

Decisive Battles in the History of the Sixth Wilaya (1957–1961) (The Third Region as a Model)

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Abstract:

The Sixth Wilaya of the historical Algerian resistance witnessed fierce battles against the French enemy from 1956 to 1962. The Third Region had a significant share of these battles due to its location, which included major mountain ranges, most notably Mount Boukhil, extending from Djelfa to the borders of Biskra. Among the major confrontations against the enemy, three decisive battles emerged as pivotal turning points in the course of the liberation revolution in the region. These included the battles of Dallaj 197 (1957), Sefsefifa (1959), and the 48-hour battle of 1961. The outcomes of these battles had far-reaching consequences that reshaped the course of events across the entire Sixth Wilaya.

Keywords: Sixth Wilaya, Makhlouf Ben Qassim, Zian Al-Buhali, Boukhil, Chabani.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Sixth Wilaya of the historical Algerian resistance was established during the Soumam Conference on August 20, 1956. However, the desert people had joined the liberation revolution shortly after its outbreak. The Desert Military Unit was formed in March 1955, and the Desert Army expanded across the Eastern Sahara Atlas and the Ouled Nail Mountains, reaching over 700 fighters by the beginning of 1956.

Sheikh Zian Ashour¹ established the solid military base for the Desert Army, which later became known as the Sixth Wilaya Army. However, the Soumam Conference ignored the ground realities and appointed Commander Ali Melah² as the head of the Wilaya, which led to a political and military disarray that lasted for a long period.

Despite the challenges, the people of the Sixth Wilaya managed to overcome difficulties and achieve military victories that thwarted the Boulenis Conspiracy and foiled all of France's colonial projects in the desert.

The Third Region witnessed pivotal battles that had significant repercussions on the course of revolutionary activity in the Sixth Wilaya. Among these battles were the Dallaj battle of 1957, the Sefsefifa battle of 1959, and the 48-hour battle in 1961, which was also known as the "Battle of the Karma and Jreibiya."

To present the subject of this study in its comprehensive form, we must address the following question:

What were the decisive battles in the history of the Third Region that reshaped the course of the confrontation in the Sixth Wilaya?



2. The Battle of Dallaj ³ 1957, led by Zian El-Bohali.

The Battle of Dallaj, which took place on July 2, 1957, marked a pivotal moment in the history of the second sector of the third region, and its commander, Zian El-Bohali, was one of the most prominent revolutionary leaders in the area.

2.1 Milestones in the Life of Commander Zian El-Bohali

Zian El-Bohali, also known as (Belkhiri Zian)⁴ was born in the rural area of Faid Batma in 1932. Very little is known about his life before the revolution. He was conscripted into the French army, which was headed to the Indochina War in 1952. There, he gained military skills and rose to the rank of first soldier. During his time in Indochina, he witnessed the immense sacrifices made by the people of Indochina in their struggle for freedom and dignity.

After returning on military leave from Indochina in April 1956, he found that the armed struggle had already begun in his region. He joined the ranks of the Liberation Army and initially contacted the Boukhil Group, led by the Mujahid Mohamed Ben El-Hadi⁵ and, due to his military experience, he was quickly appointed as a squad leader just a week after joining the revolution. Within days, Mohamed Ben El-Hadi made him his deputy upon realizing Zian's military abilities and combat skills.

He participated in various armed operations, ranging from direct daylight attacks on enemy centers to ambushes and fierce battles. Among his most significant military operations were:

- Participating in disarming the (Civilians) of their weapons and military uniforms in the Amoura area in April 1956.
- Attacking the M'sila center in May 1956 and killing two French soldiers.

–The first attack on the Damed center in October 1956, resulting in the deaths of four French soldiers.

–An ambush between Mjebara and Djelfa (Saba Maqran) on October 1, 1956, killing a French officer and three soldiers, seizing their weapons.

–The attack on Mjebara center in December 1956, resulting in the death of 40 French soldiers and the complete evacuation of the center.

–An ambush at Ain Riche in December 1956, killing many French soldiers and seizing their weapons.

–An ambush on the road connecting M'sila and Djelfa in December 1956, setting fire to a European truck.

–The second attack on the Damed center in January 1957, killing several French soldiers.

–The attack on the Manqoub center in the desert (Sidi Khaled) in early January 1957.

–The Hawaas Battle in northern Djelfa in April 1957, the first battle in Djelfa during daylight, which lasted for an entire day, in which the enemy lost many soldiers, and only one Mujahid from Zian El-Bohali's group, Abdelkader Daqman, was injured.

–Supervising the military attempt to eliminate the SAS leader in M'sila, "Schmidt," in May 1957, assigning Mansour El-Hachani and Miloud Ben Atiya to carry out this mission. (Mkhallat, 2016, 43)

After this successful military operation, he was promoted to the rank of Second Lieutenant in June 1957.

