

Dirassat & Abhath
The Arabic Journal of Human
and Social Sciences



مجلة دراسات وأبحاث
المجلة العربية في العلوم الإنسانية
والاجتماعية

EISSN: 2253-0363
ISSN : 1112-9751

The Role of the Algerian Woman in the Liberation of Algeria (1830-1962)

دور المرأة الجزائرية في تحرير الجزائر (1830-1962)

Chorf Fatima¹

¹ Maitre de Conference B, University Oran2, Mohamed Ben Ahmed, Faculty of Foreign Languages,
Department of English, chorfi.fatima@univ-oran2.dz

شرفي فاطيمة¹

¹ أستاذة محاضرة ب، جامعة وهران 2 محمد بن أحمد كلية اللغات الأجنبية قسم اللغة الإنجليزية..

chorfi.fatima@univ-oran2.dz

Corresponding author: Chorfi Fatima, chorfi.fatima@univ-oran2.dz

تاريخ القبول : 2021-04-24

تاريخ الاستلام: 2021-03-29

Abstract:

Historical luminary names like Lalla Fatma N'soumer, Djamila Oudai, Djamila Amrane Minne, Djamila Bouhired and Djamila Boupacha are among the icons and heroines that Algeria is blessed to have. In this paper, I want to glorify their struggle, sacrifices as well as reflect their whimper, and grievances against the most feral and ruthless colonialism. In this month of March that encompassed both the International Woman Day of 8 March and the Victory Day of March 19, I want to shed light on the significant role they had played to get their independence in 1962.

Keywords: History of Algeria; French colonialism; Algerian woman struggle; resistance; revolution.

الملخص:

الأسماء التاريخية البارزة مثل لالة فاطمة نسومر ، جميلة عدي ، جميلة عمران مين ، جميلة بوحيرد وجميلة بوباشا هي من بين الرموز والبطلات التي تنعم بها الجزائر. في هذه الورقة ، أود أن أمجد نضالهم وتضحياتهم وكذلك أن أعكس أنينهم ومظالمهم ضد أكثر الاستعمار وحشية وقسوة. في شهر مارس هذا الذي شهد كلاً من اليوم العالمي للمرأة في 8 مارس ويوم النصر في 19 مارس ، أود أن ألقى الضوء على الدور المهم الذي أدوه لتحرير الجزائر في عام 1962.

الكلمات المفتاحية: تاريخ الجزائر- الاستعمار الفرنسي - نضال المرأة الجزائرية - مقاومة - ثورة

INTRODUCTION

The Algerian Liberation War is one of the greatest revolutions that the world had ever witnessed in the twentieth century. It is by excellence the personification of a revolted population with its different components all alike men and women in urban as well as rural areas against the French colonizer since the early years of colonization in 1830. The latter had succeeded to crush different forms of resistance in various parts of Algeria and thought that he had fully conquered Algeria whilst united under the leadership of the Algerian Liberation Front (FLN) the Algerians joined the Algerian Liberation Army (ALN). Whether in the *maquis* or inside the cities, towns and in the countryside, the Algerians realized that the revolution is the only means to defeat colonialism which refused to admit that Algeria is not a French Department and its integral part.

The Revolution that started on November 1, 1954 had been considered for months by the French people and press as one mere insurgency of rebels that they call: *Felaga*(outlaws). At the beginning they failed to recognize the significance and the extent of this revolution but they soon realized that the Algerians were determined to free themselves from the French domination; oppression and persecution.

Driven by the resolve to liberate Algeria at all costs, just like men did, women took the combat in an expensive range of roles including as paramilitary fighters, transporters, fundraisers, nurses, cooks and communicators. One of the many tactics adopted by female agents during the war

was to act as communicators between the Algerian soldiers and the population as a whole, in order to raise funds and propagate the news about the revolution.

In this context this paper examines the role of the Algerian women in the Liberation from the French colonial rule through different generations and various eras. From the first form of women resistance namely, Fatima Nsoumer to the first woman martyr Zoulikha Oudai to end up with Djamila Amrane Minne, Djamila Bouhired, and Djamila Boupacha who had the chance to survive colonialism and witness the Algerian independence in 1962 to continue their contribution in the development and emancipation of the Algerian woman and the edifice of the country in the post-independence period. It will provide an answer to the following questions: How could the Algerian women since the beginning of colonialism defy the existing institutions with their traditions that compelled them to be at most a housewife to protest, resist and revolt? From where did they stem their courage, bravery and above all their determination to crush colonialism? At which cost did they succeed to affirm their status during the colonial era and what were the achievements of their involvement in the Algerian Revolution?

2. Lalla Fatma N'Soumer (1830-1863):

Throughout Algerian history under French colonialism, women played a vital role in the quest of independence as well as protecting the national traditions, culture and pride. This was apparent in the fierce revolutionary resistance of the most known figure, Lalla Fatma N'soumer. Despite her enormous historical contribution, this

Algerian iconic remains somehow uncelebrated outside the Maghreb and the Arab world. This revolutionary woman whose defiance of social and gender norms had cemented her place in history needs to be further glorified.

Lalla Fatma N'Soumer was born in 1830 in Upper Kabylia, in the village of Werja. She has four older brothers and her father is the Head of a Coranic school¹. In the year of her birth, three years after the start of the Algiers War, France launched a violent campaign to colonize Algeria. Initially directed against Algiers, it quickly spread to the rest of the country and in particular to Kabylia. Fatma grew up in this context and developed a deep aversion to colonizers.

