

The Violation of Algerian Women's Rights under French Colonialism – The Algerian Woman as a Case Study -A Socio-Historical Study-

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Abstract:

During the French colonial period, Algerian women played an active and decisive role in the national resistance movement, performing a wide range of functions that included material and moral support as well as direct participation in revolutionary activities. In parallel, they were subjected to severe repressive policies, including torture, imprisonment, and widespread violations of their fundamental human rights. Despite this, they demonstrated remarkable resilience and maintained strict secrecy regarding revolutionary activities. They contributed in various capacities as combatants, couriers, and medical assistants.

This study aims to highlight the role of Algerian women during the War of Liberation while shedding light on the abuses committed by the French colonial authorities against them.

Keywords: Lalla Fatma N'Soumer, Aisha Nawasir, Meryem Bouatoura, Djamila Bouhired, combatant, courier, nurse.

Introduction

During the French colonial period, Algerian women were neither marginal figures nor mere passive witnesses to the country's historical transformations; rather, they were essential actors within the national resistance framework and pivotal components in sustaining revolutionary action. Confronted with a colonial order characterized by systematic repression, the violation of fundamental rights, and attempts to dismantle Algerian social structures, women successfully asserted their historical presence through diverse forms of struggle, ranging from indirect support to active participation in the field.

The contributions of Algerian women during the War of Independence were remarkably varied. They encompassed vital logistical roles—such as transporting supplies and weapons and sheltering *mujahideen*—alongside intelligence gathering on colonial military movements, as well as nursing and first-aid work in the mountains and rural regions. Furthermore, their involvement extended to guerrilla and combat operations within urban centers, demonstrating a profound level of engagement in the national liberation movement despite the severe risks and consequences involved.

In this context, several female figures emerged as prominent national icons in Algerian collective memory. Among them were Lalla Fatma N'Soumer, who embodied early nineteenth-

century resistance, and Djamila Bouhired, who personified the militant spirit of the War of Independence, alongside many other women who contributed to shaping national consciousness and embedding a culture of resistance.

Based on the foregoing, this study addresses a central research problem: What was the nature of the role played by Algerian women in opposing French colonialism? And how did the colonial administration address this role in terms of repression and counter-action?

The significance of this topic lies in its re-examination of the Algerian woman's contribution to the War of Independence as a structural rather than a circumstantial element. It illuminates her position within the dynamics of colonial conflict and highlights the scale of her sacrifices to preserve national identity and reclaim sovereignty.

To address these questions, the study employs a socio-historical approach. This methodology allows for an analysis of historical events in relation to the social and cultural structures that produced them, enabling a deeper understanding of the Algerian woman's experience under French rule and analyzing the interaction between colonial society and female actors within the national liberation movement.

First: Algerian Women's Responses to French Colonial Policy

From the very beginning of the French occupation of Algeria, colonial rule was characterized by a policy of extreme violence, manifested through massacres, looting, torture, and deliberate attempts to dismantle Algerian social structures. Algerian women were not exempt from these violations; rather, they were among the groups most severely affected by the infringement of fundamental rights, including the right to life, bodily integrity, and their social and familial roles, alongside continuous efforts to undermine their position within Algerian society.

Despite this harsh reality, Algerian women did not submit to colonial domination. Instead, they gradually moved from the position of victims to that of active agents of resistance. They contributed to supporting popular movements and later became involved in the armed revolutionary struggle launched by Algerians against French colonial rule. This involvement took various forms, ranging from indirect forms of support to, in certain cases, direct participation in resistance activities.

A – The Role of Algerian Women in Popular Uprisings

Algerian women participated in various popular uprisings against French colonial rule, either directly or indirectly. Their role was not limited to being wives or mothers of *mujahideen*; rather, they constituted active elements within the resistance structure. They assumed both moral and material responsibilities by providing supplies and provisions to resistance fighters, transmitting information regarding the movements of the French army, and offering psychological support to the *mujahideen* through encouragement, prayers, and continuous moral reinforcement. Among the most prominent historical figures who embodied this role was Lalla Fatma N'Soumer, one of the most significant symbols of female resistance during the nineteenth century. Lalla Fatma N'Soumer belonged to a distinguished religious family. She was the daughter of Sheikh Muhammad ibn 'Isa, one of the prominent figures of the Rahmaniyya *zawiya*, while her mother, Lalla Khadija, was associated with a symbolic status in