2.2 The Dallaj Battle (or Conspiracy)

At the end of May and early June 1957, a meeting took place between the Fifth and Sixth Wilaya, represented by commander Omar Liris, who immediately traveled to Morocco to bring weapons. Arab



Meziane, known as (Al-Arabi El-Kabaili), was appointed to lead the Boukhil unit in the second sector, with Zian El-Bohali as his deputy. It was at this time that Arab Meziane began to conspire against the revolution and specifically against Commander Zian El-Bohali, who had achieved significant military victories, especially in the Hawaas Battle. Zian's fame was beginning to overshadow that of Arab Meziane and others like him.

2.2.1 Events of the Dallaj Battle

The first task Zian El-Bohali was assigned was to set an ambush for a French military convoy consisting of trucks and jeeps carrying supplies, guarded by military vehicles, on the road connecting M'sila and Djelfa (Bettsalah region). Zian arrived at the site of the operation on June 30, 1957, hoping to receive the necessary explosives for the ambush that morning. However, strangely, the supplies did not reach Zian until a day later, signaling a clear indication of betrayal by Arab Meziane, who had conspired to delay the operation. Furthermore, the operation required a full battalion of 110 soldiers in a barren area with no cover or escape routes. Even more alarming was that Arab Meziane was aware of the large French military forces assembling in M'sila and Ain El Ibel to attack Zian El-Bohali's army but chose to do nothing about it. There are matching sources confirming that Arab Meziane had informed the French military about the details of the ambush. (Mkhallat, Private Interview, 2016)

The ammunition for Zian's battalion arrived on July 2, 1957, and he quickly set up the ambush, only to be shocked by the arrival of an unexpected large French force from M'sila, consisting of armored vehicles and jeeps. Despite detonating mines on the French patrol and destroying one of the armored vehicles, Zian ordered his army to withdraw when it became clear that the ambush had been set for them. They retreated to the Dallaj area, about 10 km away, where they could

find shelter, supplies, and water. When Zian and his battalion arrived, exhausted, after 9 a.m., they were surprised to find the area surrounded by a large French force, reinforced by various types of military aircraft. (Zaitouni, 2017)

Zian quickly divided his battalion into three groups to scatter the French forces and facilitate their withdrawal, marking the beginning of the intense Dallaj battle from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. The French used fighter jets, napalm bombs, and chemical gases, while hundreds of paratroopers were dropped into the battle area. Amidst the intense fire from all directions, the Mujahideen fought fiercely despite the lack of equipment, causing heavy losses to the French forces. Many of the enemy soldiers were killed by airstrikes after hand-to-hand combat. The battle resulted in the martyrdom of 72 of the region's finest sons, 25 Mujahideen were captured after running out of ammunition, and many others were injured. Only 13 Mujahideen managed to escape the battle, having miraculously withdrawn at nightfall.

Among the most prominent martyrs of this battle were Commander Zian El-Bohali and his deputies: Majdel and Ibn El-Hajj).

2.2.2 Outcomes and Repercussions of the Battle

-In that battle, 70 martyrs fell, led by military officer Belkheiri Ziane (known as "Ziane El Bouhali"). The battle itself was an ambush orchestrated by El Arbi Meziane in coordination with the colonial administration from the south of Djelfa, and it was later continued by Blounis⁶, in the north of the city, where they ambushed the revolutionary leadership at the Kaïkaï center and captured Commander Abdelrahman Hachi.⁷

Following this, unit commanders were summoned in his name, and more than 83 field commanders—who had inflicted heavy defeats on the enemy since May 1956—were executed. Blounis presented them as proof of his loyalty and obedience to the French generals.



-Blounis' followers seized control of the Second and Third Regions, deceiving soldiers into believing they were supporters of Messali Hadj. This conspiracy had been in the works since 1956, aiming to dominate the region. Blounis collaborated with the French enemy, culminating in the May 31, 1957, meeting in Beni Oulman with French intelligence officers.

The main agenda of this meeting was to discuss strategies for combating the FLN and exposing its networks and supply routes. (National Organization of Mujahideen, 1995, 19)

- Blounis found allies to execute his plan in the region. From the French side, General AIMEZ became his special advisor, and intelligence officer REKOL provided him with full military support.

Meanwhile, he secured backing from infiltrated Messalists within the Liberation Army, led by Mohamed El Akhal, who managed to deceive some key army figures, such as:

- Abdelkader Djaghla
- Boufatih El Jerouni
- Miftah
- Abdallah Esselmi
- Abdelkader Latrech

- El Arbi Meziane, who spread false rumors within the Liberation Army, claiming that the FLN had executed Omar Idris⁸ and his assistant Tayeb Farhat.

- Revolutionary activities in Djelfa and surrounding areas came to a halt for over five months after Blounis declared a truce with the French enemy, falsely promising to achieve Algeria's self-governance. This threw the region into chaos and confusion until July 1958, when Blounis and his conspiracy were eliminated.

3. The Battle of Safsifa (1959) Led by Makhlouf Ben Gacem

3.1 Milestones in the Life of Commander Makhlouf Ben Gacem

Makhloufi Makhlouf Ben Gacem Delloula, known as Makhlouf Ben Gacem⁹, was born in 1917 in OuladMessahel, Bordj Ben Azzouz (currently Tolga District, Biskra Province). He grew up leading a simple life, with a passion for hunting and shooting.

