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The Algerian revolution in the Libyan written press 1954-1962 – a study of models

الثورة الجزائرية في الصحافة الليبية المكتوبة 1954-1962، دراسة نماذج

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Abstract:

This study attempts to explore the image of the Algerian Revolution and its development in the Libyan press, as well as its resistance to all forms of aggression from the French occupation, particularly during the era of General De Gaulle where the country witnessed the most violent phases of repression, displacement, and property infringement until De Gaulle and his government were convinced of the necessity to negotiate in order to meet the demands of the Algerian people.

Libya, with all its diverse elements and components of society, particularly the media, contributed significantly to the financial, military, and human support for the Algerian Revolution. The written media, which was more widespread than other media outlets, whether audio or visual, played a crucial role in mobilizing public opinion against the French, collecting donations, and providing all forms of assistance to the Algerian people during their ordeal.

Keywords: The Revolution, Algeria, Libya, Written press

الملخص :

تحاول هذه الدراسة، البحث في صورة الثورة الجزائرية، وتطورها في الصحافة الليبية، ومدى مواجهتها لكل أشكال العدوان من الاحتلال الفرنسي، وبشكل خاص خلال مرحلة الجنرال ديغول حيث شهدت البلاد أعنف مراحل القمع والتهميش، والتعدي على الممتلكات، إلى أن اقتنع ديغول وحكومته بضرورة التفاوض للاستجابة لمطالب الشعب الجزائري.

لقد ساهمت ليبيا بكل أطياف ومكونات مجتمعيها وبشكل خاص وسائل الاعلام في حشد الدعم المالي والعسكري والبشري للثورة الجزائرية، حيث ساهم الخطاب الإعلامي المكتوب الذي كان منتشرًا بشكل أوسع من بقية أجهزة الاعلام سواء المسموعة أو المرئية، في تعبئة الرأي العام ضد الفرنسيين، وجمع التبرعات، وتقديم يد العون بكل أشكاله وصوره للشعب الجزائري في محنته.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الثورة، الجزائر، ليبيا، الصحافة المكتوبة.

1. INTRODUCTION

Libya and Algeria have maintained strong and close relations since the Islamic conquest until today. Pilgrimage journeys used to pass through Libya on their way to the Hijaz, and market trade in Tripoli and Fezzan flourished to serve the pilgrims. Scientific trips to Egypt, the Levant, Iraq, and the Hijaz also passed through Libya. Additionally, many convoys carrying weapons, medicines, and equipment to support the Algerian Revolution came through Libya into Algeria. Both the official and popular stances were in harmony in supporting the Algerian Revolution, what distinguishes this support is the participation of all segments and classes of society, especially intellectuals, writers, and journalists in the major Libyan cities.

From here emerges the main problematic of this study, which is to what extent the image of Libyan official and popular support is reflected in the Libyan press in general, and in the written press in particular, given its widespread reach and influence during the study period. The research aims to describe the political and media situation in Libya during the Algerian Revolution, highlighting the various popular activities supporting it in Libya. It also aims to study the major transformations in Libyan media, especially the written press, and its impact on solidarity with the Algerian cause.

The study followed the historical method by attempting to analyze historical writings and extract relevant information from them. The region experienced a significant impact from international circumstances in the post-World War II period, accompanied by substantial changes in the spread of global liberation movements and a wave of Arab and international

solidarity with the Algerian Revolution after its outbreak.

First: The Strategic Depth of Libya for Algeria :

The Algerian Revolution originated from its national environment, and its resonance and initial external support and strength came from the Arab extension, particularly the neighboring countries in the Maghreb. Tunisia, Morocco, and Libya served as a rear base for logistical support and funding for the revolution, as well as the political and media front through which the revolution presented itself to the governments and peoples of the world.