the Kabyle region. She was born in 1830, and was forced into marriage at an early age; however, she rejected this imposed situation and returned to her family, demonstrating an early spirit of defiance against social and political constraints. Some historians have described her as far more than an ordinary woman, portraying her as an exceptional figure who combined intelligence, determination, and courage. These qualities enabled her to become one of the leading figures of resistance in the Kabyle region. She fought numerous battles alongside Sharif Boubaghla, including the battle of 18 July 1854, in which the French army suffered significant losses, estimated at more than 800 fatalities, including officers, in addition to hundreds of wounded soldiers¹.

Her military strategy relied on organizing small resistance groups capable of launching rapid and surprise attacks, targeting supply lines and disrupting communication routes. This approach reflected an advanced tactical understanding of the nature of irregular warfare. She continued her resistance activities even after the death of Sharif Boubaghla, further consolidating her status as a steadfast symbol of resistance. The French authorities referred to her as the “Joan of Arc of Djurdjura,” yet she rejected this designation, preferring another symbolic reference associated with Islamic identity, such as Khawla bint al-Azwar. This preference reflected the clear connection between her resistance and the local cultural and religious framework. At the end of her struggle, she was captured on 11 July following the Battle of Tighourda near Tamesguida. She was placed under house arrest at the Beni Slimane *zawiya* near Tablat, under the supervision of the colonial authorities, where she remained until her death in 1863 after suffering from illness².

B – Algerian Women's Participation in the National Liberation Front and the National Liberation Army

Many Algerian women joined the Liberation Revolution within the framework of the National Liberation Front (FLN) and the National Liberation Army (ALN), representing a qualitative transformation in the role of Algerian women from indirect support to organized participation within the revolutionary structure. With their involvement in revolutionary activities, women were no longer perceived merely as “women” in the traditional social sense; rather, within the militant environment, they were addressed as “sisters,” a symbolic reference to the principle of national fraternity that united men and women around a single objective: the liberation of the homeland. The process of joining the revolution generally followed carefully organized procedures. A woman would submit a request to join, often through her connection with a *mujahid* or an organizational cadre within the National Liberation Front or the National Liberation Army. A liaison operative (*mousabbil*) would then be responsible for transferring her to the *mujahideen*'s bases, where she would be presented to the regional leadership. The

¹ Mariam Sayyid Mubarak, Nisa' Lahun Tarikh, Dar al-Ma'rifa, Algiers, undated, pp. 49–50, 52–53.

² Mariam Sayyid Mubarak, *ibid.*, p. 53; see also: Salih ibn Nabili Farkous, Tarikh Jihad al-Umma al-Jaza'iriyya li-l-Ihtilal al-Faransi: al-Muqawama al-Musallaha (1830–1962), Dar al-'Ulum lil-Nashr wa-l-Tawzi', Algiers, n.d., p. 225

latter would conduct a preliminary investigation to verify the sincerity of her intentions and the seriousness of her desire to join the revolutionary movement³.

After this verification process, she would be directed to one of the revolutionary bases, particularly those located along the eastern or western borders, where she received field training or basic instruction, including first aid and nursing. Some centers, such as the Ghardimaou region, contributed to the training of a number of *mujahideen* in the medical field, allowing medical knowledge to be transmitted among male and female members of the revolutionary movement. In this context, physicians such as Dr. Muhammad al-Saghir al-Naqqash played an important role by being assigned to provide both theoretical and practical training for field nurses and medical personnel within the ranks of the revolution⁴.

Upon completing their training, women were integrated into field activities, with their roles distributed between work within the civilian organization of the National Liberation Front, including cooking, food provision, caring for the wounded, and collecting contributions and donations, and military tasks within the National Liberation Army, such as participation in communication, supply, and medical assistance units. They also undertook surveillance activities and gathered information on the movements of colonial forces, reporting this intelligence to the revolutionary leadership. In certain cases, their involvement extended to direct *fedayeen* operations. Djamila Bouhired clearly embodied this militant role, as one of the most prominent female activists who endured arrest and torture. She was captured after being wounded by a bullet in her left shoulder and was transferred to the French military hospital (Maillot Hospital), where she received medical treatment under guard. During her detention, she expressed her revolutionary position with determination, affirming that the struggle of Algerian men and women was a struggle for freedom and the restoration of sovereignty, while rejecting colonial logic and its justifications. Among the statements attributed to her was: "You are French soldiers, unaware of the reason for which you are here, whereas we are fighting for a cause..."—a statement reflecting the depth of political awareness that characterized Algerian women activists⁵.