He joined the National Liberation Revolution early in January 1955 and rose through the ranks to become a military lieutenant in the army of Si El Haouas.¹⁰

After the defeat of the traitor Blounis and the restructuring of Wilaya VI in 1958, Makhlouf Ben Gacem became a commander in Zone III and was responsible for the Second Sector, which covered a vast geographic area:

–From Mount Thamer in the northeast, passing through Messaad, down to Sidi Makhlouf in the south.

–From the Bou Saada Road in the north to Mount Lebba, near Mount Messaad, in the east.

–The sector included divisions 55, 56, 57, and 58. (Wilaya Secretariat of Mujahideen in Djelfa, 1998)

3.2 His Most Notable Military Missions

Makhlouf Ben Gacem planned and executed nearly 19 ambushes and confrontations, the most notable of which were:

–Attack on Mount Boukahil near Amoura (February 1, 1959)

–Engagement at Mount Al-Muallaq (July 17, 1959)

–Engagement at El-Karma (August 3, 1959)

–He fought more than 17 battles with exceptional military skill. Some of the most significant include:



-The Battle of Al-Muhariqa (November 17, 1956), east of Bou Saada.

- 120Mujahideen participated.

-It began at 7 AM and lasted until nightfall.

-It resulted in heavy enemy casualties, 20 martyrs, and six wounded Mujahideen.

-The Second Battle of Mount Al-Muhariqa (February 9, 1957), near M'sif, east of Bou Saada.

-14 French aircraft took part.

-Lasted an entire day.

-Three planes were shot down, including a helicopter.

-The Battle of Al-Maymouna (December 1957) against Blounis' followers, who had taken control of the area.

-The battle saw French ground and air forces intervening.

-The common enemy was the National Liberation Army (with the FLN behind it).

-It lasted a full day.

-Four French aircraft were downed.

-Five Mujahideen were martyred.

-The Battle of Safsifa (January 9, 1959) – details to follow later.

-The Battle of Marah Al-Ajram (Mount Boukahil, August 10, 1959).

-Another severe blow to Blounis' followers.

-First Lieutenant Zidan was martyred.

-The Battle of Toumiat (Boukahil, September 2, 1960).

-One of Ben Gacem's greatest victories.

-A large number of enemy soldiers were killed.

- A T-06 aircraft was downed.
 - Four Robar-type machine guns were seized.
 - The Battle of Al-Alq (Boukahil, October 3, 1960).
 - A fierce battle that was closer to an ambush.
 - 16 Mujahideen were martyred.
 - Despite the heavy losses, the enemy suffered significant casualties.
 - Two French aircraft were downed.
 - The Battle of Al-Safraa (Boukahil, May 19, 1961).
 - One of the largest battles in the Second Sector.
 - The enemy lost over 80 soldiers.
 - Mujahideen seized various weapons (MAS-56 rifles, MAT-49s, a pistol, and a radio transmitter).
 - 10 Mujahideen were martyred, including Farhat Hassouni and Assistant Omar Nouibat.
 - The Battle of El-Karma and El-Jreibi' (September 18-19, 1961).
 - Led by Commander Mohamed Chaabani.
 - Ben Gacem, as head of Zone III, played a crucial role in the second day of battle.
- His strategic withdrawal plan helped save the Wilaya VI army:
- Fake withdrawal through the southern pass by sending livestock down the valley.
 - Meanwhile, the real withdrawal took place through the northern rocky pass.
 - His strategic insight was key to Wilaya VI's victory.
 - The Battle of Mount Messaad (October 10, 1961).
 - Ben Gacem was returning from a Zone III meeting.
 - He had only five Mujahideen with him.

–The area was thought to be secure, but the enemy’s new strategy involved setting ambushes in the mountains.

–The French forces tracked his movements and surrounded him overnight.

–By morning, he was completely encircled.

–A fierce but unequal fight ensued.

–His group ran out of ammunition.

–He was wounded and captured.

His Capture and Execution

–Ben Gacem was taken to Messaad, then to Djelfa, where he endured brutal torture.

–Despite the interrogation, he stood firm and insisted he was an officer in the National Liberation Army.

–When a French officer tried to belittle him in front of the imprisoned Mujahideen, he defiantly responded:

–“Show some respect! You are speaking to an officer in the National Liberation Army.”

–This infuriated the colonial authorities, who ordered his execution.

–On October 31, 1961, he was crushed under a tank on the slopes of Mount Boukahil. (Cheroun, 2020)

3.3 The Battle of Safsifa – January 9, 1959

The Battle of Safsifa was a turning point in the history of Wilaya VI in general and Zone III in particular. At that time, the region was suffering from the control of commanders loyal to Blounis’ army, who held strategic positions.

