning children and minors (Hammani, 2022, p. 145).

Presidential Ordinance 20-03, in its Article 5, requires the involvement of civil society and the private sector in the development and implementation of the national strategy for the prevention of neighborhood gangs. This is done through the inclusion of civil society and private sector members and their active contribution in the national and provincial committees for the prevention of neighborhood gangs and in executing the national strategy developed by the state and its institutions, as well as private sector entities (Barakat & Messika, p. 42).

THE SECOND TOPIC: ESTABLISHMENT OF THE NATIONAL AND PROVINCIAL COMMITTEES FOR THE PREVENTION OF NEIGHBORHOOD GANGS

The legislator addressed, in Articles 8, 9, and 10 of Ordinance No. 20-03 dated August 30, 2020, and Executive Decree No. 21-123 dated March 2, 2021, the composition of the National Committee for the Prevention of Neighborhood Gangs. This committee consists of representatives from ministries, representatives of public administrations and institutions, representatives of national associations active in the field of violence prevention and social scourges, and individuals with competencies, along with a description of the committee's tasks and operating procedures.

The Provincial Committee is to be established whenever necessary, by decision of the territorially competent Wali (Governor), and its composition, appointment methods of its members, tasks, and functioning procedures will be discussed.

First Requirement: Tasks and Powers of the National Committee for the Prevention of Neighborhood Gangs

The legislator addressed this in Articles 08, 09, and 10 of Ordinance No. 20-03 dated 11 Muharram 1442 corresponding to August 30, 2020, and Executive Decree No. 21-123 dated 15 Shaaban 1442 corresponding to March 29, 2021, as follows: The National Committee for the Prevention of Neighborhood Gangs, chaired by the Minister of the Interior or his representative, as stipulated in Article 2 of Executive Decree No. 21-123 dated 15 Shaaban 1442 AH corresponding to March 29, 2021, consists of:

First section: Ministries

- Representative from the Minister of Justice, Keeper of the Seals
- Representative from the Minister in charge of Religious Affairs
- Representative from the Minister of National Education
- Representative from the Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research
- Representative from the Minister of Vocational Training and Education
- Representative from the Minister of Culture
- Representative from the Minister of Youth
- Representative from the Minister of Post and Telecommunications
- Representative from the Minister of National Solidarity and Family
- Representative from the Minister of Urban Planning
- Representative from the Minister of Communication
- Representative from the Minister of Health
- Representative from the Minister of Employment

Under Public Administrations and Institutions:

- Representative from the General Directorate of National Security
- Representative from the National Gendarmerie Command
- Representative from the National Office for Drug Control and Addiction
- Representative from the National Institute of Public Health
- Representative from the High Council for Youth

Second section: Civil Society

Two representatives from national associations active in the field of violence prevention and social scourges.

- Two (2) individuals recognized for their expertise in the field of criminology
- A specialist in sociology
- A specialist in psychology

This includes university professors and academics active in the fields of criminology, legal sociology, psychology, and other disciplines related to the issue of crime in neighborhoods and residential communities.

There is no doubt that this balanced composition—bringing together academics, specialists, and specialized security agencies—will make the combat process characterized by the precision, comprehensiveness, and effectiveness necessary to eliminate this dangerous phenomenon (Flih, 2021, p. 486).

Third section Three: Appointment Methods

The members of the National Committee are appointed, according to Article 3 of the same decree, by decision of the Minister of the Interior based on a proposal from the authorities, bodies, associations, or organizations to which they belong, for a term of 3 years renewable. In the event of the termination of a member's mandate, a new member shall replace them in the same manner until the end of the term. The representatives of the ministerial sectors must hold a senior executive rank.

Fourth Section: Tasks of the National Committee for the Prevention of Neighborhood Gangs

According to Article 8 of Ordinance No. 20–03 dated 11 Muharram 1442 corresponding to August 30, 2020, it is tasked with the following:

- Preparing the draft of the national strategy for the prevention of neighborhood gangs, submitting it to the government, and monitoring its implementation by the competent public authorities, civil society, and the private sector.
- Collecting and centralizing data related to the prevention of neighborhood gangs.
- Defining standards and methods of prevention against neighborhood gangs and developing national expertise in this field.
- Proposing all measures that would ensure effectiveness in the prevention of neighborhood gangs.
- Providing opinions or recommendations on any matter related to the prevention of neighborhood gangs.
- Ensuring information exchange and coordination of efforts among all stakeholders involved in the prevention of neighborhood gangs.
- Proposing and evaluating legal and administrative tools in the field of prevention of neighborhood gangs, and suggesting any measure or procedure to improve their effectiveness.
- Monitoring and evaluating the activities of the provincial committees for the prevention of neighborhood gangs and coordinating their actions.