This trajectory contributed to the emergence of numerous Algerian women who became an essential part of the revolutionary structure, whether through organizational work, field activities, or direct *fedayeen* actions.

1 – In *Fedayeen* Operations

³ Muhammad Ghammar al-Wasli, *Ghar al-Dima' Qa'ida Khalfiyya lil-Thawra al-Jaza'iriyya bi-Imtiyaz* (1954–1962), Tunis, 2019, p. 90

⁴ Muhammad Ghammar al-Wasli, *Ghar al-Dima' Qa'ida Khalfiyya lil-Thawra al-Jaza'iriyya bi-Imtiyaz* (1954–1962), Tunis, 2019, p. 90; see also: Zahra Bou'alaq, "Al-Dawr al-'Askari lil-Mar'a al-Jaza'iriyya Khilal al-Thawra al-Tahririyya (1954–1962): Jamilah Bouhired Namudhajan," *Majallat al-Nawazil al-Fiqhiyya wa-l-Qanuniyya*, Laghouat, no. 1, 2013, pp. 174–176; see also: Mariam Sayyid Mubarak, op. cit., p. 62; see also: Abd al-Malik Bourzam, 'Adhra' al-Auras wa-l-Jallad: al-Shahida Maryam Bouatoura min al-Tamrid fi al-Jibal ila Harb al-Shawari' wa-l-Mudun bi-al-Shamal, 1st ed., Dar al-Shayma' lil-Nashr wa-l-Tawzi', Batna, 2011/1432 AH, p. 84

⁵ Lahsan Jaker, *Mawqif al-Ra'y al-'Alami al-'Alami min al-Hukm bi-l-I'dam 'ala al-Mujahida Jamilah Bouhired* (1957–1958), *Majallat al-Hiwar al-Mutawassiti*, Djilali Liabes University, Sidi Bel Abbes, 2012, no. 1, p. 2

The participation of Algerian women in *fedayeen* activities emerged as one of the most significant forms of resistance during the War of Liberation. Through this involvement, many Algerian women moved beyond supportive roles to engage directly in clandestine and field operations.

Among the most prominent examples was Hassiba Ben Bouali, who joined the revolution in 1955 initially as a social worker before transitioning to *fedayeen* activities in 1956. She benefited from her professional position as a nurse at Mustapha Pacha Hospital, which enabled her to access certain chemical materials and utilize them in supporting the production of explosives for the *mujahideen*. As her activities intensified, the colonial forces increased their pursuit operations until her involvement was discovered along with a group of activists. She was killed on 8 October 1957 following the bombing of the house where she had taken refuge⁶.

Djamila Bouhired is also regarded as one of the most prominent symbols of *fedayeen* operations in Algiers. She participated in planting and transporting explosive devices in locations where colonial forces gathered, resulting in losses among their ranks. After her activities were uncovered, she was arrested and tried in July 1957, and a death sentence was issued against her. However, her defense team continued to advocate for her, and she remained imprisoned until she was released following the negotiations that led to the Evian Accords⁷.

2 – In the Field of Medical Assistance

In addition to *fedayeen* activities, Algerian women played a crucial role in providing medical assistance and nursing services within the ranks of the revolution. Among the prominent examples was Maryam Bouatoura, who originated from the region of N'Gaous. She decided to join the revolution after gradually acquiring first-aid skills under the guidance of several physicians and activists, including Dr. Tahar Bousdira. The latter encouraged her to employ her knowledge in the service of wounded fighters and *mujahideen*, which became a decisive motivation for her active involvement in the revolution within Wilaya II. Her role was particularly significant in providing medical care to the *mujahideen*, and she even participated in performing field medical procedures under extremely difficult conditions. In one of her letters to her uncle, she described the nature of her work, stating: “I practice medicine with great proficiency; I perform operations and remove bullets...”. She continued her activities until she was captured alongside a group of *mujahideen* following the betrayal of an informant, after which she was subjected to arrest and siege⁸.