Her full name is Fatma Si Ahmed Ou Meziane. She also bore the nickname of Lalla N'ouredja, who in the Kabyle tradition is given to young girls who refuse to resign themselves to customs and traditions. She used to be called "tamnafakt" that is to say rebellious because she refused any alliance and marriage so as not to alienate her freedom which according to her: "a sacred gift that cannot be monetized!"²

When her father died, Fatma joined her brother Si Tayeb in Soumer, where he ran a Coranic school.³ She then took the name Fatma N'Soumer and assisted him in running the school, devoting herself particularly to children and the poor and acquiring an excellent reputation. Belonging to the Rahmaniya brotherhood, a Sufi Muslim brotherhood, she seemed to have been considered a kind of extraordinary woman.⁴

It is likely that these kinds of legends about her life are meant to highlight her virtue and rebellious spirit, to lend credibility to her political engagement. But Fatma N'Soumer's life contains enough courage and rebellion, even without embellishments because her central role in the Kabyle resistance against the French, from 1847, is historically verifiable. In this era, according to the French politician and historian who accompanied the French expedition in the Kabylie, Emile Carrey, in his book, *Récits de Kabylie; Campagne de 1857*, between 1830 and 1872, nearly a third of the Algerian population disappeared in fighting, but also in raids and massacres of the civilian population or because of the hunger that followed the destruction of crops by the colonial forces. Besides France was looking for land where to settle its colonists, and had to eradicate or displace the Algerians. The French Army quickly seized the Algerian coast, and the Dey of Algiers surrendered. But France later encountered resistance from the Berber tribes on one side and the troops of Emir Abd el-Kader on the other.⁵

But this was tenacious. The French had to wrest from the Kabyles village by village, and Fatma N'Soumer played a crucial role in this resistance. She had visions which encouraged her to rally the warriors of the region, then joined the sherifs who were fighting against the French troops. In 1849, Fatma n'Soumer joined the resistance forces with Si Mohammed El-Hachemi, a marabout who participated in the Boumaza insurrection in Dahra in 1847.⁶ Her origins and devotion bestowed upon her the admiration and respect of combatants. She was even given the nickname Lalla, reserved for women of

high rank and age. The French called her the "Joan of Arc of Djurdjura".⁷

In 1850, when the French legionary troops entered the region of Djurdjura, Mohammed Lamjad ben Abdelmalek, known as Cherif Boubaghla, initiated a great movement of popular Kabyle revolt.⁸ Lalla Fatma N'Soumer immediately joined, first by collecting supplies for the insurgents and then actively participating in the defense of the country. Without wielding arms herself, she exhorted, rallied and inspired the troops, which she led into battle.⁹

Fatma N'Soumer organized the resistance, collected funds and food for her men and women. She was at the center of propaganda efforts (one of the adages of the Kabyle warriors is: "The bullets are in front of us and Fatma is behind us") and of military strategy.¹⁰ Even thajmaâth assemblies, strictly reserved for men, were opened to her. Among other things, she led the Imsemblen, warriors who sacrificed their lives in "kamikaze" attacks. In 1854, the leader of the Kabyle troops, Cherif Boubaghla, died in combat. Fatma N'Soumer rallied and then led her troops and won the battle of Tashkirt, against an enemy vastly superior in number and in means.¹¹

The French, under the orders of General Jacques Louis Cesar Alexandre Randon (1795- 1871), then demanded a cease-fire, which Fatma N'Soumer accepted. But this calm period was useful to the French who came back to the charge by surprise in 1857. Lalla Fatma N'Soumer rallied the resistant one last time, calling them to fight to the end, because it was the freedom of all the country which was in play. 35,000

soldiers of the French Army crushed the resistant. Fatma N'Soumer took refuge in the Tablat region, where she was arrested on July 27, 1857.

In her article about Lalla N'Soumer, author Samia Touati recounts that on the day she was captured by the French army, Marshal Randon asked Lalla N'Soumer why her men violently resisted the French troops. She replied: "God wanted it. It is neither your fault, nor mine. Your soldiers went out of their ranks to penetrate my village. Mine defended themselves. I'm now your captive. I have no reproach to you. You shouldn't have any reproach to me. It was written this way!"¹²

Her library was destroyed; the French monopolized its heritage.¹³ She was placed under house arrest in Beni Slimane where she spent the last six years of her life. Weakened by her long imprisonment and deeply affected by the death of her brother in 1861, she died in 1863 at the age of 33.

Legends and traditional songs tell of her exploits. Her memory was necessary to preserve the Algerian cultural identity during the French occupation. Fatma N'Soumer is celebrated today with monuments and TV series. Her ashes were collected in 1994 to be buried in the Square des Martyrs of the *El Alia* cemetery in Algiers.

In spite of crushing different forms of resistance all over Algeria, the French could not declare victory and through time, they had to face one of the bloodiest and most cruel wars, namely the Algerian Liberation War which started on November 1, 1954. A war in which once again, the Algerian woman was eager to take part just like her predecessors did in

their revolutionary resistance. The following heroines are among those who deserve all kinds of glory and gratitude.

