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Torture and Interrogation in Algeria through Foreign Testimonies (1954–1962): Henri Alleg's Testimony as a Model

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Abstract:

Many anti-French colonial figures in Algeria witnessed the torture and interrogation methods used by the French military services. The purpose of these practices was to subject victims to severe questioning in order to obtain secret information related to the National Liberation Front and Army, which revealed the brutality and inhumanity of the French colonizer. Among the most notable testimonies is that of the activist and journalist Henri Allag, who was tortured and documented his experience in his writings, the most significant of which is The Question. Through this work, he exposed France and the practices of its army and military apparatus to the world's public opinion. Hence, the importance of his testimony lies in serving as both evidence and witness to the crimes of French colonialism in Algeria during the Algerian War of Independence.

Keywords: Henri Allag, torture, judicial police, Jacques Soustelle

Introduction:

The Algerian Revolution unsettled the colonizer's authority, which spared no effort in subjugating and humiliating the Algerian people through a criminal policy that employed various forms of repression. These actions constituted grave violations of human rights, the most severe of which was the systematic use of torture as a tool of interrogation and intimidation. Such practices were preserved not only in the collective memory of the Algerian people but were also meticulously documented by foreign testimonies that closely examined their realities.

Through this study, we sought to highlight the policy of the colonial authorities in practicing torture and interrogation, relying on foreign testimonies that exposed the brutality of the colonizer. Particular emphasis is placed on the experience of the activist and journalist Henri Alleg and his

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influential book La Question, which stands as a living testimony documenting the French philosophy of torture. The book reveals the stages and methods of torture, exposing the inhuman practices of the colonizer, who aimed to dehumanize all patriots opposing his policies and make them feel inferior. La Question also illustrates how the experience of torture left a profound psychological shock, deeply etched in the imagination of its victims. Through his narrative, Alleg conveys the depth of this suffering, believing in its human and moral significance for the Algerian cause and for his fellow citizens who endured such abuses.

Relevance:

The significance of this topic lies in examining the policy of torture and interrogation and the practices carried out by the French colonial authorities. These practices were not limited to Algerians of different social categories but also extended to foreign nationals who opposed the colonial policy. This study particularly highlights the testimony of Henri Alleg, which he documented in his writings, especially in his renowned book *La Question*. This work adds both credibility and neutrality to the horrific events he experienced, making it an essential source for understanding the extent of the colonial abuses.

Objectives of the Study:

- To highlight the importance of foreign testimonies in credibly and impartially documenting and exposing the practices of the French army in Algeria.
- To examine the policy of torture and interrogation practiced by the colonial authorities by analyzing the methods of physical and psychological torture and their use as tools of interrogation and intimidation.
- To identify Henri Alleg as a supporter of the Algerian Revolution, an anti-colonial activist in Algeria, and a historian who documented the policy of torture and interrogation carried out by the executioners of the French army and its entire military apparatus.

Statement of the Problem:

The problem addressed in this study revolves around the importance of foreign testimonies in documenting the crimes of French colonialism and examining how Henri Alleg's testimony in his book *La Question* contributed to exposing the policy of systematic torture practiced by the French colonial apparatus during the Algerian War of Liberation.

In order to answer the main issue, we ask the following sub-questions:

- What is torture in French colonial philosophy?
- What were the main methods of torture used in Algeria during the Liberation Revolution?
- What was Henri Alleg's personal experience as a model for exposing the colonizer's brutality in the practice of torture?
- What impact did Henri Alleg's testimony about torture have on public opinion and international support for the Algerian Revolution?

Methodology of the Study:

The method used in this study is the historical-analytical method, through which we collected the scientific material related to the research topic and presented it systematically, analyzing it based on the information obtained. This approach relies on living testimonies to document historical truths, considering them an important source for understanding the history of the Algerian Revolution.

1. Torture in French Colonial Philosophy:

Torture can be defined as the deliberate practice and conduct inflicted on a victim, supervised by an authority for the purpose of interrogation or motivated by punishment or retaliation. It results in both physical and psychological harm and constitutes a serious violation of human dignity (Vialatoux, 1957, pp. 42-43).