During the confrontation, she destroyed the documents in her possession in order to protect the secrets of the revolution, despite the location being subjected to intense attacks with grenades and machine guns. After being wounded and attempting to escape, she was captured and severely tortured in an effort to extract information from her; however, she refused to cooperate. As a result, she was executed through a lethal injection, joining the ranks of the

⁶ Mariam Sayyid Mubarak, op. cit., pp. 65–66.

⁷ Mariam Sayyid ‘Ali Mubarak, op. cit., p. 77

⁸ Abd al-Malik Bourzam, ‘Adhra’ al-Auras wa-l-Jallad: al-Shahida Maryam Bouatoura min al-Tamrid fi al-Jibal ila Harb al-Shawari’ wa-l-Mudun bi-al-Shamal, 1st ed., Dar al-Shayma’ lil-Nashr wa-l-Tawzi’, Batna, 2011/1432 AH, pp. 29–63, 90–93, 127–133

revolutionary martyrs. Another figure associated with this field was Maryam Makhtari, who joined the National Liberation Army in 1956 and served as a nurse within Wilaya VI under the supervision of the martyr Youssef al-Damerджи. She was arrested in 1961 and imprisoned in Tifshoun Prison in Blida before regaining her freedom following Algeria's independence on 5 July 1962⁹.

3 – In the Fields of Food Provision and Surveillance

The role of Algerian women was not limited to *fedayeen* activities and medical assistance; it also extended to areas of logistical support and surveillance. Among the examples illustrating this dimension was Aisha Nawasser, the wife of the martyr Rezzaq Muhammad, who joined the revolution in 1957. She was assigned the task of supplying the *mujahideen* with clothing, particularly winter garments such as the *burnous* and *kachabia*, in addition to gathering information about the movements of colonial forces. Her activities were discovered in 1959, and she was subjected to severe torture using electric shocks; however, she refused to disclose any information concerning the *mujahideen* until she died under torture¹⁰.

Women from the Qarara region in Ghardaïa Province also played notable roles, including Oulad Bahoun Lalla, who served as a *moussabila* within the National Liberation Army. Her role consisted of monitoring enemy movements and protecting the *mujahideen* who frequently visited her husband's home. She also contributed to providing them with food and drink, as well as supplying them with provisions and various forms of logistical support. This reflects the vital role played by women in sustaining the revolutionary movement's support networks and rear structures¹¹.

C – The Political Role during the Revolution

1 – Participation in Political Meetings

The role of Algerian women during the War of Liberation was not limited to material and moral support; it also extended to participation in political activities that had characterized the national movement since the period preceding the outbreak of the revolution. Their presence became visible in several important political meetings, reflecting the gradual emergence of their involvement in the political sphere. Among these historical milestones was the meeting held on 5 August 1951 at Dounia Zad Cinema in Algiers, organized by the founding committee responsible for establishing the Front for the Defense of Liberty and Respect for It. The meeting brought together several national and reformist organizations and witnessed a notable female presence. According to *Al-Manar* newspaper, that day was considered a significant event in the

⁹ Maryam Makhtari, *Sirat Mujahida*, special edition, Ministry of Mujahideen, Algiers, n.d.

¹⁰ Suwailim Mukhtar, "Dawr al-Mar'a al-Sha'anbiyya fi al-Thawra al-Tahririyya: Nawasser 'A'isha (al-Khansa' al-Ukhra lil-Sha'anba) Anmudhajan," *Majallat al-Wahat lil-Buhuth wa-l-Dirasat*, University of Ghardaïa, 2014, pp. 444–445.

¹¹ Muhammad Sulayman Abu al-'Ala and others, *Safahat min al-Kifah li-Mujahidi al-Qarara fi al-Thawra al-Tahririyya*, 2nd ed., *Jam'iyyat al-Turath*, Ghardaïa, Algeria, 1437 AH/2015, p. 220.

history of the Algerian national movement, as it demonstrated the opening of political action to women's participation¹².