Even after Blounis’ downfall and his proven betrayal in collaborating with the French army, his loyalists—including figures

like Abdelkader Jghlef, Boufattah El-Jarouni, Miftah, and Abdallah Essalmi—continued to claim they were Zayani and Messalist.

Their primary enemy was not the French, but the National Liberation Front (FLN) and its army (ALN), posing a real threat to the revolution's continuity in Zones II and III.

Strategic Background

In July 1958, Makhoulf Ben Gacem was appointed commander of the Second Subsector in Zone III.

His first military objective was to eliminate the remnants of Blounis' forces from their strategic positions—especially in the Boukahil mountain range.

Why Were These Groups a Threat?

1. They knew the terrain very well and operated in areas vital to the revolution's success.
2. They had modern weapons—provided by France during Blounis' collaboration.

Preparation for Battle

Ben Gacem moved deep into the Boukahil Mountains and targeted Mount Safsifa, a heavily fortified natural stronghold overseeing its surroundings. His goal was to dislodge the remaining Blounis loyalists from these defensive positions.

On the night of January 8, 1959, he led his battalion toward the mountains near Safsifa, where he carefully observed enemy movements throughout the day.

Using his binoculars—his constant companion during his revolutionary journey—he meticulously mapped out their positions and planned an ambush. (Karbaa, 2017)



At dawn on January 9, 1959, Ben Gacem divided his battalion into multiple groups and launched a surprise attack at sunrise.

- Heavy casualties were inflicted on the enemy.

- Many of them abandoned their positions and fled downhill to Wadi Safsifa.

- However, Ben Gacem anticipated this retreat and laid a trap:

- His forces surrounded the valley, setting up ambushes at multiple points.

- The enemy was forced out of hiding, leading to a horrific battle.

Outcome

- The highest-ranking former commanders of Blounis' army were killed, including:

- Abdelkader Jghlef

- Boufattah El-Jarouni

- A total of 89 enemy combatants were killed.

This battle eliminated a force that could have otherwise aided Wilaya VI in fighting the French occupation—had it not been misled by Blounis' treachery. (Jeballah, Battle of Safsifa, 2021)

3.4 Results and Consequences of the Battle of Safsifa

- The ranks of those known as (Blounisians) were scattered after losing their key field leaders (Abdelkader Jghlaf and Boufatih Al-Jarouni).

- Their near-total withdrawal from Mount Boukhel, which had been their stronghold before this battle.

- The division of (Blounisians) into wandering groups lacking leadership and clear objectives.

–The strong return of the Liberation Army to Mount Boukhel and its regained control over its strategic centers.

–The resumption of battles by the Liberation Army against the French enemy, the true adversary of the revolution.

–The beginning of the end of the discord caused by Blounis, which claimed the lives of some of the finest sons of the desert.

4. The Battle of Karmah and Jraiba or (48 Hours) – September 17/18, 1961

This battle is historically known as the “48-Hour Battle,” which took place on the southeastern slopes of Mount Boukhel in the Third Zone, Second Sector, covering sections 56 and 57. Under the leadership of Mohamed Chaabani.¹¹

The Liberation Army achieved a significant military and moral victory, dashing the enemy’s hopes of eliminating the leaders of the Sixth Wilaya and winning the case for the Sahara’s separation in the negotiations taking place on French and Swiss soil.

4.1 Key Reasons for the Battle

- A meeting of the Sixth Wilaya leadership was held under the presidency of Colonel Mohamed Chaabani, the Wilaya commander, with the aim of expanding media propaganda and intensifying armed action to counter the Sahara separation project. The meeting was attended by officers: Omar Sakhri (Commander of the Fourth Region), Slimane Slimani (Commander of the Second Region), Makhlof Ben Qasim (member of the Third Region), and Mohamed Chebchoub (attached to the Wilaya leadership). The number of mujahideen exceeded 400, which naturally drew the attention of the colonial forces through reconnaissance aircraft that constantly monitored the area.

- The defection of three Algerian conscripts from the enemy’s



army to the Liberation Army from the Messad center on August 12, 1961, carrying with them three German Mauser rifles, three MAT-49 submachine guns, and a thousand cartridges. This defection enraged the enemy and pushed them toward retaliation against the Liberation Army.

- The French enemy's attempt to eliminate the Sahara Army, considering it the main obstacle preventing them from maintaining control over the Sahara and executing its separation project.

- The successive defeats suffered by the French army along Mount Boukhel from 1956 to 1961 made the enemy leaders believe that the time was right to strike down this army and its gathered commanders. (Lakhdari, 2021)

4.2 Preparation for the Battle

- Assigning a specific location for each battalion to station itself and facing the enemy from a designated front.

- Each mujahid was tasked with digging a trench (known as "Kazma") to serve as a stronghold against the enemy. The war officer determined the location of these trenches, and no one was allowed to leave them without orders from the battalion's war officer.

- Stockpiling necessary provisions according to the available resources.