The Algerian-Libyan relations have represented a strong barrier against many challenges and conspiracies faced by both countries. Libya opposed the project of Muhammad Ali, the ruler of Egypt, in 1829, who planned in coordination with France to invade Algeria on behalf of the French in exchange for material and political privileges. Numerous instances of solidarity between the two parties have emerged, including the formation of a political committee in Paris in 1833 led by Hamdan bin Othman Khoja from Algeria and Hassouna Al-Daghis¹ from Libya, to support the Algerian cause.²

The Arab depth, especially the brotherly country of Libya, has served as the natural extension of Algeria's political geography and a source of cultural support for the Algerian political entity since the Islamic conquest. This connection creates a shared destiny among the regions and peoples of the Arab nation, and it also imposes national duties and commitments in times of necessity and crises.³

The Western colonial powers attempted to isolate the Algerian Revolution from its strategic depth by launching a tripartite aggression—French, British, and Israeli—against Egypt. They mistakenly believed that weakening Abdel Nasser's Egypt would lead to the weakening of the Algerian Revolution and its political course. Additionally, they built a barrier of barbed wire equipped with the latest technologies and means like mines, electricity, searchlights, and radar systems along Algeria's borders with Tunisia and Morocco. The goal was to prevent the infiltration of freedom fighters and revolutionaries and to stop the smuggling of weapons and various forms of support for the Algerian Revolution. Additionally, they hijacked a Moroccan plane carrying the external delegation on October 22, 1956, a week before launching the tripartite aggression against Egypt. They also carried out military strikes on the borders with Tunisia, resulting in many casualties from both Tunisia and Algeria in Sakiet Sidi Youssef on February 8, 1958.

Second: The Official and Popular Libyan Stance on the Algerian Revolution:

The leadership of the Algerian Liberation Revolution quickly reached out to influential Libyan figures in the summer of 1954, seeking political, financial, and military support for the revolution. Indeed, the Libyan masses sympathized with Algeria, followed its revolution with great interest, and rejoiced at the victories and heroics of the National Liberation Army. This natural sympathy stemmed from the bonds of Arabism and Islam between the brotherly nations⁴.

The Libyans considered the Algerian

Revolution as their own, sincerely and faithfully believing in its victory. They dedicated themselves and their efforts to support it by smuggling weapons into Algeria and collecting donations. They acted as a support front for the Algerian Revolution and notably stood against French pressures to hand over revolution leaders when they visited Libya, including Ahmed Ben Bella.⁵

With the outbreak of the Great Liberation Revolution, influential elements in Libya took the initiative to form a popular committee to support the Algerian cause. Within just a few days of its formation and announcement, the committee gained widespread fame, and tribes, regions, and various communities began to compete in donating to the revolution. Delegations from all directions flocked to join the efforts in support of Algeria.

This committee, led by Al-Hadi Al-Mshriqi⁶, began its mission to raise awareness among the Libyan populace about the Algerian cause and to mobilize support for the Algerian people in their struggle against French colonization. The committee published an announcement on May 11, 1956, in the newspaper “Tripoli Al-Gharb”, formatted as a “holiday greeting”. This announcement carried deep political and humanitarian meanings, sparking intensive communications that led to a mini-meeting at Al-Hadi Al-Mshriqi's house on May 18, 1956. During this meeting, it was decided to form a fundraising committee named “The Libyan Committee for Aid to the National Liberation Army”, with Al-Hadi Al-Mashriqi entrusted with its financial administration⁷. Subsequently, as its activities expanded and its membership grew, it transformed into a new body named

the “Algerian Revolution Support Committee”. This committee was bolstered by political and financial figures from Libya's wealthy class who supported the Algerian revolution. The committee also focused on aiding the poor and orphans, expanding its activities to include collecting zakat funds, selling sacrificial animal skins, and donating the proceeds to Algeria.⁸

The committee's activities diversified, including organizing gatherings, festivals, and various fundraising and aid campaigns. They successfully established a national solidarity day for the Algerian cause, inaugurated by the head of the government with a symbolic financial donation. This day was followed by a series of political, official, and popular events where lectures were held and films and tapes about the Algerian revolution and colonial crimes were screened.⁹