3. Zoulikha Oudai (1911-1957):

One of the most tragic atrocities that any Algerian woman had ever undergone during the French colonialism was the case of Zoulikha Oudai whose real name is Yasmina Echaib. She was born on May 7, 1911 in El Hajout and grew up in Cherchel a province of Tipaza.¹⁴

Originally from the Chenoua region in Algeria, Zoulikha Oudai is the daughter of a cultivated father, a large landowner and a municipal councilor. She lived in Cherchell, where she was educated in a native school. She gave birth to five children. One of them had been executed in January 1957, two months after the execution of his father and Zoulikha's husband, El Hadj Si Larbi.¹⁵

The execution by the colonial army of her husband and her son were the triggers of her commitment to Algerian independence. Quickly appointed Head of the National Liberation Front (FLN) in the Cherchell region, she took part in intelligence operations for the FLN and in bringing it closer to the population. She funded the FLN with her husband's money. When the FLN network in the Cherchell region was dismantled in 1957 (54 arrests), Zoulikha Oudai joined the *maquis* where she took refuge with Ghebalou Hmimed and his deputy Boualem Benhamouda, political commissar of the sector (two students who joined the *maquis* after the famous student strike in May 1956). Before joining the *maquis*, she took care to burn all her photos, only two of them were recovered from her sister.¹⁶

From the *maquis*, she continued to lead the network of women which had not been dismantled. The French army ambushed her in the *Haizer River*, where she was arrested on October 15, 1957 and exposed to the Algerian masses attached to an armored vehicle. She did not reveal any information that the French army wanted to have. She instead addressed the crowd and urged them to go the *maquis* and fight against the French colonialism:

"My brothers, witness the weakness of the colonial army which hurls its armed soldiers to the teeth against a woman. Don't surrender. Continue your fight until the day when our national flag flies on all the pediments of our towns and villages. Go up to the *maquis*! Free the country!"¹⁷

The captain tried to silence her but in vain she instead spited in his face. She was tortured for ten days but did not give the names of her comrades in arms.

Executed on October 25, 1957, when the French threw her alive from the helicopter her body was not found until 1984 i.e.: 27 years later when a farmer claimed to remember having buried the bodies of a woman and two men found dead in handcuffs on the road. The French soldiers used to dump the bodies of prisoners in the Ghardous camp so that the inhabitants of the surrounding area could bury them. Few of the survivors of the Ghardous extermination camp created by the sector chief Lt Colonel Lecoint.¹⁸ She now rests in the cemetery of the martyrs of *Menaceur* with more than 400 companions who died for the independence of Algeria.

Her full story and heroism has been depicted in Assia Djebbar *La Femme sans Sepulture*. From the beginning, the author tells us that the narration deals with a vivid

account of a tragic story of a woman, and that the aim of that narration is to transcribe her story and confirm her heroism as a female freedom fighter during the Algerian Revolution; thus, re-establishing the honor and bravery of the Algerian women. Djébar states: "The story of Zoulikha is finally going to be recorded, or rather to be re-registered"¹⁹. She claims that it was her duty to voice an important chapter of the Algerian history and focused on the fact that the Algerian Revolution and the contribution of the Algerian women to get its independence. She explains: "I came back only to tell. I mean, in my hometown, her words and her silence"²⁰. She further evokes the figure of Zoulikha Oudai in her 1977 film, *La Nouba des Femmes du Mont Chenoua* (*The Nouba of the Women of Mount Chenoua*). She faithfully depicted the heroism and extraordinary bravery of Zoulikha Oudai.

4. Djamila Amrane Minne (1939-2017):

Unlike the previous heroines mentioned above, Djamila Amrane Minne (Born Daniele Minne) is a French woman who was committed to the Algerian Revolution. Born in Neuilly-sur-Seine (France) on August 13, 1939, a few days before the outbreak of the Second World War, Danièle Minne experienced from childhood hunger, the deprivations of the 1939-45 war, disease (primary tuberculosis infection) and the absence of a father involved in the French resistance.²¹

At the end of the war, her father Pierre decided to go into exile from this land for which he fought. After a tumultuous stint in Senegal from where he was expelled for his anti-colonial activism, the small family settled in Algeria in 1947. Then eight years

old, Danièle discovered an Algeria of injustice and misery. Her father was a professor of philosophy while her mother Jacqueline was a teacher in the Tlemcenian countryside and this immersion in the colonial rural world, made of the exploitation and alienation of a people, plunged them all into revolt. Her mother, Jacqueline, engaged in the fight with her second husband, Abdelkader Guerroudj.²² This communist militant, one of the leaders of the Fighters of the Liberation later rallied to the FLN, had been sentenced to death with Jacqueline who became his wife and Taleb Abderrahmane, the group's pyrotechnist.²³ The couple had been pardoned while Taleb was executed. In April 1955 both of them had been expelled by the French from Algeria for their anti-colonial activities. After spending a few months in France, they returned to Algiers and from January 1956 participated in the organization of the Liberation Fighters and the Bomb Network of Yacef Saâdi. They were both condemned to death as accomplices of Fernand Iveton, the only European man guillotined during the Algerian Revolution. They were released once Algeria had its independence in 1962.²⁴

In this militant and engaged context Daniele Minne grew up and took part in the student strike in 1956 and joined the rebellion of Algerian nationalists under the name of *Djamila*. In the midst of the Battle of Algiers, she joined the group of Mohand Arezki Bennaceur (named Toufik). Responsible for integrating *Parti Communiste Algérien* PCA activists into the FLN, Toufik recruited her in Al Casbah.²⁵ After a few acts of sabotage and the transport of documents and weapons.