It has been used to describe any act that deliberately and systematically inflicts physical or psychological pain on a person as a means of extracting information, obtaining a confession, intimidating the victim, or imposing punishment. It represents an inhuman attempt to strip the accused

of all human qualities, such as courage, will, intelligence, and honesty, while distorting their body, soul, and mind, and reducing them to the status of a miserable, possessed animal. It also seeks to subjugate the virtuous person, forcing them to renounce their beliefs and betray their principles, which constitutes the harshest suffering for a free individual (Seddik, 2009, pp. 133-134).

Torture was regarded, in the philosophy of the French colonizer, as an effective means of interrogating victims. These practices were supervised by the French military establishment, which sought to maintain absolute secrecy in order to prevent the media, particularly the French press, from obtaining any information related to such acts. This secrecy aimed to obscure the realities of what was taking place within the various French security and military institutions in Algeria (Baalouj, 2021, p. 174).

The interrogation process serves as a prelude to the harshest forms of torture and is conducted on the persecuted detainee using various methods to compel a confession regarding their actions, whether with the army or the National Liberation Front (FLN), or whether as a cause, mujahid, or guerrilla. The detainee is forced to reveal secrets and identify those supporting the revolution to the French authorities. Interrogation is the initial step, and if the accused does not comply, more severe methods are employed to extract information (Ayada, 2018, p. 68).

After the Algerian revolution, the French colonial authorities pursued a policy of violence, persecution, and torture. In the spring of 1955, Jacques Soustel, Governor-General of Algeria, established centers known as shelters, to which every suspect was transferred, including locations such as the Waterfall, the Shelf, the Avlo, the Poroqia, and others. The military assumed control of the civil administration, and the French authorities barred lawyers from accessing these centers. Detainees were kept in complete isolation from the outside world, and naked prisoners were required to render military salutes to the officers. Within these centers, cells were designated for interrogation and torture, and sniffer dogs and other coercive measures were employed (Magder, 2014, p. 84).

In response to efforts to suppress the revolution or any liberating movement, the number of prisons and detention centers, particularly prisons, doubled. Prisoners were subjected to all forms of torture through

interrogations, most of which resulted in death, regardless of whether the prisoner confessed. This process established the necessary infrastructure, equipment, facilities, and trained personnel, creating a system that operated as a standalone mechanism applied throughout Algeria. Day by day, torturers competed to devise new and increasingly brutal methods of torture (Kalil, 1991, p. 40).

In February 1955, Rogé Williom, Inspector General of the French Administration responsible for investigating assaults suffered by prisoners after November 1, 1954, drafted a detailed and explicit report. He noted that "all police stations, the gendarmerie, the judicial police, and the General Intelligence Police resorted during interrogations to beatings, the water basin, the water pipe, and electricity, with the water pipe, due to its widespread use, being the preferred method." The author of the report presented these practices as relatively less harmful and suggested, in effect, to "raise the veil of hypocrisy" that concealed them, legalize them, and restrict their use solely to the jurisdiction of the judicial police. Given the strengthening of the judicial police in Algeria, all practices appealing to other authorities were to be prohibited. In a more critical report, John Murray, Director General of National Security, condemned these methods and their justifications. In fact, Inspector General Williom's proposals were not adopted; rather, these coercive methods continued to be used and were partially codified in practice (Branche, 2010, pp. 27-28).

In February 1955, Rogé Williom, Inspector General of the French Administration responsible for investigating assaults suffered by prisoners after November 1, 1954, drafted a detailed and explicit report. He noted that "all police stations, the gendarmerie, the judicial police, and the General Intelligence Police took refuge during operations." In March 1955, Inspector General Williom sent a report from Algeria in which he concluded that "Torture is practiced in Algeria and is a currency in circulation, but by virtue of its perceived positive results, it must continue to be employed. His report suggested specific interrogation methods and recommended their strict use and supervision" (Magder, 2014, p. 84).

Torture has been considered one of the greatest achievements of the French generals, and Paul Aussaresses openly admitted to torturing a large number of Algerian prisoners. In a statement to the newspaper *Le Monde*

under the title *Determined to Torture* (*Je me suis résolu à la torture*), he stated, “If I had to do it again it would bother me, but I would do it again because I don't think we can do otherwise” (Baalouj, 2021, p. 175).