The stature and sanctity of the Algerian revolution were evident in the hearts of the Libyan Arab people during the exuberant reception of the National Liberation Front (FLN) football team. They visited the Kingdom of Libya in January 1958 for a sports match. As soon as the match ended, bringing together the Libyan team with the FLN team, the spectators rushed onto the field chanting in support of revolutionary Algeria. In every match, the Algerian team proudly wore their national flag. Representatives of the government and the Senate took their seats alongside representatives of the FLN, including Bashir Al-Qadi, head of the Algerian mission in Tripoli, and Mohammed Salah Sadiq, responsible for advertising and media.¹⁰

Here is the translation of your provided passage:

As for the reception of the Libyan people for Prime Minister of Algeria Mr. Ferhat Abbas and the accompanying delegation including Karim Belkacem, Abdelhafid Boussouf, and Ahmed Tawfik El Madani, during that visit, President Ferhat Abbas addressed the Libyan people, saying: “...As for you, noble Libyan people, your land has mingled with the blood of martyrs of freedom, your air has mixed with the souls of independence heroes. We have seen in you the sincerest emotions, the noblest sentiments, and we have felt with our own hands what your pure heart harbors towards the Algerian people of struggle—love, admiration, and a genuine readiness to sacrifice your lives alongside theirs, and your blood beside theirs. We have seen an inseparable part of the Algerian people in you, in their enthusiasm and in their readiness to embrace death so that they may deserve life.

We cannot say that you merely supported Algeria in its war or aided it in its struggle, but history testifies that you fully engaged with all your capabilities in this jihad and bore a substantial share of the struggle...”¹¹

The Libyan intellectuals also contributed to supporting the Algerian revolution through their articles that praised the Algerian people's heroism, exposed the atrocities of the despicable occupation, and highlighted the brutal acts perpetrated against an innocent people seeking nothing but freedom and independence. They played a prominent role in organizing grassroots committees in support of the Algerian revolution, mobilizing and recruiting the masses through their journalistic writings and political seminars held on all occasions

related to Algeria. Additionally, they addressed the international public opinion and international community institutions about these crimes committed in Algeria¹².

The official government side avoided direct confrontation with the French due to pressure, as France issued warnings and threats against any country showing sympathy for the Algerian revolution. Former Libyan Prime Minister Mustafa Ben Halim summarized Libya's post-independence situation in his memoirs, speaking to President Jamal Abdel Nasser: "You know that British forces are deployed throughout Libya from Tobruk to west Tripoli, and British officials control sensitive centers, especially in the police of Tripoli State. France still occupies southern Libya (Fezzan), and its intelligence apparatus in Tripoli and Benghazi is led by 'Commandant Niza' with agents and spies spread throughout the country. Our relationship with France is now severely deteriorated after we warned them in an official memorandum demanding their withdrawal from Fezzan..., despite these extremely delicate and risky circumstances, we will not hesitate, but rather welcome, the transfer of arms and equipment to the Algerian revolutionaries right under the noses of the French."¹³

Therefore, the Libyan government secretly supported the Algerian revolution, allowing the establishment of committees to collect donations and receive gifts. It also permitted the passage of arms into Algerian territory. Mustafa Ben Halim noted in his memoirs that he met with the Saudi King and President Jamal Abdel Nasser in the autumn of 1954 to discuss supporting the Algerian revolution financially and morally from its inception. It was decided that Saudi

Arabia would provide the necessary funds to purchase weapons and equipment, and the Egyptian army would handle the procurement and delivery of these weapons to the Libyan border, from where they would be transported to the Algerian border and received by the Algerian revolutionaries.¹⁴

The first shipments of weapons, equipment, and field devices arrived in early December 1954 at the port of Tripoli West aboard the Egyptian yacht "Pride of the Seas" which was one of King Farouk's yachts. Libyan officers unloaded the cargo and transferred it to secure warehouses in Tripoli, where it was handed over to Ahmed Ben Bella and his associates. They then smuggled it into Algeria. These shipments continued for a full year under the supervision of Prime Minister Ben Halim and Ahmed Ben Bella.¹⁵

Libya also contributed to the transportation of weapons donated by Turkey during the era of Adnan Menderes in early 1957. An agreement was reached with the Libyan government that these donated weapons would be a gift to the Libyan army to purchase arms, and Libya presented them as a gift to the National Liberation Army in Algeria.¹⁶

King Idris al-Senussi was in solidarity with the Algerian cause and deeply committed to it. He received Prime Minister Ben Youssef Ben Khedda during his visit to Libya in December 1961, where he affirmed Libya's government support for the Algerian war and its complete moral and material solidarity with Algeria¹⁷.