Member of the "bomb network" of the FLN during the Battle of Algiers, she was part of the group of young women bombers (*poseuse de bombe*) in public places of Algiers, in particular cafes frequented by colonial people. On Saturday January 26, 1957, Danièle who was still a minor (17 years old) participated in a triple attack by the FLN in three brasseries on *Rue Michelet* located in the European district of Algiers. It was her first experience and was accompanied by Zahia Kerfallah. She placed her bomb in the *Otomatic bar* in Algiers, while Zoubida Fadila had to place the explosive device at *Coq-Hardi* and Djmaila Bouazza at *La Cafeteria*.²⁶

She was therefore actively sought after and escaped the terrible repression of the paratroopers following the eight-day strike. Mohand Arezki Bennaceur instructed members of his family to bring her up to the *maquis* as quickly as possible. She arrived in Wilaya III (Zone 2) and was once again in contact with bruised and dispossessed rural populations. She did not know that at the same time Mohand Arezki Bennaceur was arrested and tortured to death.²⁷ For her long months of exhausting marches, flight, search, bombing and their share of victims followed. She was trained in her new role of caregiver and tried, with her team, to provide the populations with the necessary care. She married, in the *maquis*, Khelil Amrane, known as Si Ali, a student at the end of the dental surgery course, health manager in zone 2 who died during a clash on November 6, 1961. But the hardening of living conditions in the Kabyle *maquis* after the establishment of prohibited zones and the start of major military operations motivated Colonel

Amirouche's decision to evacuate women and students to Tunisia.²⁸

In November 1957, during the tragic journey which led them to the borders, she was arrested in *Draa Errih* in the region of Bordj Bou Arreridj with Nefissa Hamoud, Mustapha Laliem her husband, Tahar Mébarki and Louisa Attouch while Raymonde Peschard, doctor Rachid Belhocine, Arezki Oukmanou, Si Moh and seven djounoud fell that day.

Sentenced on December 4, 1957 to seven years in Barbarouss prison, subsequently she was transferred to France in several French prisons. At Pau prison where she found many Algerian activists, she resumed her studies by correspondence, obtained her baccalaureate, and began a first year of faculty. She was released in April 1962 at the same time as her mother and returned to Algeria where she resumed her studies. She remarried in July 1964 and opted for Algerian nationality to become *Djamila Amrane* upon her marriage.²⁹

Her university career continued at the Faculty of Algiers after independence and led her to obtain the title of professor thanks to the defense of a doctoral thesis in 1988 on the participation of women in the struggles for the independence of Algeria. "In a national liberation war, women are faced with a situation where they can act, and indeed they act. Many are those who have not been recognized as Moudjahidin, but who have had exceptional acts of activism."³⁰ Thus, She was able to make a piece of individual history an object of scientific study and paid tribute to all those, anonymous or not, who have participated in the writing of the history of

our country. She worked at the University of Algiers then in 1999 became professor of history and women's studies at the University of Toulouse. She is also and above all the author of *Algerian Women and the National Liberation War, 1954-1962*, and *Des Femmes dans la Guerre d'Algérie* from which this paper stems its resources. Two precious works which give a voice to women who took part in the war for the independence of Algeria. The books were based on the testimonies of 33 interviewed women. She held her research essentially on the basis of two main sources: on the one hand the militism certificate file issued by the Ministry of Moujahidin (10,949 militant out of a total of 336,748 Moudjahidins) and on the other one, oral testimonies collected from former militants.³¹ Djamila Amrane Minne, died on Saturday, February 11 2017 in Algiers at the age of 77, two days later she was buried in Bejaia unlike her mother Jaqueline Guerroudj who died in 2015 at the age of 95 and buried in the martyr cemetery *Al Alia*.

5. Djamila Bouhired (1935-) :

There are beings whose character is stronger than the person, individuals who have made history even before they become adults. This is very rare, it is the case of Djamila Bouhired, whose name alone sums up the Algerian Liberation War, the Battle of Algiers, torture, infamy, heroism, freedom. The most famous Algerian combatant Djamila Bouhired is a worldwide figure of the Algerian nationalist woman known in Africa, Arab World and elsewhere.

A quarter of Djamila Bouhired's life would be enough to fill many other lives.

She is literally a living legend, an enigma. Born in 1935 in Al-Casbah in Algiers, militant Djamila Bouhired showed signs of political leadership in the early years of her childhood. As a pupil in a French school, Bouhired once rebelliously sang "Algeria is our mother" instead of "France is our mother" and was severely punished by the headmaster.³² That was exactly what had forged her early protest against colonialism. At the age of 20 she enthusiastically joined the National Liberation Front (FLN).

One year after her integration in the FLN, there held from August 20, 1956, the Soummam Congress which constitutes an important turning point in the armed struggle by defining the objectives of the Revolution and by setting the authorities both on the political and military level.³³

In its chart, the Soummam Congress devoted a whole section (F) for the Algerian women entitled: The Movement of Women. It first, testifies and glorifies the sacrifices made by women during the early years of the revolution:

Immense possibilities exist and are increasing in this area. We greet with emotion, with admiration, the exhilarating revolutionary courage of young girls and young women, wives and mothers; of all our "Moujahidine" sisters who participate actively, and sometimes with arms in hand, in the sacred struggle for the liberation of the Fatherland.³⁴

The section ended by the focus of the congress on the different ways through which the Algerian women could further be involved in the revolution and how to organize their next struggle against the coloniser.³⁵