French officials attempted to cover up their crimes under various pretexts, but the confessions made by some French soldiers and officers regarding the atrocities they committed in Algeria were ultimately prompted by the French authorities. The highest authority in Paris was aware of the torture and crimes taking place in Algeria, including the then Minister of Justice, François Mitterrand (Magder, 2014, p. 86).

Yusuf Ben Khedda states that Paul Aussaresses personally confessed to the French channel *Antenne*: “Torture was a method of action recognized and tolerated by the highest political authorities and a vital necessity for the French army, in Algeria and France.” He admitted to killing 24 prisoners of war, ordered the extrajudicial killing of hundreds of suspects, and stated that he would not hesitate to use torture again, as he considered FLN members to be bandits and outlaws (Boudarsaya, 2022, p. 441).

The first months of 1957 witnessed widespread torture during the Battle of Algiers, affecting civilians such as Mohamed Elaraby Benmehidi and Ali Boumendjel, who were forcibly arrested, tortured, and murdered. On March 5, 1957, these crimes were justified as the only means to extract critical information. Military doctors were reportedly employed to conduct research, secretly providing specialists with data to determine the extent of torment that could be inflicted without causing immediate death. Non-commissioned officers under Major Aussaresses reportedly monitored the interrogation areas daily to collect the dying and dead, confirming deaths using pistols and daggers before burying the bodies in mass graves. Victims were often bound to reinforced concrete, and estimates of the missing range from 3,000 to 5,000 (Boudarsaya, 2022, p. 445).

2. Methods of Interrogation and Torture:

Torture methods are varied and can be classified into two main categories: physical torture and psychological torture. These methods are employed to subjugate the victim and are designed to extract information, punish, or intimidate them.

3. Physical Torture:

The process of physically torturing the victim typically began when the detainee denied the charges against them. All painful methods of coercion were employed, and prisoners were often stripped of their clothes, even women, and left in extremely cold conditions under the watch of jailers (Al-Amin, 2024, p. 101). Other methods included extracting teeth, amputating fingers and ears, blindfolding the victim, forcing them to sit on glass or nails mounted on wooden planks, dragging or pulling them across nailed floors, hammering fingers, crushing legs, gradually inserting knives into the body, injuring various body parts, and rubbing wounds with salt or chemicals. Fingers were sometimes trapped between a door and its frame and then crushed (Bousselham, 2001, p. 183) .

Journalist Claude Bourdi mentioned some of the physical torture methods to which Algerian detainees and prisoners were subjected, including water and electricity torture, as well as hunger torture using a bottle, a stick, or a cow's nerve. He described:

> All this explains why the Gestapo does not hand over its prisoners to the investigating judge until five or ten days later. This is a terrible breach of the law, which stipulates that the accused must be handed over to the judge 24 hours after his arrest at the latest in order to prevent any torture or pressure from the police. The police and the judiciary in Algeria had the argument that there were too many defendants and too few police officers. But it is noticeable that prisoners begin to be tortured from the first day, and after the police can obtain from their victim the confession that fell on them. Half dead, [the prisoner] spends the rest of his days running to the police to treat him, until he is in a proper position when he comes to justice. Since the police are afraid that the prisoners will retract before the judge, it is the police who bring their prisoner to court and

> then wait for him to return to prison after the investigation, and the method followed in this way is unknown to warn the accused that he will be subjected to other types of torture if he retracts before the judge (Chriet, 1955, p. 44).

Physical torture during the liberation revolution represented one of the most brutal forms of torture known in the twentieth century. It was inflicted on detainees, prisoners, patriotic fighters loyal to their homeland, faith, and revolution, as well as on ordinary Algerian men and women (Seddik M. A., 2009, p. 141).

The methods of physical torture multiplied and had a profound impact on prisoners, leaving lasting physical marks and deformities over time. Due to the wide variety of techniques, this discussion is limited to two common types employed by the French colonial authorities: electric torture and water torture.

4. Electric Torture:

Attorney Pierre Brown stated in his testimony that the use of torture was strictly regulated and that electric current was not very widespread at the time, with the diving method initially being the most common (Ayada, 2018, p. 74). Nevertheless, electric torture became one of the most frequently used methods due to its relative ease and effectiveness. This form of torture first appeared in Indochina and was taught by executioners at the Officer Training School Joan of Arc in Skikda (Seddik M. A., 2009, p. 40).