Thirdly: Emergence of Libyan Journalism:

The beginnings of Libyan journalism date back to the end of the third decade of the 19th century, influenced by the modern Renaissance movements in both the Mashriq and Maghreb regions, which in turn were influenced by European journalism. At the end of the Qaramanli era around 1827, the first newspaper in Libya, named "Al-Munqab al-Afriqi" (The African Observer), appeared under the auspices of European consuls and diplomats. However, the actual start was in 1866 with the publication of "Tripoli al-Gharb" (Tripoli the West) and the establishment of the first printing press in Libya. This event marked the true beginning of a rich journalistic history that expanded significantly, especially after the Ottoman constitutional reforms during the reign of Sultan Abdulhamid II¹⁸.

In addition, the issuance of the Ottoman constitution in 1908 had a significant impact on advancing the press in Libya, where newspapers became platforms for writers and thinkers. Among them was the newspaper "Al-Tarqi", founded in 1897, with its first director being Sheikh Muhammad al-Busayri. It was published weekly for a full year before temporarily ceasing and later resuming publication.

After the occupation of Libya, newspapers faced restrictions on their freedom by the Italians, especially those supporting the resistance. Journalists emphasized Libyan identity through various means, and intellectual meetings and cultural unity formed across the three regions of Libya, despite some newspapers being issued from Tripoli or Benghazi. Writers from various Libyan cities contributed to laying the groundwork for cultural and media activities after World War II.¹⁹

In addition, there was an increasing interest in education, which formed a strong pillar in creating an informed audience of learners and intellectuals interested in reading newspapers. This interest later transformed into active participation in their editorial processes. Most newspaper workers did not receive salaries but volunteered in their editing. There was also a growing cultural openness towards Arab countries, with many intellectuals having relationships with publishing houses in the Arab world. Additionally, many Egyptian newspapers were circulated in Libya during this time.²⁰

After the end of Italian colonization and the period of interim colonial administration, Libya entered a new era. The colonial chapter was closed, and new types of newspapers and periodicals emerged, Especially between 1949 and 1952, when the king Idris al-Senussi declared the country's independence, marking the beginning of the independence era from December 24, 1951 onwards.

Some of the most important newspapers that appeared at the beginning of independence include three weekly political newspapers: "Al-Difaa", "Al-Manar", and "Sawt Libya", along with the educational school magazine "Al-Ilm". Also, "Al-Bashir" was a weekly newspaper, and the magazine "Huna Tripoli" the official mouthpiece of the local radio in Tripoli in 1954, later transforming into "Tripoli al-Gharb". Additionally, "Al-Liwaa" was published in 1955, followed by "Al-Raed" in 1956, "Fazzan" in 1957, and others.²¹

Fourth: Libyan Written Press and the Algerian Revolution:

The Libyan written press closely followed all the events of the Algerian

liberation revolution. Libya's official royal support for Algeria and its revolution helped create an atmosphere conducive to this cause. Libya hosted dozens of scientific, cultural newspapers, daily news journals, and specialized academic bulletins, each varying in content, form, and affiliation. Among the most prominent Libyan newspapers was "Tripoli al-Gharb," which was published daily, widely circulated, and closely followed the Algerian revolution and its various stages and events.