4.3 Battle Events¹².

4.3.1 First Day – September 17, 1961

At around midnight, the patrol guards detected light beams indicating the direction of enemy military convoys moving toward the Liberation Army's position at *Karma*. Soon, *Karma* was surrounded from all directions by enemy forces, and the battle erupted

at 7:00 AM on September 17, 1961. The enemy's reconnaissance planes began circling over the site, followed by bombers and fighter aircraft that intensely bombarded the mujahideen positions for about an hour using explosives and napalm. (Souissi, The 48-hour battle (60th anniversary), 2021)

The aircraft flew in squadrons, with each squadron consisting of 9 to 12 planes. While one squadron bombed, another returned to reload. The planes operated from the following military bases: Ain Oussera, Telaghma, Laghouat, and Djelfa. The total number of aircraft participating in the bombardment was estimated at 40, including B-26, B-29, T-6, and planes known to the Liberation Army as "Safraa" and "Chasseur" (Scouts).

The bombs used in the bombardment included:

- Heavy bombs, weighing several quintals, which created deep craters and sometimes caused groundwater to surface.
- Gas bombs with a foul odor.
- Incendiary bombs that burned everything in their path (napalm).
- Rocket bombs, launched by T-6 aircraft.

At that time, the only means of protection for the mujahideen against these bombs were the trenches ("Kazma").

After the aerial bombardment, heavy artillery, mortars, and tanks (250 units) came into action. The bombardment lasted for several hours. Once the air and artillery strikes subsided, the enemy launched a ground attack, with foreign legion soldiers at the front, followed by Harkis (local auxiliaries) and Algerian conscripts in the French army. They advanced toward the mujahideen, who held their fire until the enemy was close enough. The battle continued throughout the first day. (Jeballah, The 48-hour battle (60th anniversary), 2021)



The battle raged at the same intensity until 9:00 PM, when the bombardment began to subside. Skirmishes continued intermittently under the enemy's searchlights, allowing the battalion leaders to meet with Colonel Mohamed Chaabani and his aides. After checking on the battalions and the soldiers' conditions, the toll was reported:

–Two martyrs

–Three severely wounded fighters: Belkacem Mestawi, Ahmed Maghzi, and Taher Mahjoub

The enemy's losses on the first day were significant.

After the battalion leaders presented reports on the first day's operations, arrangements were made to evacuate the wounded. Following consultations with the unit leaders, Colonel Mohamed Chaabani decided to move from Karma to the Jraiba center to the north, due to its proximity, defensive strength, and availability of water and supplies.

The mujahideen successfully broke the siege around Karma and reached Jraiba before sunrise.

4.3.2 The Second Day of the Battle: September 18, 1961

On the second day, the enemy mobilized larger forces than on the first day, estimated at around 14,000 soldiers, using all types of bombs and aircraft. The first martyrs of the second day were three fighters, discovered by a reconnaissance plane on its way to bomb the primary battle center:

1. Mohamed Lamounes: the first soldier, bearer of the heavy sniper machine gun ("Tireur").
2. Cherif Kermat: mine manufacturer.
3. Bachir Mahdad.

The battle continued throughout the second day from 7 AM until midnight, becoming even more intense and fierce. The French forces

deployed their most powerful military equipment (both ground and air), yet their ground troops failed to reach the positions of the Mujahideen, who were fortified within the rugged terrain of Jrebiâ.

However, the Liberation Army leadership needed to find a way to break the siege. While searching for an escape, the Liberation Army scouts discovered an overlooked pass to the north, in the form of a rocky slope. The army successfully climbed this path and broke through the enemy's blockade.

The first military officer, Mokhlouf Ben Gacem, devised a diversionary tactic by sending livestock towards the southern side through the valley, creating chaotic movement. The enemy mistook this for an attempt by the Mujahideen to break the siege, diverting its fire towards these noises. This provided the Liberation Army with the perfect opportunity to retreat safely through the northern side. (Garoud, 2014)

4.4. Results and Consequences of the Battle of Kerma and Jrebiâ

- Nine martyrs and seven wounded soldiers.
- Heavy enemy casualties: The steadfastness of the Mujahideen in their positions and inside the (Kazemat) made it difficult for the enemy to locate them. This forced the deployment of massive Foreign Legion infantry forces, leading to substantial enemy losses.
- Some enemy soldiers – mercenaries – were killed by their own aerial bombs (deliberately, as they retreated from the Mujahideen's fire) (Lakhdari, 2021) during the second day of battle.
- The Sixth Wilaya Army was the protector of the Algerian cause and the strongest support for Algerian diplomacy, which was fighting to keep the Sahara as an inseparable part of Algeria. The brilliant leadership of Mohamed Chabani played a crucial role in both military and media confrontations, backed by all the militants and Mujahideen of the Sixth Wilaya.



- The military victory in the 48-hour battle gave momentum to the Algerian cause, challenging the enemy's diplomatic efforts to separate the Algerian Sahara.

- The enemy realized it could not defeat the Liberation Army, which was the guardian of national unity, even on barren land.

