

The Mouvement Populaire has primarily a rural base. It stands for rural smallholders and the landless poor as well as low-skilled urban labor. Its programs stress improved social services, agricultural co-operatives, and state-based development equitably distributed between rural and urban areas. The party wants to secure the poor and the marginalized a measure of influence on social and economic policy, commensurate with its position as the majority of the population. In 1986, Mahjoubi Ahardan was removed from the position of leadership in the MP and then formed a new party, the **Mouvement National Populaire**. The reorganized Mouvement Populaire, under Mohand Laenser, has increased its share of parliamentary seats since the 1993 elections. In the 2002 elections, it won 27 seats.

**MOUVEMENT POPULAIRE DÉMOCRATIQUE ET CONSTITUTIONNEL (MPDC).** This political party is an offshoot of the **Mouvement Populaire** established in February 1967 by Doctor `Abd al-Karim Khatib after he was ousted from the Mouvement Populaire on 4 November 1966. Its secretary-general, Doctor Khatib, was one of the leading founders of the Mouvement Populaire. The MPDC won no seats in 1993. In 1992, Doctor Khatib joined forces with the Attawhid wa al-Islah association and founded the progovernment Islamist party, Parti de la Justice et Développement (PJD). In the 2002 national elections, the PJD won 42 seats.

**MOUVEMENTS ET FRONTS UNIFIÉS DE L'AZAOUAD (MFUA).** *See* FRONT ISLAMIQUE ARABE DE L'AZAOUAD; FRONT POPULAIRE DE LIBÉRATION DE L'AZAOUAD.

**MOZABITES.** They are known as Banu Mzab or simply Mzab, a Berber community of the heterodox Ibadithe sect, the survivors of the once-flourishing Rustimid imamate of **Tahart** or the city-republic of Sadrata, which succeeded it. Tahart is located near the town of Ouar-gala in the Algerian Sahara. Driven out of Sadrata in the middle of the 11th century, the Ibadithes withdrew into the arid and inhospitable limestone highland of the Shabka, some 645 kilometers south of the capital city, Algiers. There, on the Mzab River, hence the name under which they are currently known, through hard work they created large groves of date trees irrigated by a dense network of chan-

nels. These plantations requiring large investments of labor and capital are not to be viewed, however, from the point of view of economic returns. In fact, their maintenance is made possible only by the earnings of the Mozabite merchants and capitalists established all over Algeria.

The Mozabites live in a loose confederation of seven small urban settlements that grew up between the 11th and 17th centuries. These seven cities of the M'zab are Beni Isguen, Ghardaïa, Melika, Bounoura, Elateuf, Guerrara, and Berriane, with Ghardaïa as the largest and most important urban center of the Mzab country. Each town constitutes a sort of theocratic republic governed by two assemblies: one, the *halqa* (circle), of 12 religious heads (*I'zzaban*) and the other consisting of laymen in charge of the administration and police affairs. Civil and penal jurisdiction lay exclusively in the hands of the *I'azzaban* and was based on their interpretation of the Qur'an and the *Hadith* (sayings and practices of the Prophet). These commentaries were compiled in numerous collections until Sheikh `Abdel `Aziz of the town of Bni Isguen codified them in the 10 volumes of his *Kitab al-Nil*. Following the incorporation into the Algerian administration of the Mozabite territory (1882) after it had already been declared (1853) a French protectorate, certain reforms were introduced into this code, but most of them remained practically unobserved, so that the French policymakers thought it wise to exempt the Mozabites from the innovations introduced in 1959 into the traditional legislation regulating marriage and divorce in Algeria. After independence, Sheikh Buyud Ibrahim was designated to represent the Mozabite community in the government of the Algerian Republic.

The desert environment and the isolation of their homeland have never stopped the Mozabites from gaining a place in the economy of Algeria. In Ottoman times, certain occupations, such as the running of public baths of slaughterhouses or mills, were almost exclusively under their control. Today, about one-sixth of the male population (women are not allowed ever to leave the Mzab River region) seeks commercial success on the markets of the larger Algerian towns and cities in various commercial enterprises. Other Ibadithe communities are found in the Tunisian island of Jerba and the Jbal Nefusa in Libya. *See also* KHARIJISM.