The Libyan newspapers contributed to conveying reports of military operations from Algeria, monitoring the activities of the Algerian revolution on the ground, and tracking Algerian diplomatic movements abroad. They reported on news concerning the rebels and the wars they waged against the French army. The headlines related to the revolution varied in their form, placement on newspaper pages, wording, and content. Sometimes they occupied prominent positions as main headlines, and at other times they appeared as columns within newspapers, but generally, they were featured on the front pages of the newspapers.²²

The Libyan newspapers varied in their presentation of news about the Algerian revolution. Initially, headlines at the beginning of the revolution included phrases like "Algerian nationalists attack French centers" and "Major armed revolution in Algeria" (Trabulus Al-Gharb newspaper, issue 3408, dated November 2, 1956). They reported on Algerian martyrs and similar topics. Later, their style shifted to one characterized by skepticism towards the strength of the French and increased confidence in the Algerian rebels. Headlines such as "France engages in a losing battle in

Algeria" and "Liberation Army inflicts heavy losses on French forces" (Trabulus Al-Gharb newspaper, issue 33472, dated April 17, 1956) became more prevalent, then they moved to more provocative headlines to attract readers' attention, such as "Algerians strike fear into the hearts of the French" (Trabulus Al-Gharb newspaper, issue 107, June 13, 1956), "Mujahideen in Algeria inflict heavy losses on French forces" (Trabulus Al-Gharb newspaper, issue 154, September 10, 1956), and "Intense activity by Algerian mujahideen in their latest attack against colonial forces" (Trabulus Al-Gharb newspaper, issue 176, October 5, 1956).²³

The Libyan newspapers also focused on reporting the victories of the Algerian revolution in military battles against the occupation. For example, they mentioned: "Successful attacks by mujahideen in Algeria against colonial French forces", "Algerian mujahideen kill 13 French", "From victory to victory, the National Liberation Army achieves remarkable results", and "The French acknowledge the strength of the National Liberation Army"²⁴.

The Libyan newspapers also closely followed the diplomatic victories of the Algerian revolution worldwide, showcasing the visits of revolution leaders and their continuous travels between Arab and international capitals. They highlighted the revolution leaders' efforts to present their cause in various international forums, conveying their determination to continue the struggle against French colonization or their readiness to negotiate for peace. The newspapers reported on the revolution leaders' responses to French statements and exposed the falsehoods in French claims regarding the Algerian cause.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that Libyan support for the Algerian revolution encompassed all fields and areas, as Libya, both government and people, stood alongside the liberation movement. Libya provided financial aid and weapons, and its newspapers and magazines wrote supportive articles endorsing the Algerian people's struggle. Among the most prominent were newspapers like Tripoli al-Gharb, Al-Zaman, Al-Ra'id, and Fizan, which focused on reporting Algerian revolution news prominently on their front pages.

The news was sourced from international news agencies and relied on the National Liberation Front of Algeria and its office in Tripoli as a key information and news provider. This significantly contributed to mobilizing Libyan and Arab public opinion in support of the Algerian revolution. Libyan newspapers played a prominent role in countering false French claims about the Algerian revolution, its leaders, and its victories. They also exposed the crimes of the French occupation in Algeria, revealing their use of internationally banned weapons and detailing the extent of destruction and sabotage in Algeria.

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marriage, as Ibn Yusuf al-Qarmanli (Ali) was married to the sister of Husayna al-Daghisi. Through his position, al-Daghisi maintained contacts with Western European governments, consuls, and ambassadors in Tripoli. He was deeply influenced by Western European culture, proficient in French writing and fluent in Arabic and English as well, Mohammed Al-Daghisi, was one of the prominent figures and elders of Tripoli during the reign of Yusuf Pasha al-Qarmanli, his father, Muhammad al-Daghisi, was one of the most prominent dignitaries in the city of Tripoli during the era of Yusuf Pasha al-Qarmanli. There are differing accounts regarding his origin, but most narratives suggest he was from the Kouloughli community, and his family descended from Erzurum in Turkey. It's said that his grandfather arrived in Tripoli al-Gharb (Western Tripoli) with the permission of the Ottoman Sultan to serve as deputy to the governor of Tripoli in the late 17th century CE. His family held high positions within the province, adhering to the Hanafi school, the official school of the Ottoman state.