- The 48-hour battle confirmed to the French enemy that its economic interests in the Sahara were in grave danger, as long as the Saharan Army remained this strong. This left General De Gaulle with no option but to accelerate negotiations leading to a ceasefire.¹³

5. Conclusion

The Sixth Wilaya witnessed fierce battles led by field commanders, graduates of the mountains of the revolution, who displayed exceptional skill, outmatching even the graduates of the largest NATO military academies. The Third Zone, with its mountainous and desert-like terrain, played a significant role in these heroic epics, which served as decisive turning points in the course of the Liberation Revolution.

Among these crucial confrontations was the Battle of Dellaj in 1957, which exposed the betrayal of insiders, orchestrated by Blounis in coordination with the French enemy, under the false belief that eliminating the army of Commander Ziane Bouhali would eradicate the revolution in the region and establish a hybrid project that would solidify the shaky presence of the French army on the battlefield. However, the revolution, with the strength of its people and the wisdom of its leaders, overcame this challenge, despite the heavy price paid in the blood of its finest youth.

In response to this treachery, the Battle of Safsifa in 1959, led by Mokhlouf Ben Gacem, reaffirmed the firm foothold of the revolution in Mount Boukahil and made it clear to leaders who had

been swept away by division that they had fallen into a trap orchestrated by French intelligence and executed by Blounis.

However, the final word came with the 48-hour battle in 1961, led by Colonel Mohamed Chabani, where the Liberation Army demonstrated full control over the battlefield and had developed the military and organizational capabilities necessary to steer the revolution toward an inevitable and imminent victory.

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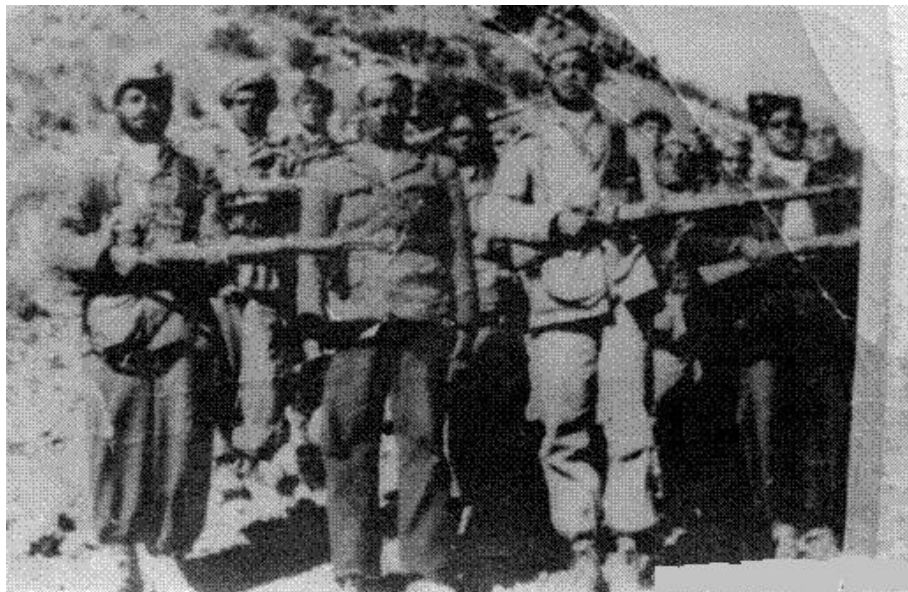
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7. Appendices



Appendix No 01. A photo taken on February 13, 1957, in Mount Boukahil. It shows Officer Zian Bouhali on the far left, next to Commander Hani Mohamed Ben El Hadi. From *Mudhakkarāt al-mujāhid Mukhtār Mukhlīt: Tārīkh jihād, yawmiyyāt min al-wilāyah al-sādisah* (p. xx), by A. Qurūd (Ed.), 2016, Dār Nu'mān. © 2016 by the publisher.



Appendix No 02. A photo showing Boulhanis, with his coup assistant Arabi Meziane to his right. From Al-jinīrāl Blūnīs... bayna al-khadī‘ah wa-l-mu‘āmarah (Part two), by Djelfa Info, 2011, <https://djelfainfo.dz/ar/enquete/1593.html>.



Appendix No 03. The office of the Second Sector of the Third Region in Mount Boukahil. In the foreground, from left to right: Ali Cherif, Makhlouf Ben Kassim, Bachiri Thamer. From Mudhakkarāt al-mujāhid Mukhtār Mukhlīt: Tārīkh jihād, yawmiyyāt min al-wilāyah al-sādisah (p. xx), by A. Qurūd (Ed.), 2016, Dār Nu'mān. © 2016 by the publisher.



Appendix No 04. Photos of the 48-Hour Battle as documented by (Roulaud), the photographer of the French 4th Regiment of Tirailleurs (4e R.T), September 1961. From Mudhakkarāt al-mujāhid Mukhtār Mukhlīt: Tārīkh jihād, yawmiyyāt min al-wilāyah al-sādisah (p. xx), by A. Qurūd (Ed.), 2016, Dār Nu'mān. © 2016 by the publisher.