2 – The Establishment of Algerian Women's Organizations in Support of the Revolution

Algerian women also contributed to the establishment of women's organizations beginning in June 1947. These organizations brought together female students, teachers from free schools, as well as activists involved in social and educational fields. Among the prominent figures associated with this movement were Mamia Chentouf, a midwife, and Nafissa Hamoud, a medical student, along with other women who contributed to the development of a militant feminist consciousness.

The objectives of these organizations focused on several fundamental areas, most notably:

- Promoting the interests of Algerian women and seeking their social and educational advancement.
- Providing women with political training and preparing them to engage in national issues.
- Mobilizing women and encouraging them to support the revolution and rally around its objectives.
- Assisting the families of political prisoners and defenders of the national cause, in addition to supporting impoverished families¹³.

3 – The Association of Algerian Muslim Women

Among the prominent women's organizations was what became known as the "Miss Qara Organization," an initiative launched by a group of female *mujahideen* in the Metlili region. The French colonial authorities regarded it as a suspicious organization due to its dual nature: while it presented itself publicly as a social initiative, it secretly carried out revolutionary activities in support of the Liberation Revolution. This organization was able to continue its activities thanks to its highly structured organization and strict secrecy, in addition to the resourcefulness of Algerian women who succeeded in concealing their activities from the colonial authorities¹⁴.

4 – Algerian Women's Participation in International Forums

The struggle of Algerian women was not confined to the domestic sphere; it also extended to the international arena, where they contributed to introducing the Algerian cause in several Arab countries, such as Egypt and Tunisia, as well as in Asian countries including China and Vietnam. They also took part in various international conferences and gatherings.

Among the most notable events were:

- The Fourth Congress of the World Democratic Women's Federation (June 1958).

¹² Anissa Barakat Drar, *Nidal al-Mar'a al-Jaza'iriyya Khilal al-Thawra al-Tahririyya, al-Mu'assasa al-Wataniyya lil-Kitab*, Algiers, n.d., p. 22.

¹³ Ibid., p. 23; see also: Suwailim Mukhtar, "Dawr al-Mar'a al-Sha'anbiyya fi al-Thawra al-Tahririyya: Nawasser 'A'isha (al-Khansa' al-Ukhra lil-Sha'anba) Anmudhajan," *Majallat al-Wahat lil-Buhuth wa-l-Dirasat*, University of Ghardaia, 2014, p. 443.

¹⁴ Suwailim Mukhtar, op. cit., p. 443.

- The Conference of the International Federation of Democratic Women (June 1961).
- The Conference of West African Women.
- The Women's gathering hosted by the city of Copenhagen¹⁵.

These participations represented an important diplomatic dimension in supporting the Algerian cause and gaining international sympathy for it.

Algerian poetry also expressed this militant role of women, as reflected in the following verses: *"The daughter of Algeria, in the struggle, climbed the peaks of mountains and the cycles of fortresses. How magnificent is the machine gun upon her arm, striking the enemy with fiery shells. She is the gazelle in times of peace, and a lioness in her struggle, with her mighty steadfastness."*¹⁶

Second: French Colonial Methods toward Algerian Women

A – Arrest and Imprisonment

The French colonial authorities did not adopt a clear policy of separation between male and female prisoners. They did not establish prisons specifically designated for women; instead, they detained them within the same detention facilities as men, with separation maintained only inside cells or prison wings. This situation itself constituted a form of systematic violation of the dignity and privacy of Algerian women. Female detainees were also subjected to the most severe forms of physical and psychological torture, as part of a policy aimed at breaking their will and extracting information from them. Some data indicate that the proportion of female detainees reached approximately 16% in 1956, with this percentage increasing in subsequent years as women's revolutionary activities expanded¹⁷.

B – The Policy of Intimidation and Starvation

French colonialism also adopted a policy of collective intimidation and starvation as a means of exerting pressure on the civilian population, particularly in rural and mountainous areas that served as strongholds of the revolution. In this context, the *mujahid* Si Mourad recounts in his memoirs a painful incident involving his wife in June 1960. She was in labor, accompanied by women who were assisting her during childbirth. However, the sounds of nearby French aerial bombardment caused intense panic, forcing the women to flee and leave her alone at a critical moment. She was thus compelled to endure the pain of childbirth without assistance and remained afterward in a difficult psychological and physical condition for three days¹⁸.