The congress imparted Algiers a special status, the Autonomous Zone of Algiers (ZAA), structured into two branches: political and military, bringing together 12,000 militants divided into three zones. Thus, the military branch was commanded by Yacef Saadi, under the control of Larbi Ben M'Hidi, and the political branch was headed by Brahim Chergui, supervised by Abane Ramdane and Benyoucef Ben Khedda.³⁶

Benefiting on January 7, 1957 from full powers to restore security in Algiers within the framework of the "Battle of Algiers", General Jacques Massu launched his troops of the 10th DP (Parachute Division) in the footsteps of the two branches of the ZAA for dismantle them, following the Eight Days strike, from January 29 to February 8, 1957, which shook the colonial authorities, and the bombings that followed, carried out by the *fidaiyine*.³⁷

The operations of the FLN commandos carried out on the orders of the CCE aimed, on the one hand, to break the grip drawn up by the colonial authorities on the capital and relayed by the terrorist operations carried out on August 10, 1956 by the French ultras in the *Rue de Thebes* and, on the other hand, to bring the struggle to the capital, proving to the world the mobilization of the Algerian people behind the FLN.³⁸ Following the dismantling of the two branches of the ZAA through the systematic use of torture, the members of the CCE, Ramdane Abane and Benyoucef Ben Khedda left Algiers for Tunis and Larbi Ben M'hidi was arrested and then executed. Thus, the ZAA with its two branches was, in the absence of Brahim Chergui, arrested, taken in

charge by Yacef Saadi until his arrest in September 1957.³⁹

The role of the Algerian woman during the "Battle of Algiers" was most active, in particular in matters of intelligence, the carrying of weapons and the planting of bombs. Among the female combatants are Zohra Drif, the martyr Hassiba Ben Bouali, Djamila Bouazza (deceased on July 10, 2016), Djamila Bouhired who was entrusted by Yacef Saadi with the mission of liaison officer, and many others. It was at the age of 20 that Djamila Bouhired joined the FLN by helping her uncle Mustapha shelter the *moujahidine* and of whom she witnessed the murder in March 1957 at the Casbah by paratroopers. Active member of the Yacef Saadi network, Djamila Bouhired planted her bomb in September 1956 at the Milk Bar:

"We had visited the site and noted several possible targets. We had been told to place two bombs, but we were three, and at the last moment, since it was possible, we decided to plant three bombs. Samia and I carried three bombs from the Casbah to Bab el Oued where they were primed. Each of us placed a bomb, and at the appointed time there were two explosions; one of the bombs was defective and did not go off."⁴⁰

What remains today of the battle of Algiers in the collective memory? No doubt the memory of a military victory by Massu's paratroopers and Bigeard's "Red Berets" over the FLN, but also the memory of an immense political and moral defeat which was to seal the fate of French Algeria.⁴¹

It was on April 9, 1957 that Djamila Bouhired was arrested in the *Rue du Sphinx*, in the Casbah, while she was in possession of important documents addressed to Ramdane Abane, the Head of

Wilaya IV and member of the CCE. The young *fidaiya* put up fierce resistance to the paratroopers to prevent them from getting their hands on the contents of her bag, and that was when a bullet came out, hitting her in the shoulder, before it passed out. No sooner had she regained consciousness than she was taken to prison where she was, for three days, subjected to a strict interrogation and testing under the *gégène* (torture with electricity) in various places of the body, in particular during the night of the 17th to the 18th when the torture lasted from 9 p.m. to the next day until dawn, until unconsciousness. The following testimony explains further the truthful atrocity she had been endured:

“There was there, a captain, small, brown, French from Algeria, judging by his accent, and about forty years old, a lieutenant, a master sergeant, and two soldiers: a parachutist in charge of the "laboratory", and a second in charge of recording the confessions.”⁴²

On the night of April 17-18, Djamila Bouhired, whom her younger brother joined week later, to experience the refinements of torture in her turn, is tortured with electricity while aircraft engines hum up there:

“The three captains, who had brought me out of the hospital around 9:00 pm, and the two paratroopers stripped me naked and my eyes were blindfolded. I was tied to a bench, taking care to place wet rags under the ties on the wrists, arms, stomach, thighs, ankles and legs and I was placed electrodes in the sex, in the hands, ears, on the forehead, in the mouth, at the tips of the breasts. Around three in the morning, I passed out, then went delirious...”⁴³

The paratroopers did not even spare her shoulder injury by slashing her savagely. A month later, Djamila Bouazza, barely 20 years old, was arrested. Fate brought them

together in the same prison where they suffered the worst tortures: physical violence and spraying with cold water in the middle of winter, and their obligation to stay wet all night. Despite the suffering endured under torture, Djamila Bouhired did not say a word, thus proving her extraordinary courage in the face of the peril that threatened her. Equal to herself, the young *fidaiya* had shown herself to be dignified and serene. On May 16, 1957, she sent a letter to the military examining magistrate Boyeux reminding him of her complaint of April 27 addressed to the dean of the examining magistrates asking for the appointment of an expert to examine her immediately to see the after-effects of the torture she suffered.⁴⁴

These two requests had gone unheeded. Over the days, the abuses of the Instruction increased to the point where Djamila Bouhired was deprived of the assistance of her lawyer Jacques Vergès, who was not advised to attend the interrogations of his client as required by law. It was not long before he announced his withdrawal from the Information phase, protesting the extorted confession, attributing the young fighter to the manufacture of bombs as well as his denial of visiting his client. More serious undoubtedly, during this period of investigation, was the attempted kidnapping by the ultras against Vergès and his two colleagues, Moutet and Gauthrat.⁴⁵