Appendix No 05. A photo of the Mujahid Haballah Said in the Jreibeï' area as a witness to the battle.



A photo with the Mujahid Mohamed Belkahla – one of the leaders of the 48-Hour Battle – in the heights of the Jreibeï' area, the battle site. Photo by T. Hālīs.

Notes:

¹ For details on the life of Sheikh Zian Ashour, refer to: The National Organization of Mujahideen: Zian Ashour, a Bright Chapter in the History of the Great Liberation Revolution, Biskra (date unknown). Also see: Abdul Karim Qadhifa, Zian Ashour, the Ascetic Scholar and Heroic Mujahid, Artistic Publications, 2009. Also refer to: AmhamedQarrud: Leadership Vacuum After the Martyrdom of Sheikh Zian Ashour and its Impact on the Strategy of the Revolution in Djelfa, 1956–1958, Proceedings of the First National Conference, Djelfa, Struggle Journey 1830–1962, Dar Naaman for Printing and Publishing, Algeria, 2015.

² Ali Melah, his military name “Colonel Sharif,” born on February 14, 1924, near Draa Ben M'hidi, learned Arabic and memorized the Quran from a young age, joined the People's Party then the Movement of Victory, was one of the early members of the liberation revolution from 1954, was appointed head of the Sixth Wilaya at the Soumam Conference, martyred on March 31, 1957, at Mount Shaoun near Ksar El-Boukhari on the borders of the Fourth Wilaya. See: Said Bouranan: Prominent Figures in Algeria's Struggle 1830–1962, Dar Al-Amal, 2nd edition, 2008, pages 85-86.

³ Dallaj, a mountainous area that is part of the Betssalah Mountains, extending to the Ouled Nail and Saharan Atlas, crossed by the road connecting M'sila and Ain El Ibel, where several ambushes were set against French patrols. It was also the site where Zian El-Bohali set an ambush for a French patrol, marking the beginning of the Dallaj battle. For more on the Dallaj battle or conspiracy, see: Mokhtar Mkhallat, A Live Testimony, February 18, 2013, The Wilaya of the Mujahideen in Djelfa. Also refer to: Association of November First for the Protection and Preservation of Revolutionary Monuments, M'sila branch: Commemoration of the 48-Hour Battle and the Heroism of Zian El-Bohali, September 2004.

⁴ See the image of Martyr Zian El-Bohali in Appendix 1.

⁵ Mohamed Ben El-Hadi, or Hani Mohamed Ben El-Hadi, was one of the pioneers who established revolutionary work in the Sixth Wilaya. In February 1956, he was tasked by Sheikh Zian with overseeing the organization and military operations across a vast area including M'sila, Ain El Ibel, Ain Riche, Faïd Batma, Mellila, and Amoura. He fought in many battles against the enemy, including the battle of Qezran in May 1956, the battle of Nesnisa on January 15, 1957, and the battle of Takresan on April 9, 1957. He was captured in January 1958 by the followers of the traitor Belounis. His captors, led by Miftah, promised not to harm Ben El-Hadi, considering him a popular leader among the soldiers of the Sixth Wilaya, but after his assassination by the traitor Belounis, the Desert Army realized they had been

deceived, and that the traitor had manipulated them into a conspiracy with the enemy. See: Mokhtar Mkhallat, *History of Jihad: Diaries from the Sixth Wilaya*, edited by AmhamedQarrud, Dar Naaman for Printing and Publishing, Algeria, 2016, pages 91-93.

⁶ See the image of Blounis and his deputy El Arbi Meziane in Appendix No. 02.

⁷ Abdelrahman Hachi memorized the Quran in his childhood and received extensive knowledge in Islamic jurisprudence and Arabic linguistics from prominent scholars. He joined the Association of Muslim Scholars and was granted the title of volunteer teacher at “Al-Ikhlâs School”, established by the association in Djelfa.

Sheikh Hachi was also involved in politics, joining the “Movement for the Triumph of Democratic Liberties”.

He engaged in civil revolutionary work when the Revolution reached the region in 1955, enduring imprisonment in Laghouat that same year, followed by another imprisonment in Djelfa in 1956.

In March 1956, he joined the armed struggle in the Bou Kahil Mountains and participated in many battles against the enemy, including:

- The ambush against Goumiers and pro-French militias in Amoura (May 1956).
- The battle of Mount Qazran (May 1956).
- The battle of Mount Kaïkaï (Summer 1956) alongside Commander Omar Idris and Mohammed Ben El Hadi.
- The operation to bomb the railway and train tracks between Djelfa and Hassi Bahbah.

By Spring 1957, he was appointed commander of the Liberation Army upon assignment from Omar Idris, before Omar Idris traveled to Morocco.

After the Battle of Dallaj, Abdelrahman Hachi fell victim to a plot orchestrated by the traitor Blounis through his agent El Arbi Meziane and was captured in Mount Kaïkaï.

He was imprisoned in Dar Chioukh and executed in June 1958.