The *mujahida* Qasimi Fatima, the wife of a National Liberation Army fighter, also recounts that in November 1960 she experienced extremely harsh conditions due to the siege imposed by colonial forces on the area where she was residing. This blockade resulted in a severe shortage of food, forcing her to rely on wild herbs and acorns from oak trees found on Mount Bouhloua. Despite her ability to endure hardship, her infant daughter could not survive the effects of hunger and died due to the lack of food and milk. A few days later, her other child

¹⁵ Majallat al-Jaysh, Rajab 1408 AH/1988, no. 80, p. 29

¹⁶ Muhammad Sulayman Abu al-'Ala and others, op. cit., p. 220.

¹⁷ Mariam Sayyid 'Ali Mubarak, op. cit., p. 63.

¹⁸ Si Mourad, Mudhakhirat al-Naqib Si Mourad, ed. Abd al-Rahman Karimi, Dar al-Umma, Algiers, n.d., p. 38.

also passed away, in a scene that reflects the cruelty of the siege and its devastating humanitarian consequences for women and children in besieged areas¹⁹.

C – Brutal and Inhumane Torture

Algerian women were subjected to some of the most horrific forms of physical and psychological torture during the period of French colonial rule, particularly those who joined the ranks of the National Liberation Front (FLN) and the National Liberation Army (ALN). Women became direct targets of colonial repression, which disregarded all humanitarian and legal considerations. The *mujahida* Qasimi Fatima recounts several examples of the abuses inflicted upon Algerian women in internment camps and during interrogations. Among these testimonies is the story of her friend Halima, a martyr's widow who lived in a French internment camp like many other Algerians. Despite these conditions, she continued her revolutionary activities in secrecy and even participated in an ambush against French soldiers that resulted in the deaths of several of them. Following interrogations, the colonial authorities succeeded in uncovering her activities. An order was then issued by a French officer from the *SAS* (Sections Administratives Spécialisées), named Jacques Morin, to bring her before all the detainees in the camp, where she was publicly tortured in an attempt to intimidate them and break their will. The methods of torture represented a blatant violation of human dignity: she was stripped of her clothes in front of those present in an act of deliberate humiliation, before a flammable substance was poured over her and she was set on fire. She died amid cries for help, without any intervention. At the same time, another woman who had been providing medical assistance and supplies to the *mujahideen* was also assaulted. She was killed and her body was thrown before the detainees, creating a state of extreme terror within the camp, to the extent that some women fainted or suffered miscarriages as a result of the horror of the scene²⁰.

The martyr Fatima al-Sufi represents another example of these violations. She was lured through a trap arranged by one of the colonial agents, who deceived her into believing that her sons, who were *mujahideen*, were waiting for her. Upon reaching the location, she found herself surrounded by French forces and was arrested and imprisoned despite being pregnant at the time. She was subjected to severe torture before being exposed to an even more brutal scene: police dogs were released against her in front of the people, after which her body was mutilated in a savage manner that led to her martyrdom. Her case remains among the most atrocious documented examples of colonial violence committed against Algerian women²¹.

D – Rape

Testimonies provided by several female *mujahideen* indicate that Algerian women during the period of French colonial rule were subjected to some of the most horrific forms of physical and psychological violations, foremost among them the crime of rape. This crime left profound consequences that extended beyond independence, affecting both the psychological and social levels. Some testimonies recount the atrocities committed against women: *"The rape of*

¹⁹ Muhammad Qantar, op. cit., p. 118.

²⁰ Muhammad Qantar, *Min Butulat al-Mar'a al-Jaza'iriyya fi al-Thawra wa-Jara'im al-Isti'mar al-Faransi*, Dar al-Gharb lil-Nashr wa-l-Tawzi', n.d., p. 119.

²¹ Salih Bin al-Nabili Farkus, op. cit., p. 410.