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¹Hussuna ben Mohammed Al-Daghisi Al-Tarabulsi was a Libyan politician, thinker, and intellectual, considered by some as Libya's first journalist. He was among the foremost political and intellectual figures in Libya and the Islamic world in general. He served as a diplomat and held the position of Minister of Foreign Affairs during the reign of Yusuf Pasha al-Qarmanli. He was also appointed as an ambassador to London. One of his biographies in the Maghreb described him as 'the scholarly literary sheikh, Abdelhadi al-Kittani (1302-1382 AH / 1884-1962 CE) mentioned him, saying: "The jurist, literate gentleman", known as Hassouna bin Muhammad bin Hassouna al-Daghisi al-Azrumi al-Tarabulsi al-Hanafi, who arrived in Fes in 1246 AH. The French historian and orientalist Charles Féraud (1829-1888 CE) also described him in his book "Libyan Chronicles," after discussing Muhammad Bayt al-Mal: "He was even more cunning and flattering than his predecessor, al-Daghisi", In another context, he adds: "Indeed, diplomatic correspondences and political relations were entrusted to his son-in-law Husayna al-Daghisi, who hailed from a noble lineage. He was renowned for his extensive knowledge of Arabic literature and mastery of European languages. He was around thirty-five years old, of good character." The family of Husayna al-Daghisi had strong ties to the family of Yusuf al-Qarmanli through

¹¹Ibid, p. 121.

¹²Ibid, p. 122.

¹³Ben Halim Mustafa, *Folded Pages from the Political History of Libya*, Al-Ahram Commercial Press, Qalyub ,Egypt, n,d, p. 351.

¹⁴Ibid, 350.

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²⁰Ibid, pp. 290-291.

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²³Ibid, pp. 57-58.

²⁴Ibid, p.59.

Issue 03, Ahmed Ben Bella University Oran, 2015, p. 84.

³Ben Sultan Amar and others, *Arab Support for the Revolution*, Publications of the National Center for Studies and Research in the National Movement and the November 1st Revolution 1954, Ministry of Mujahideen Edition, Algeria 2007, p. 24.

⁴Ibid, p. 119.

⁵Mashhoud Rabeh, *Memoirs of the Algerian Mujahid and Diplomat Rabeh Mashhoud*, Vol. 01, Sciences of the Nation Foundation for Cultural Investments, 2018, pp. 65-66.

⁶Al-Hadi Al-Mshriqi is Hadi Ibrahim Mohammed Ahmed Al-Mashriqi, born on Sunday, 15 Dhu al-Hijjah 1325 AH, corresponding to 13 January 1908 CE, granted Ottoman citizenship in the Old City of Tripoli, belonging to a prominent family known for scholarship and trade. He learned Arabic language and Islamic principles in the mosque, and mastered trade at an early age, becoming one of the wealthiest individuals in Tripoli and Libya as a whole. He traveled extensively, visiting 88 countries worldwide, and developed strong political relationships within the Libyan sphere in Egypt, Algeria, and Tunisia. He committed himself with his fellow countrymen to defend the Libyan cause against occupation, and had a great affection for Algeria, fighting for its cause. His home was the first nucleus from which all Libyan support projects for the Algerian Revolution originated. He dedicated all his financial resources to support this cause, and left instructions to be buried in Algeria due to his deep attachment to the country. Throughout his travels worldwide, he amplified the voice of the Algerian cause. He passed away on 15 October 2007, at the age of 99, and was buried in the El Alia Cemetery in the Algerian capital, in accordance with his wishes. bdul Hamid Deliouh, *Al-Hadi Al-Mashriqi: His Personality and Struggle in the Algerian Revolution 1954-1962*, Studies in Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Algiers, Vol. 02, Issue 18, (s), 2018, pp. 73-103.

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⁸Deliouh Abdelhamid, previous reference, p. 90.

⁹Ben Sultan, Amar and others, previous reference, p. 120.

¹⁰Ibid, p. 121.