Fifth section: Operating Procedures

According to Article 4 of the same decree, the National Committee meets in regular sessions four times a year, and in extraordinary sessions whenever necessary upon convocation by its Chair. The Chair prepares the agenda of the meetings and sends it to the members of the National Committee at least fifteen (15) days prior to the meeting date. This period may be

reduced for extraordinary sessions but shall not be less than eight days, as stipulated in Article 5.

Based on Article 6, the National Committee shall draft and approve its internal rules. It is also provided with a secretariat handled by the competent services of the Ministry of the Interior. The National Committee prepares periodic reports outlining the outcomes of its activities in the field of prevention and combat of neighborhood gangs, which are submitted to the Prime Minister. Additionally, it prepares an annual report presented to the President of the Republic, pursuant to Article 8 (Saadi & Karroudj, 2021, p. 06).

Due to the importance of the role entrusted to this committee and to ensure its effectiveness, the Algerian legislator has required the committee to submit an annual report to the President of the Republic. This report must include an assessment of the implementation of the strategy for the prevention of neighborhood gangs, as well as recommendations deemed necessary to strengthen national mechanisms in this area (Hamlel, 2022, p. 1123).

Second Requirement: Tasks and Powers of the Provincial Committee for the Prevention of Neighborhood Gangs

The composition and operating procedures of the Provincial Committee for the Prevention of Neighborhood Gangs are stipulated in Articles 9 to 16 of the aforementioned Executive Decree No. 21-123. Article 9 states: “A Provincial Committee for the Prevention of Neighborhood Gangs shall be established at the level of each province. The Provincial Committee shall be installed whenever necessary by decision of the territorially competent Wali (Governor).”

The main task entrusted to the Provincial Committee for the prevention of neighborhood gangs is to implement the national strategy at the local level. The aim of creating such a local body is to enable early detection of gang activities and to alert the concerned authorities in order to engage in preventive action and address crimes before they occur—or at the very least, mitigate their criminal consequences in terms of human and material damage (Kharchef, 2015, p. 811). The Provincial Committee is installed whenever necessary, by decision of the territorially competent Wali, and we will address its composition, appointment methods, tasks, and operating procedures (Wakass, 2021, p. 732).

First section: Its Composition

The Provincial Committee for the Prevention of Neighborhood Gangs is composed of 27 members (Government of Algeria, 2020):

- Representative from the Directorate of Education
- Representative from the Directorate of Vocational Training and Education
- Representative from the Directorate of Urban Planning
- Representative from the Directorate of Employment
- Representative from the Directorate of Religious Affairs and Endowments
- Representative from the Directorate of Youth and Sports
- Representative from the Directorate of Culture
- Representative from the Directorate of Health
- Representative from the Directorate of Social Action and Solidarity
- Representative from the National Gendarmerie Group
- Representative from the National Security Services

- Representative from local associations active in the field of violence prevention and social scourges
- Representative from neighborhood committees
- Elected member from the Provincial People's Assembly
- Specialist in Criminology
- Specialist in Sociology
- Specialist in Psychology

The committee may also seek the assistance of any individual who, by virtue of their expertise, can support its work.

Members of the Provincial Committee are appointed by decision of the Wali, based on proposals from the authorities, bodies, associations, and organizations to which they belong, for a term of 3 years, renewable. In the event of a member's departure, a new member is appointed in the same manner to serve until the end of the term ([Government of Algeria, 2021](#)).

Second section: Appointment Methods

The members of the Provincial Committee are appointed, according to Article 11 of the same decree, by decision of the Wali, based on proposals from the authorities, bodies, associations, or organizations to which they belong, for a term of 3 years, renewable. In the event of the termination of a member's mandate, a new member shall replace them in the same manner until the end of the term.

Third section: Tasks of the Provincial Committee for the Prevention of Neighborhood Gangs

According to Article 12 of Ordinance 20-03, the Provincial Committee is tasked with the following ([Merjan & Sarih, 2021, p. 60](#)):

- Implementing the national strategy for the prevention of neighborhood gangs at the local level
- Early detection of neighborhood gang activities and notifying the competent authorities
- Developing awareness programs and initiating campaigns on the dangers of neighborhood gangs and their impact on society; proposing the organization of any cultural, media, or awareness activity to local authorities in order to raise public awareness on the dangers of neighborhood gangs and how to prevent them, and involving civil society in this
- Studying and analyzing neighborhood gang activities within the province and the surrounding factors and circumstances, in order to adopt a local policy for gang prevention
- Requesting studies from concerned departments at the local level on any phenomenon or topic related to neighborhood gangs, and enabling access to all data and statistics related thereto
- Giving priority in gang prevention programs to the treatment of phenomena that most affect youth
- Implementing the directives of the National Committee related to its activities, including focusing on specific forms of gang crimes
- Reporting to competent judicial authorities any acts it learns of that may constitute crimes under this ordinance

– Preparing periodic reports and an annual report to be sent to the National Committee, evaluating the gang situation in the province and actions taken for prevention ([Government of Algeria, 2020](#)).