In her revelation to Amrane Djamila's *Les Femmes Algériennes dans la Guerre*, Djamila Bouhired continued her testimony by adding horrible account about the torture she had endured and how the French doctor who investigated the issue

had falsified his examination report and denied the truth:

"On the 21st, I was transferred to a second specialized "villa" located in El Biar, in Algiers. Until the 25th, I was beaten and it was not until the next day that I was presented to the Parquet. I cannot after the tortures I suffered, worse than death because humiliating, from the French officers, in a French military hospital or on the premises of the army, not to deny to a French court not only the competence, but the simple moral right to judge me."⁴⁶

On May 18, thirty-five days after her arrest, forensic pathologist Doctor Godard came to report and "explain" the prisoner's condition. Knowingly omitting the path of the bullet which entered the back, the wound reopened to become tuberculous in nature. Only a bacteriological examination would provide more precision.⁴⁷ On the other hand, the right-angled flexion of Djamila Bouhired's left forearm remained without "clinical explanation." The Doctor limited himself to recommending an x-ray. As for the "two pink, painful scars, five centimeters long" which are on the right flank and the external face of the right thigh, he readily claimed that they: "can go back to about thirty days and come from a fall, local friction or blows" before concluding here and now that: "Djamila Bouhired does not bear any trace of violence that can go back to the twenty days that precede."⁴⁸

Her trial therefore opened on July 11, 1957 before the Permanent Tribunal of the Armed Forces (TPFA) of Algiers. To Djamila Bouhired were addressed three charges and not the least: "criminal association", "complicity in assassination" and "destruction of buildings by an explosive substance."⁴⁹

During the trial, Djamila Bouhired had remained vigilant and dignified as during the Investigation. She did not breathe a word on the secrets of the Revolution and hid herself behind the silence, protesting against the pitfalls set up for her lawyer. On the other hand, she declared herself proud of her membership in the Revolution. Here is her last word before withdrawing from the tribunal to deliberate: "The truth is that I love my country and I want to see it free, and that is why I support the struggle of the National Liberation Front." Then she added:

"This alone leads you to condemn me to death after the tortures I suffered at your hands, as you killed my brothers Ben M'hidi, Boumendjel and Zeddiam. But you must not forget that by killing us you will assassinate the traditions of freedom of your country and put its future in danger, and besides, you cannot prevent Algeria from being independent."⁵⁰

Yet, after less than an hour of deliberation, the court sentenced Djamila Bouhired and Djamila Bouazza to death. Djamila Bouhired was awaiting her fate in prison, now that the affair had reached its end since the execution of the sentence was scheduled for March 8, 1958. Her condemnation provoked a campaign of support led by her lawyer Jacques Vergès, who four months after the verdict, in November 1957 published a manifesto entitled *For Djamila Bouhired (Pour Djamila Bouhired)*, in Editions de Minuit. This text alerted international public opinion to the torture inflicted by the French army on Algerian combatants. It was intended as a defense for Djamila Bouhired and a condemnation of the deplorable conditions in which the trial was held.⁵¹

From her case, there was media coverage that went beyond the borders of Algeria and France in an extraordinary way. This, along with the director of the newspaper *Alger Republicain* Henri Alleg's book *The Question (La Question)* resulted in the international outcry raised by her condemnation. Indeed, in 1958, she was 23 when her life was adapted to the cinema by Egyptian filmmaker Youssef Chahine, in *Djamila l'Algérienne*. When the Egyptians saw this film, they demonstrated in front of the French embassy for the independence of Algeria. The Lebanese diva *Fairouz* then dedicated a song to her that proclaimed her friendship, her solidarity: "*Letter to Djamila Bouhired*"⁵²

Detained in Barberousse prison in Algiers, Djamila Bouhired insisted to her lawyer, Vergès, not to take any steps to ask for a pardon. "A fighter," she said, "doesn't have to ask for pardon, as a matter of principle."⁵³ While wishing to respect the will of the young moudjahida, Vergès remained in contact with the office of the Superior Council of Magistracy (CSM) in anticipation of its possible summons by the President of the Republic. He was pleasantly surprised in this office by thousands of letters and telegrams from all over the world asking for mercy for Djamila Bouhired.⁵⁴

This incessant flow of letters did not fail to touch the President, René Coty, who, on March 13, 1958, decided to grant pardon to Djamila Bouhired as well as Djamila Bouazza and Jacqueline Guerroudj, and to commute the death sentence to life hard labor.⁵⁵ Not stopping there, Vergès and Georges Arnaud redoubled their efforts to extract Djamila Bouhired from the horrors of Barberousse and transfer her to prisons

in France where she suffered terribly following the complications of her shoulder injury, aggravated by the tortures afflicted by the paratroopers and by the refusal of the prison authorities to provide her with the necessary additional care.⁵⁶

In Barberouss, Djamila Bouhired was among five women also condemned to death, two of whom shared a narrow room, devoid of any basic condition of life. It was then that she learned of the death of her brother Ilyes, a 16-year-old arrested by the paratroopers. To all this was added the prohibition of her lawyer to visit her.⁵⁷

The efforts of Vergès and Georges Arnaud ended up being crowned with success and Djamila Bouhired was transferred to the prison of Pau, then to Fresnes due to further complications from her shoulder injury. There, she felt more at ease in the presence of dozens of Algerian political prisoners and was able to meet Ahmed Taleb Ibrahimi and Yacef Saadi.⁵⁸