See: Mokhtar Mokhlet, previous source, pp. 63-65. Also refer to: “November 1st Association for the Protection and Commemoration of Revolutionary Achievements – Messaad Branch”, “A Moment with the Martyr Abdelrahman Hachi”, “November 1st Magazine”, Issue 06, 2005.

⁸ Commander Omar Idris, whose nom de guerre was Fayçal, was born on March 15, 1931, in El Kantara, Ain Touta District, Biskra Province.

He was educated in French in his hometown in 1937, then in Arabic in 1939 at “Al-Huda School”, affiliated with the Association of Muslim Scholars.

He was conscripted into mandatory military service in 1951 in Algiers before joining the National Liberation Army in 1955 in the Aurès Mountains.



After a brief period in Aurès, he was deployed to the southern front, where he operated in the Ouled Nail Mountains.

He opposed Blounis' movement since 1956, succeeding Sheikh Ziane after his martyrdom.

Following the elimination of the traitor Blounis and the restructuring of the Sixth Wilaya, he became Si El Haouas' first assistant.

He suffered severe injuries in the Battle of Mount Thamer on March 29, 1959, was captured, and was executed in June 1959 in Djelfa.

See: Belkacem Zeroual, "Knights on the Front Lines: Pages from the Jihad Journey in Aurès and the Sahara", Al-Orassia Publishing House, Algeria, 2012, pp. 123-124. Also refer to: National Organization of Mujahideen, Djelfa Provincial Office, "Bright Pages from the History of One of the Heroes of the November 1, 1954 Revolution: Commander Omar Idris (D-T)".

⁹ See the image of Commander Makhlouf Ben Gacem in Appendix No. 03.

¹⁰ Ahmed Ben Abdelrazak Hamouda, known as Si El Haouas, was born in 1923 in M'chouneche, Biskra Province.

He received a religious upbringing, memorized the Quran in his childhood, and pursued his studies at the Association of Muslim Scholars' school, where he obtained his primary certificate. However, he soon dropped out and turned to commerce.

He was actively involved in politics, joining the Algerian People's Party (PPA) and becoming a leading political figure in M'chouneche. Due to his political activism, he befriended prominent revolutionary leaders, including Commander Mustapha Ben Boulaid.

In 1948, he traveled to France upon orders from the Movement for the Triumph of Democratic Liberties (MTLD) to support the nationalist movement among Algerian emigrants.

At the outbreak of the Algerian Revolution, he was among the first to join from the northern part of Zone III, which was administratively part of Wilaya I.

After the martyrdom of Ziane Achour and Ali Mellah, he became the first commander of Wilaya VI.

Thanks to his experience and determination, he revived Wilaya VI after the Blounis betrayal.

After a long struggle, he was martyred in the Battle of Mount Thamer on March 29, 1959.

For more details on Si El Haouas' struggle, refer to:

- Khamissi Frih: "Colonel Si El Haouas – The Journey of a Wilaya VI Leader (1923-1959)"

- Messaoud Floussi & Cheban Hamouda: "The Heroic Martyr Ahmed Ben Abdelrazak Hamouda – His Life, Struggle, and Martyrdom".

¹¹ Mohamed Chaabani or Tahar Chaabani, born on September 4, 1934, in Oumache, Biskra. He received his early education in his hometown at the local Zawiya, managed by his father. Later, he moved to Biskra to continue his studies, then, in 1950, relocated to Constantine, where he joined the Abdelhamid Ben Badis Institute. There, he connected with many activists through his relations with students and his readings of newspapers from the Association of Algerian Muslim Scholars, which led him to recognize the necessity of armed struggle.

At the outbreak of the revolution, he was among the first to launch initial operations. He became an assistant writer to Colonel Houas in the Sahara region and was later promoted to the rank of lieutenant. In April 1958, he became a first political officer, and by 1959, he was appointed head of the Third Zone of the Sixth Wilaya. After the martyrdom of Colonel Houas, he succeeded him as coordinator and later became the leader of the Sixth Wilaya from 1961 until independence.

Chaabani played a major role in expanding military operations in the vast south, especially after the discovery of oil and France's attempt to separate the Sahara. He participated in the 1962 crisis, siding with the Tlemcen faction. He opposed Ben Bella's socialist policies and the integration of Algerians who had served in the French army into the Liberation Army. As a result of this opposition, he was tried and executed on September 3, 1964.

See: Salem Jarrad, "The Role of the Second Region of the Sixth Historical Wilaya in the Great Liberation Revolution (1956-1962)", Master's thesis in contemporary history, University of Algiers 2, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, 2009, p. 35.

For more details on Chaabani's life, refer to: Mohamed El-Hadi Derouaz, "Colonel Mohamed Chaabani: Hope and Pain", Houma Publishing, 2nd Edition, Algiers, 2006.

¹² See an actual photo from the second day of the battle in Appendix No. 04.

¹³ For more information on the Battle of Kerma and Jrebiâ, in both sound and image, refer to the television program on National Channel One, prepared by journalist Tahar Hlis, about the 48-hour battle, available on the National Television website.