Electric torture was one of the most brutal methods used by the French colonial apparatus against Algerians, both men and women. Due to its extreme horror, this form of torture often took place at night. The electric current was applied to sensitive parts of the body, including the ears, tongue, genitals, and nose. According to the testimony of survivors, the pain was indescribable, and its effects included confusion and sprains caused by the severity of the electric shocks (Baalouj, 2021, p. 178).

In some cases, victims were tied by their legs to a ladder, suspended upside down, and partially immersed in water while electrical wires were applied, amplifying the effect since water conducts electricity. Prisoners

were also tied to iron beds and subjected to high-voltage currents, causing smoke to emerge from the mouth, ruptured tongues, or loss of consciousness. These shocks could result in coma, long-term brain damage, insanity, memory loss, and severe burns on the body (Al-Amin, 2024, pp. 101-102).

According to Seneslas Hotan, one of the first authors to document torture, the generator forces the victim to scream, whereas beatings do not necessarily elicit such screams. While punches or kicks may not produce audible distress, the generator compels victims to cry out. These screams reflect the extreme deprivation of human dignity experienced by the victim (Branche, 2010, p. 63).

5. Water Torture:

The colonial apparatus employed water as a method of torture in various ways. In one method, the prisoner's head was submerged in a cement basin filled with water while their clothes were removed, often in extremely cold conditions (Rashid, 2010, p. 22). In another method, a wet cloth was placed over the prisoner's nose while water was poured into their mouth, a process that could last from one and a half to two hours. If the prisoner resisted or became unresponsive, soldiers would wake them with cold water, beat them severely, and force them to turn repeatedly (Baalouj, 2021, p. 179). In some cases, prisoners were positioned in a specific way, their mouths forced open, and large amounts of water poured in until the stomach swelled, with guards pressing on the abdomen to force water out of all parts of the body (Al-Amin, 2024, p. 102).

In another form of torture, detainees and prisoners were transferred to a valley near the prison where stagnant water and filth accumulated, emitting unbearable odors and containing broken glass, infectious germs, and harmful insects. Supervisors of torture often chose winter, particularly very cold days, to inflict maximum suffering. Detainees were taken out barefoot and naked, dragged into the valley, and forced to remain there for long hours (Ayada, 2018, p. 77).

6. Psychological Torture:

Psychological torture involves regularly stripping victims of their clothes in the presence of other naked suspects and executioners, which worsens their situation and heightens their vulnerability. This practice is intended to psychologically prepare them, spread panic, and paralyze their ability to resist, often accompanied by vile insults, death threats, and bargaining with their families (Branch, 2010, pp. 160–161). In this context, Captain Falk states: "Panic should be spread, and the capabilities of the prospective person should be paralyzed by demonstrating his incapacity, during which the dirtiest insults, vile bargaining, and death threats are also practiced" (Branche, 2010, p. 160).

The purpose of psychological torture was to harm the victim, break his psychological resistance, and ultimately coerce him into collaborating with the executioners, even turning him into an agent both inside and outside the prison, particularly if he had a weak personality. For those who resisted, the outcome was often death, liquidation, or madness. Prisoners were sometimes forced to witness the torture of others and were told that the same fate awaited them, while being tied to the bodies of victims to instill fear and compel submission. They were frequently informed that they would soon be executed, yet the exact time was never revealed. Guards would deliberately create a sense of impending death by inserting a key into the cell door lock, making the prisoner believe his time had come, only to lock the door again and leave laughing. In some cases, prisoners were taken to the guillotine at the execution site and then returned, further intensifying their psychological torment. Torture was also carried out in front of prisoners' parents, or vice versa, to exert additional psychological pressure. In extreme cases, prisoners' wives were brought in and threatened with gang rape to break the prisoner's resistance (Al-Amin, 2024, pp. 104-105).

7. Interrogation and Torture in the Writings of Henri Alleg:

Henri Alleg was born on 20 July 1921 in Britain and was of Polish-Jewish descent. His grandparents had sought refuge in Britain to escape the extermination campaigns targeting Eastern European Jews and the harsh living conditions under the Russian Empire. In the early 1920s, his parents decided to relocate to France, which at that time offered better living conditions and greater security for Jews (Alleg, 2007, pp. 19-23).