Released on April 18, 1962, the day after the decree of March 22 of the same year in application of the Evian Accords of March 18, 1962, Djamila Bouhired returned to the country, satisfied to witness the triumph of the Revolution of which she is one of its valiant moudjahidate. She was a guest of several brotherly and friendly countries where she was received with warmth and admiration, especially in literary and artistic circles who praised her bravery spanning from 1957 to independence.⁵⁹

6. Djamila Boupacha (1938-)

One cannot talk about Djamila Bouhired without talking about Djamila Boupacha as both of them were considered as *poseuse*

de bombes and both had the same faith. She was born in Bologhine on February 9, 1938, daughter of Abdelaziz and Zoubida Amarouche. At the age of 15 she engaged in politics and became a member in the Democratic Union of the Algerian Manifesto (UDMA) founded by Ferhat Abbas in 1946. On the eve of the Algerian Revolution she was committed to the FLN in 1955 and took the name of Khelida. She was a member of Yasif Saadi bombs network in Algiers with Djamila Bouhired and Djamila Bouazza.⁶⁰

Arrested at her parents' home, at the age of 22, on the night of February 10 to 11, 1960, suspected of having planted a bomb at the Brasserie des Facultés in Algiers, she was suddenly woken up by soldiers who dragged her into the courtyard without giving her time to get dressed. She recounted her arrest:

"There, a captain hit me slapped me several times, punching me in the body, then asking me if I knew Si Djamal and Si Mourad, two" brothers." They then took me to the road where I was again mistreated. I was taken in a 403 to the El Biar sorting center, where the same captain slapped me again and punched me again. A day or two later, a parachute captain I was seeing for the first time punched me, grabbed me by the hair, twisted my neck. Falling to the ground, I was hit with a heel on the chest."⁶¹

Illegally imprisoned (officially, she was not, for a month, imprisoned anywhere), raped, she suffered for more than a month of numerous abuses, inflicted by members of the French army. Examined four days later by a military doctor, she was then taken to the engineering barracks in Hussein-Dey where she was further brutalized and tortured as she revealed it:

"It was in this barracks that I was subjected to the electric current. A thread, held together with tape, was placed over my breasts, legs, groin, and genitals. I had previously been strapped to a steeply sloping wooden chair. The inspectors asked me questions about my "brothers". I said that I received "brothers" and provided them with medicine."⁶²

Again subjected to the magneto and cigarette burns, torture repeated the next morning, she was dragged to a new room:

"I was tied to the wrists, while a stick was slipped between my forearms and my knees. This stick was then to be placed over a tub full of water. Rotating me around this stick, they would plunge my head into the water at intervals... to ask me where the brothers were, which I didn't know... they threw me on the ground, I was naked, the arms raised and held on the ground. A strip of canvas tightened my belt. These men successively inserted the neck of a beer bottle and a toothbrush into my sex, and I lost consciousness."⁶³

Her brother succeeded in warning the lawyer Gisèle Halimi who decided to take charge of her case in March 1960. Their first meeting was held at the Barberousse prison on May 17, 1960. Relating to the tortures to which she was subjected, Djamila Boupacha ended by describing how the soldiers raped her by inserting the handle of a toothbrush and then the neck of a beer bottle:

"I was administered the torment of the bottle; it is the most atrocious of sufferings; after having tied me in a special position, the neck of a bottle was thrust into my stomach. I screamed and passed out for, I believe, two days."⁶⁴

During her visit to the prison, Gisèle Halimi was outraged by such cruelty and decided to stand up for her. She wrote: "I saw the traces of torture on her body, the breasts burned by cigarettes, the ribs

broken by the beatings; I decided to be her lawyer."⁶⁵ To defend the young activist, she denounced the inhuman acts of torture to which she was subjected. After a botched trial, she was sentenced to the guillotine. However, Halimi strived to prevent her execution deployed exemplary activity and appealed to her friends, to save the young activist from the guillotine.⁶⁶

It alerted the French intellectual elite and the most influential politicians of the time. She went so far as to question the President of the Republic and his minister who retorted "that torture is not practiced in Algeria"⁶⁷ sought to publicize the Djamila affair by exposing it to the general public. So, she made an urgent appeal to Simone de Beauvoir, known for her anti-colonial struggle. The latter convinced by the case, wrote the article that was published on June 2, 1960 in a column in the newspaper *Le Monde*, entitled "For Djamila Boupacha."

In this article, she fiercely denounced the massive use of torture and the odious practices suffered by the young resistance member. This op-ed begins with the sentence "The most scandalous thing about scandal is that you get used to it."⁶⁸ In the latter, the intellectual recounted the tragedy of the prisoner, and drew a parallel between rape of the young woman, rape of the rights of defense and violation of the laws of France:

"If the government procrastinates, it is in the opinion to exert pressure on it, to imperatively demand the postponement of the trial of Djamila, the outcome of the investigation she calls for, safe protection for her family and friends, and for its executioners the rigors of the law"⁶⁹

The reading of this text provoked strong protests, in metropolitan France and abroad. The mobilization was gaining momentum, setting in motion the whole of French society and, in particular, the intellectual elite. The stories of Djamila and her father were published for the first time in the review *Vérité Liberté* in July / August 1960 in which Pierre Vidal-Naquet, the French anti-colonial militant wrote his article entitled "Justice Hors la loi." He distinguished himself by his involvement against torture. He had also carried out many actions for this cause and denounced the tortures of the French Army against the Algerians.⁷⁰