Algerian women... Some of them refused marriage until this very day, and their youth was lost. As they grew older, they became elderly women carrying with them, throughout the years, painful memories that wounded their honor, disfigured their bodies, and left them silent, unable even to reveal their bodies in the bath..." The *mujahida* Aisha Latim confirms in her testimonies that French colonialism was not merely a military force; rather, it pursued a systematic policy aimed at humiliating Algerian women and attacking their dignity. These violations left silent wounds that many victims carried throughout their lives, affecting their social relationships, their perception of their bodies, and their sense of self. Some testimonies also indicate that many women later refused relationships or marriage as a result of the profound psychological trauma they had endured, allowing the consequences of that period to persist across generations as a painful memory within Algerian society²².

Despite these harsh circumstances, French colonialism did not limit itself to direct repression. At times, it attempted to exploit Algerian women within strategies aimed at weakening the revolution from within, by manipulating emotions and seeking to undermine family bonds between *mujahideen* and their relatives. In this context, testimonies recount an incident in which a French officer gathered a number of Algerian women in internment camps and addressed them through an Arabic interpreter, believing he could influence them psychologically. He threatened to separate their husbands from them if they continued to support the revolution. However, the response of Algerian women was completely contrary to these expectations. They expressed their collective commitment to the revolutionary cause by remaining united and chanting national songs such as: *"From our mountains rose the voice of the free."* This provoked the anger of the colonial forces, which responded with harsher repressive measures, including arrest, torture, and humiliation²³.

Some testimonies further indicate that prisons, such as Villa Susini and others, witnessed the use of severe methods of torture, including electric shocks and water torture, in addition to beatings and physical humiliation. These inhumane conditions directly violated the dignity of female prisoners, with some of them also being subjected to forced undressing as a means of psychological and physical degradation²⁴.

E – Execution by Firing Squad

Among the forms of colonial repression inflicted upon Algerian women was execution by firing squad, a method employed during direct confrontations or following arrest, as part of a policy aimed at spreading intimidation and breaking the will of resistance. One of the testimonies associated with this form of execution concerns the martyr Fatima Zerfaoui. The circumstances of her martyrdom are recounted as having occurred while she was attempting, in an act of humanity, to rescue a wounded *mujahid*, Gammadi al-Tijani, who had been injured during an encounter with French forces and was asking for water. The martyr rushed to provide him with assistance; however, the colonial forces opened fire on her, causing her to fall as a

²² Hamad Qantari, op. cit., p. 125; see also: Muhammad al-Siddiq, op. cit., p. 162.

²³ Muhammad Qantar, op. cit., p. 124.

²⁴ See: Muhammad al-Salih al-Siddiq, Kayfa Nansa Hadhi Jara'imahum, Dar Huma, Algiers, 2012, pp. 143–162.

martyr in a moment of compassion that embodied the spirit of sacrifice and loyalty toward the *mujahideen*²⁵.

Conclusion

The present study has demonstrated that Algerian women played a pivotal role in confronting French colonialism from the earliest stages of the occupation of Algeria. They were present throughout the various phases of resistance, from the first popular uprisings to the War of Liberation, embodying prominent examples of struggle such as Lalla Fatma N'Soumer, who remains an early symbol of armed women's resistance.

Algerian women also made significant contributions within the ranks of the National Liberation Front (FLN) and the National Liberation Army (ALN), becoming involved in various organizational and military structures. They carried out diverse responsibilities, including *fedayeen* operations, intelligence gathering, message transmission, and the material and logistical support of the *mujahideen*, making them an essential component of the revolutionary system.

In addition, many women undertook vital humanitarian responsibilities, particularly in the fields of nursing and medical assistance in mountainous and rural areas. They contributed to treating the wounded and providing healthcare under extremely difficult and complex conditions.

The role of Algerian women was not confined to the domestic sphere; it also extended beyond national borders through their participation in introducing the Algerian cause within international forums and through various women's organizations and associations. These efforts contributed to the internationalization of the Algerian struggle and to gaining the support of global public opinion.

Overall, Algerian women made immense sacrifices for the independence of their homeland. They paid a heavy price through the loss of their own lives, their children, and their husbands. The names of the martyrs and female *mujahideen* remain enduring testimonies to the magnitude of their contribution, whose full extent cannot be precisely quantified due to the breadth and diversity of their involvement across the different regions of Algeria.

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²⁵ Salih al-Nabili Farkus, op. cit., p. 409.

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