Henri Alleg attended primary school at the Nuns' Boarding School of Saint Vincent de Paul, which was run under the auspices of the Catholic Church. During his fourth year at Rollin High School, he was unknowingly enrolled in the Colonial Naval Society, a semi-official organization aimed at reviving military and colonial values among French youth (Alleg, 2007, pp. 16-18). Later, he earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from the Sorbonne. In 1940, he settled in Algeria at a time when the country had become a refuge for many young Europeans fleeing the German invasion. Shortly after arriving in the capital, he worked as a supervisor at the Youth House, where he was also provided free accommodation (Alleg, 2007, pp. 56-57).

According to the researcher, Henri Alleg's stay in Algeria was not initially planned. However, he fell in love with the people, their hospitality, and their simplicity despite the difficult conditions imposed by colonialism. These factors prompted him to settle in Algeria, as he wished to learn more about its people and deeply immersed himself in their social, cultural, and political life. He also became aware of their opposition to the regime of General Vichy (Loucif, 2015, p. 156).

Henri Alleg also worked as an activist in the Communist Party, distributing anti-fascist publications (Alleg, 2007, p. 79). In addition, he served as a journalist for the republican newspaper *Algérie Républicain*, the official mouthpiece of the Communist Party, which he joined after World War II (Alleg, La question, 2008, p. 20).

Henri Alleg dedicated his life to defending human justice, using his writings as a platform to voice the struggles of persecuted fighters who chose to support the Algerian cause. He preferred living a clandestine life alongside the Algerian mujahideen rather than risk capture. However, on 12 June 1957, he was arrested by paratroopers of the 10th Parachute Division (*10e Division Parachutiste*) at the home of his friend Maurice Audin, who was also arrested and later died under torture under mysterious circumstances (Al-Aroussi, 2013, p. 140).

Henri Alleg was imprisoned, or, as he described it, sent to the "torture factory" in the Abyar region, where he and a group of Europeans who supported the Algerian revolution were systematically tortured by Officer Charbonnier. In his Algerian memoirs, Alleg recounts: "My gendarmerie

unit and two commandos arrived, including one officer with the rank of lieutenant, whose name I later learned was Charbonnier. He approached me, removed my hat, and immediately recognized me as a valuable catch, saying: 'This is Henri Alleg, former director of the Algerian Republican Newspaper'" (Alleg, 2007, p. 244). Charbonnier then interrogated him, asking several questions and stating: "You are a journalist? Then you must understand that we want to know everything. Since you are knowledgeable, you must teach us" (Al-Aroussi, 2013, p. 142).

On 6 August 1957, Henri Alleg's lawyers reported that they were unable to see him because he was being held in Lodi Prison. On 21 August 1957, he appeared before the military investigating judge, facing charges of reconstituting a previously dissolved association and compromising the external security of the French state (Thénault, 2003, p. 147). Alleg later wrote: *"My story was written months after I was tortured by paratroopers in cell number 72 in the Barberousse Prison, Algeria's civil prison"* (Alleg, La question, 2008, p. 18).

Henri Alleg is considered one of the most prominent supporters of the justice of the Algerian cause, and his name is closely associated with numerous writings that bear witness to his opposition to French colonial policy. Among his most significant works is his memoir *Mémoire Algérienne*, which stands as one of the most objective foreign historical sources in its presentation of events without prejudice. In the introduction to his memoir, Alleg writes: *"I say, as I write this testimony, that it is not only dedicated to the Algerians who lived through the years of embers, but is addressed to all men of good conscience"* (Alleg, 2007, p. 190).

One of the most significant pieces of evidence revealed by *La Question* was the exposure of the crimes committed by France against Algerian militants and European supporters of the Algerian liberation revolution. Despite being banned by the French authorities and confiscated in February 1958, thousands of copies were secretly distributed (Clodo, 2007).