Fourth section: Operating Procedures

According to Article 12, the Provincial Committee meets in regular session four (4) times a year, and in extraordinary session whenever necessary upon convocation by its Chair. The Chair prepares the meeting agenda and sends it to members of the Provincial Committee at least fifteen (15) days prior to the meeting date. This period may be shortened for extraordinary sessions, but not to less than eight days, as per Article 13.

The Committee drafts and approves its internal rules and is provided with a secretariat managed by the General Secretariat of the Province in accordance with Article 15. Based on Article 16, the Provincial Committee prepares periodic reports and an annual report evaluating the situation of neighborhood gangs in the province and the prevention efforts undertaken. These reports are sent to the Chair of the National Committee for the Prevention of Neighborhood Gangs within eight days from the closing date of the meetings.

The operating expenses of both the National and Provincial Committees for the Prevention of Neighborhood Gangs are recorded in the operating budget of the Ministry of the Interior, in accordance with Article 17 of the same decree.

– Proposing to local authorities and the National Committee the creation of public facilities or the adoption of any measures necessary for the prevention of neighborhood gangs.

Conclusion:

Finally, we have reached a set of findings, the most important of which are:

– The Algerian legislator has recognized the seriousness of the phenomenon of neighborhood gangs, prompting the enactment of a dedicated law—an indication of his and the public authorities' concern for ensuring the safety and security of citizens wherever they may be.

– The Algerian legislator prioritized the preventive aspect over the punitive aspect in confronting and addressing the crimes of neighborhood gangs.

– By issuing Ordinance No. 20-03 dated August 30, 2020, concerning the prevention and combat of neighborhood gangs, the legislator sought to address the shortcomings of previous laws and close the loopholes exploited by gang criminals to carry out their acts within residential neighborhoods and evade punishment.

– There is a lack of a national strategy and effective planning in the development of new residential neighborhoods, as well as in the relocation process following the demolition of informal settlements and the transfer of their inhabitants to new neighborhoods—leading to the emergence of new forms of criminality, including neighborhood gangs.

– Despite the issuance of a dedicated law to combat neighborhood gangs, the phenomenon continues to escalate rapidly and is no longer confined to major cities. This is due to the failure to implement the law and activate the two preventive committees it provides for: the National Committee and the Provincial Committee for the Prevention of Neighborhood Gangs. Despite their importance, neither of these committees has yet been established. The Ministry of the

Interior and other relevant authorities must act swiftly to establish them, as the phenomenon is beginning to take on a dimension that may become unmanageable in the future.

These findings lead us to present several recommendations, the most important of which are:

- The urgent need to implement the preventive measures and mechanisms provided for in Ordinance No. 20-03 of August 30, 2020, and to apply them on the ground as soon as possible to confront this type of crime.
- Laws related to the prevention and combat of neighborhood gangs must be regularly updated and developed to respond to emerging criminal behaviors, as these gangs exploit scientific and technological advancements to evade justice.
- The concerted efforts of all stakeholders are essential in preventing and combating neighborhood gangs—starting with neighborhood residents and extending to all components of civil society, including associations, teams, and clubs. The roles of schools, mosques, and families must be activated to raise awareness about the risks posed by these gangs and to cultivate a new generation of youth immune to such ideas and deeply rooted in the teachings of our noble religion.
- Awareness must be raised among residents to report any unusual activity in residential complexes or the presence of strangers and to refrain from shielding gang members—even within their own families—in order to facilitate the work of security forces in searching for and arresting them.
- Efforts must be made to address the social problems facing youth, such as poverty, unemployment, and marginalization, and to create recreational and sports spaces within residential neighborhoods, in addition to awareness and education on the dangers of gang-related crime on individuals and society.
- Organize national and international scientific conferences and meetings to exchange expertise and experiences on the subject of neighborhood gangs.
- Open specialized academic and vocational training programs in criminology at all Algerian universities across all levels: Bachelor's, Master's, and Doctorate.

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