The Boupacha case came to light and took on an international dimension when she identified, during her trial which took place on June 26, 27 and 28, 1961 at the Caen court, her torturers among the many photos of soldiers she had been shown by the judge *Chausserie-Laprée*. The case was gaining momentum with the "*Defense Committee for Djamila*" created by Simone de Beauvoir, and Gisele Halimi. The committee comprising luminaries of literature and universal philosophy, such as Louis Aragon, Jean Paul Sartre, Geneviève de Gaulle, Gabriel Marcel... and Germaine Tillon.⁷¹ Simone Veil, in her capacity as magistrate delegate to the Ministry of Justice at the time, had given *the coup de grace* by acceding to the committee's wish to transfer her to France to prevent her from certain death that her executioners were plotting to silence her forever. Thanks to the maneuvers of this committee, the Algiers court was relieved of the case, in favour of that of Caen in France. For the acts of torture, Gisèle Halimi was suing Minister of Defense,

Pierre Mesmer as well as General Charles Ailleret who then commanded the French army in Algeria for forfeiture.⁷²

But as her trial did not exonerate her, despite the proven facts, then Simone and Gisèle co-published a plea at Edition Gallimard with, as a bonus, the portrait of Boupacha by the famous painter Pablo Picasso's canvas on the cover. The outcome was an international movement took over in the form of demonstrations in front of the French embassies in Tokyo, Washington, and around the world to support the cause of Djamila Boupacha. Transferred to Fresnes prison, then to that of Pau, Djamila Boupacha was tried at the end of June 1961.⁷³

Saved from death, she was granted amnesty under the Evian accords and released on April 21 of the current year. Djamila Boupacha did in the same way as Djamila Bouhired inspired cultural and nationalist spheres who reacted in different ways to glorify her sacrifices for her country. The lithograph of Djamila Boupacha by the great Pablo Picasso. The drawing was made the day before the cease-fire on March 19 1962 to save Djamila Boupacha from the guillotine. The charcoal drawing appeared on the front page of French Letters of February 8, 1962 and as the opening of the plea by Simone de Beauvoir and Gisèle Halimi as a symbol of his unwavering support to the Algerian woman. The same year, the painter Roberto Matta produced his Torment of Djamila. Also in 1962, the musician Luigi Nono (1924-1990) paid homage to the young woman by devoting to her a vocal piece from his *Canti di Vita* and *D'amore*; *Djamila Boupacha*. In 2000, Francesca Solleville performed *Djamila* composed by

Bernard Joyet on the disc *Big Brother Little Brother*. In 2012, Bernard Joyet resumed the song on his CD *Autodidact*.⁷⁴

Besides on March 12, 2013 *For Djamila*, TV movie. It depicted how in the midst of the Algerian Liberation war, Gisèle Halimi and Simone de Beauvoir turned the conviction of an FLN activist into a platform for independence, a moving historical TV movie.⁷⁵ Gradually, Djamila Boupacha, the famous icon of the struggle for independence, is slipping from the political scene, like other women who feel they have accomplished their mission well.

7. CONCLUSION

One major point that emerged from this paper is that the fate of any colonisation is independence and freedom when nationalism encompasses determination and sacrifices. The courage and the bravery of the Algerian women who since the early beginning of the colonial era in 1830 endeavoured to free their captured motherland. They subverted the colonial lens of gender: using their veils to hide messages, money and weapons, and donning western dress as they entered the French quarters and deposited explosives. Those involved in the Battle of Algiers engraved their names among Algeria's most iconic historical figures. Through the article, it has been depicted that the Algerian women, not only the indispensable role they performed in preserving Muslim Algerians' identity, traditions and collective self-respect throughout the period of colonial domination but equally the vital role they played, and the extraordinary courage, tenacity and resourcefulness they brought to this, in the war of liberation itself.

Algerian women bravely revolted against the French colonizer at a priceless cost: through Lalla Fatma N'soumer, Zoulikha Oudai, Djamila Amrane Minne, Djamila Bouhired and Djamila Boupacha we can testify that the various kinds of torture, rape, violence, killing, psychological and physical oppression did not dissuade them from continuing their waged battle against colonialism. Those women stemmed their determination to

contribute in the liberation of their country from the daily atrocities, deprivation and institutionalised racism they had been suffering from for nearly one and half century. Their commitment defied the existing institutions with their traditions that compelled them to housewives and revolted against the unfair colonial law that deprived them of their basic rights. Today, their legacy continues to inspire a new generation in the struggle for justice.

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³⁴ -The main explosions of 1864 of the Ouled Sidi Cheikh of South Oran, of 1871 in Kabylia, of 1916 in Aurès and the region of Mascara have forever illustrated the ardent patriotism, going as far as the supreme sacrifice, of the Algerian woman. She is now convinced that the current Revolution will inexorably lead to the conquest of independence. The recent example of the young Kabyle girl who rejects a marriage proposal because she does not emanate from a maquisard illustrates in a magnificent way the sublime morale that drives Algerian women, ibid., p.3.

³⁵ - It is therefore possible to organize in this area, with original methods specific to the customs of the country, a formidable and effective means of combat. a) Moral support for combatants and resistance fighters; b) Information, links, supplies, refuges; c) Help for the families and children of resistance fighters, prisoners or internees, ibid., p.4.

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⁷² - *op.cit.*, p.113.

⁷³ - *op.cit.*, p. 169.

⁷⁴ - Mameri, *op.cit.*, p. 57.

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