The book *La Question*, published in February 1958, is 111 pages long. After completing the draft, Henri Alleg sent it to Éditions de Minuit, directed by Jérôme Lindon, who was renowned for his courage in publishing works that exposed France's crimes against European fighters

supporting the Algerian cause. In this context, Alleg also recalled the suffering of his friend Maurice Audin in the prisons of the colonial authorities. He wrote:

> Here I wrote my story. And I have never written with such difficulty, perhaps because the pain remains vivid in my memory, or perhaps because of this nightmare that I have been living through, which others are also enduring at the very moment I am writing these lines. And others will inevitably experience the same unless this shameful war comes to an end. I had to reveal everything I know, and I owe this writing to Maurice Audin. As he said, I write to him and to all those who have been humiliated and tortured, and who continue to fight with courage and heroism. I owe it to all those who die every day for the freedom of their country. (Alleg, La question, 2008, pp. 12-14)

The book was not intended solely for the intellectual elite; Henri Alleg's goal was to reach the living conscience of people from all social and cultural backgrounds. He also stated that he wrote the book after enduring severe torture and lasting psychological trauma. However, he emphasized that his humanitarian duty compelled him to document the crimes committed by the colonial apparatus.

Jean-Paul Sartre praised *La Question*, stating: "He took torture out of the darkness where it was hidden; let us now see torture in the clear light of day" (Sartre, 2007, p. 65). In the magazine *L'Express*, Sartre also published an article titled *"Une Victoire"* ("A Victory"), which led to the confiscation of the weekly issue run by Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber. In that context, Servan-Schreiber wrote:

> You know what is sometimes said to justify the crimes of the executioners: that it is necessary to torture a man if his confession will save

> hundreds of lives. A beautiful hoax. Henri Alleg was not a terrorist, and the proof is that he was accused only of compromising national security and reviving a dissolved association. They wanted to know the address of his friend who had taken him in, and if he had told them, they would have imprisoned another communist, that's all. After that, they would have continued making random arrests, holding every Muslim accountable. The majority of detainees remained silent, not because they were guilty, but because they had nothing to confess. (Betka, 2015, p. 65)

Regarding the impact of *La Question* on Jean-Paul Sartre's psyche, he stated:

> I have been on my side of reading because my duty drives me to it, and I sometimes publish some of what I write. I used to look with contempt at these stories that placed us in the dock of hardship and mercilessness, leaving us without the slightest glimmer of hope. However, with the book of interrogation, everything changed. Henri Alleg saved us from despair and shame because he was a victim, yet he rose above suffering, above the ordinary limits of human endurance. This transformation could not occur without a spirit of ridicule and sadness. He was tortured in the name of the French people, and through this book, he tried to deliver a message to them, urging them to awaken from their slumber, which was dragging them toward moral degradation, as they silently watched the brutal crimes taking place in Algeria. Interrogation was nothing but a heinous and despicable crime, committed by criminals against fellow

> human beings. Inhumanity exists nowhere but in the nightmare pressing upon our chests, born of fear and truth. Henri Alleg's courage became the very path through which our awakening confronted reality. To put an end to this shame and eradicate it once and for all, we must acknowledge our gratitude to Henri Alleg for his resilience in resisting torture and his refusal to express fear. Through his testimony, he triumphed for the humanity of both victims and colonizers against the feverish violence of colonialism, both military and civilian, fueled by racism. His testimony thus dispelled many illusions that had long remained firmly rooted in the minds of many French citizens. (Sartre, Our shame in Algeria (2nd ed), 1963, pp. 45-58)

Henri Alleg's strength and ability to influence public opinion stemmed largely from the direct support he received from Jean-Paul Sartre. Following the publication of *La Question*, Sartre encouraged people to read the book, which exposes the horrifying realities of the brutal forms of torture practiced systematically and without restraint. Despite enduring severe physical and psychological abuse, the torturers failed to extract any information from Alleg. He remained deeply connected to Algeria through his unwavering commitment, humanitarian spirit, and determination to ensure that history moved in the right direction (Loucif, 2015, p. 156).

Regarding his testimony about torture, Alleg recounts that he was subjected to multiple forms of brutal interrogation, stating:

> They took me to a building under construction on Clemenceau Street in Al-Abyar, where one of General Massu's centers for aggravated interrogation was located, and not two hours passed before I was tied to the torture plate. I remained in these places for months, imprisoned in an incomplete bathroom used by

> the paratroopers as a solitary confinement cell. In the first days, I experienced the usual pain inflicted by water, fire, and electricity. (Alleg, 2007, p. 244)

This is what he confirmed in his book *Accountability*, stating:

> They picked up the piece of wood to which I was still tied and carried me to the kitchen. They fixed a rubber tube to a metal pipe positioned right above my face and wrapped my head in pieces of cloth. When everything was ready, someone said to me: *'When you want to talk, all you have to do is move your fingers.'* Then they turned towards the tap and quickly soaked the rag in water. The water overflowed everywhere. I tried to stay still and avoid swallowing the water by clenching my throat and resisting suffocation, holding the air in my lungs for as long as I could. But I could not endure it for more than a few moments. I felt as though I was drowning, and an overwhelming sense of torment, symbolizing death itself, took over me. Against my will, all my muscles struggled in vain to save me from suffocation, and involuntarily, my fingers began to tremble uncontrollably. Then I heard a voice saying: *'This is all it takes for him to start talking.*"
> (Alleg, La question, 2008, pp. 27-28)

The torture he endured was not limited to the jailer or executioner, as he was also subjected to scientific torture supervised by a doctor, who injected him with doses of anesthetics known as *truth serum*. However, these injections proved ineffective in extracting a confession (Alleg, 2007, p. 244). Despite this, the process severely affected his mental state, pushing him to the brink of contemplating suicide. Nevertheless, he eventually regained consciousness and realized that taking his own life would only fulfill the wishes of his executioners (Alleg, 2008, p. 109). Moreover, they

threatened him with retaliation against his wife and children and, after several rounds of torture, deliberately transferred him to a cell from which he could hear screams that he believed to be those of his wife (Branche, 2010, p. 161).

He remained steadfast in his position, as supported by French anti-colonial writers, and assured them that Algerians do not confuse their tormentors with the French people. He emphasized that friendship with the French is valuable, but they must be made aware of what is happening in Algeria in the name of the French people (Alleg, La question, 2008, p. 14).

After spending a full month in Al-Abyar Prison, he was transferred to Lodi Prison in Medea, where he remained for another month before being moved to Barbarossa Prison following his sentencing to ten years of imprisonment (Maqnoush, 2020, p. 91). Henry Alleg describes this prison, stating:

> In this prison, which is full of inmates, every cell is filled with pain. If I were to recount what happened to me personally from the acts of torture, I would be ashamed of it. On the ground floor of the prison, eighty prisoners, shackled in iron and sentenced to death, lived with us. We moved and breathed at the same pace as they did. In the evening, each of them returned to the mat he slept on, imagining what awaited him, terrified at the thought of what he might see or clinging to the faint hope that nothing would happen to him. Yet, from the depths of that place, each day rose the wonderful songs of these heroes, the very heart of the Algerian people fighting for their freedom. (Alleg, La question, 2008, p. 111)

Afterward, he was transferred to Rance Prison, from which he managed to escape with the help of some comrades. He then went to Czechoslovakia, where he remained unidentified for some time due to the widespread circulation of his book *Accountability*, which had been

translated into several languages, including Czech. Upon his return to Algeria, he witnessed the country's independence, and later went back to Paris, where he died at the age of 91 on July 17, 2013 (Maqnoush, 2020, p. 87).

Conclusion:

In conclusion, this study reveals that foreign testimonies, foremost among them that of Henri Alleg in his book *Accountability*, have exposed the true nature of the French colonizer's practices and its brutality, which exceeded all human limits. It also demonstrates that the torture inflicted upon the Algerian people was not a matter of random acts, but rather a systematic and organized strategy aimed at subjugating the victims and extracting confessions from them.

For the French colonizer, torture served as a brutal form of reprisal against the victim, particularly when the interrogator failed to extract information. In such cases, the executioner resorted to various methods of cruelty as an act of retaliation, deliberately aiming to humiliate and dehumanize the victim.

Through his testimony, Henri Alleg exposed the French colonizer's policy of torture against prisoners, both men and women, without distinction, a policy that often led to death or insanity. His steadfastness, along with that of his comrades, in enduring the most severe forms of torture and refusing to submit to their executioners was not merely a personal triumph but rather a victory for universal human values and dignity. Their suffering thus became a powerful tool in exposing the crimes of the occupation before international public opinion, which contributed significantly to mobilizing global support for the Algerian cause.

His testimony helped break the silence and expose the truth about the French colonizer, prompting intellectuals and politicians, such as Jean-Paul Sartre, to condemn these practices and express their support for the Algerian cause. This study therefore confirms that firsthand testimonies, even those from foreign witnesses, have served as an effective tool in uncovering the crimes of occupation and contributing to the pursuit of justice.

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