

# **The Social Responsibility of the Media Prior to the Outbreak of the Algerian Liberation War: An Analytical Study of a Sample from the First Series of "Al- Basā'ir" Newspaper**

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### Abstract:

This study investigates the social responsibility of the Algerian press in the pre-revolutionary period, with a focus on \*Al-Basā'ir\*—the official body of the Association of Algerian Muslim Scholars—during its foundational phase (1935–1937).

Through content analysis of twelve randomly selected issues from the newspaper's first series, the research examines how *\*Al-Basā'ir\** addressed religious, social, cultural, and political challenges under French colonial rule. Findings reveal that the newspaper functioned as a mission-driven, reformist medium that prioritized national identity, moral education, and anti-colonial mobilization, thereby laying the intellectual groundwork for the Algerian War for Independence.

**Keywords:** Media; insights; responsibility; revolution; Algeria.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This study represents a significant step toward understanding the role of *\*Al-Basā'ir\** newspaper in elevating the social condition of Algerian society during its foundational phase, prior to the outbreak of the Algerian Liberation War. It examines how the newspaper contributed to liberating the Algerian people from colonial domination—a regime characterized by the aggressive imposition and entrenchment of corrupt materialistic values aimed at erasing Algerian identity. Colonial authorities systematically targeted Islamic religion by demolishing mosques and converting them into churches, stables, and barracks; arresting imams; and dispersing students of religious knowledge. Simultaneously, they waged a campaign against the Arabic language by replacing it with French, foreign dialects, and vernacular speech; destroying schools and hospitals; imposing French education on Algerians; promoting widespread illiteracy; and deliberately inciting sectarian, ethnic, and linguistic divisions. Furthermore, the colonial regime displaced and starved the Algerian population while relentlessly pursuing, imprisoning, and silencing its heroes and intellectuals.

In response to this dire situation following the French colonial occupation of Algerian territory, the Algerian people confronted these injustices through various means at their disposal, including the weapon of media. Alongside other available forces, the media assumed a crucial role in the struggle for liberation, manifested through numerous journalistic endeavors. These included party-affiliated press outlets—such as those of the *Étoile Nord-Africaine* (Star of North Africa), the *Parti du Peuple Algérien* (Algerian People's Party), and the *Mouvement pour le Triomphe des Libertés Démocratiques* (Movement for the Triumph of Democratic Liberties)—as well as reformist journalism led by the Association of Algerian Muslim Scholars, most notably *\*Al-Basā'ir\**, which paved the way for revolutionary media.

Among these publications, *\*Al-Basā'ir\** stands out for the considerable attention its issues devoted to the affairs of Algerian society, issues of liberation, anti-colonial resistance, and safeguarding the Algerian people's security, livelihood, religion, national identity, language, and cultural traditions. This engagement was rooted in the social responsibility of the media in the pre-revolutionary period.

Accordingly, this study seeks to address the following central question:

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"What was the nature of the social responsibility undertaken by the Algerian newspaper *\*Al-Basā'ir\** in the period preceding the outbreak of the Algerian War for Independence?"

## **1. Study Objectives:**

- .11. To clarify the concept of media social responsibility, particularly during crises and wars, as manifested in safeguarding populations from threats to their religion, livelihood, homeland, language, and cultural traditions.
- .12. To highlight the role of value-based revolutionary media in liberating peoples from colonial domination and guiding them toward independence.
- .13. To examine the contribution of the Association of Algerian Muslim Scholars and its purposeful media instrument during the liberation struggle, positioning it as a model for contemporary ethical journalism.
- .14. To bridge the post-independence generation with the revolutionary generation by foregrounding the media's documentation of Algerian sacrifices, thereby fostering patriotism and national cohesion.
- .15. To analyze *\*Al-Basā'ir\**'s role in exposing French colonial schemes, atrocities, and economic-political ambitions, while internationalizing the national Algerian struggle and raising domestic awareness.

## **Research Hypotheses:**

The study is grounded in the hypothesis that media plays a constructive role during periods of crisis, war, and revolution—not only by mitigating societal tensions but also by promoting human coexistence, global peace, and national unity among diverse segments of a single society.

## **3.Methodology:**

### **3.1 Research Design:**

This study adopts a descriptive research approach, defined as “the classification of data and facts that are collected, recorded, interpreted, and analyzed to yield meaningful conclusions and implications, thereby enabling the formulation of generalizations about the phenomenon under investigation” (Mohamed Abdel Hamid, 2004, p. 59). The aim is to elucidate the social responsibility of *\*Al-Basā'ir\** in articulating the Algerian people's demands for freedom, improving socio-economic conditions, and resisting colonial systematic marginalization.

### 3.2 Research Instrument:

Content analysis was employed as the primary methodological tool—a technique “widely used in media and journalistic research” (Richard Ben et al., 1992, p. 10). First applied by Charles Mills and Leterman in their 1920 study of *\*The New York Times\** (Al-Tahami, 1975, p. 16), content analysis enables systematic examination of message content and communicative behavior. It is particularly suited to this study’s objective of analyzing the socially responsible messaging of *\*Al-Basā’ir\**.

### 3.3 Population and Sample:

Given the impossibility of analyzing all 1,200+ issues published since the newspaper’s inception, and considering the study’s temporal focus on the 1930s, twelve (12) issues were randomly selected from the first series (December 1935–January 1937):

| Issue No            | 01                      | 04                         | 09                          | 15                       | 16                       | 17                | 22                 | 24                  | 33                          | 38                        | 44                           | 50                        | The total |
|---------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------|
| Date of Publication | 27 Decem<br>ber<br>1935 | 24 Jan<br>uar<br>y<br>1936 | 28 Feb<br>ruar<br>y<br>1936 | 17 A<br>pr<br>il<br>1936 | 24 A<br>pr<br>il<br>1936 | 1 M<br>ay<br>1936 | 5 Ju<br>ne<br>1936 | 19 Ju<br>ne<br>1936 | 4 Sept<br>emb<br>er<br>1936 | 9 Oct<br>obe<br>r<br>1936 | 20 Sept<br>emb<br>er<br>1936 | 8 Jan<br>uar<br>y<br>1937 | 12        |

## 4. Conceptual Framework:

### 4.1. Social Responsibility of the Media:

The term “social responsibility of the media” refers to the deliberate use of media and its observable impact on society—evident through changes in individual and collective knowledge, behavior, and cultural orientation (Mohamed Abdel Hamid, 2000, p. 245).

Emerging in the United States after World War II as a response to critiques of libertarian press theory (Kafi, 2016, p. 217), this theory rests on several core principles (Al-Dilmi, 2016, p. 111):

- 4.1. Media must accept and fulfill specific obligations toward society.
- 4.2. These obligations are met through professional standards: truthfulness, accuracy, objectivity, and balance.
- 4.3. Media should self-regulate.
- 4.4. Content that incites crime, violence, social disorder, or insults minorities must be avoided.

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- 4.5. Media must represent multiple viewpoints, reflect societal diversity, and uphold the right of reply.
- 4.6. Society has the right to expect high ethical performance from media.
- 4.7. Public intervention may be justified to serve the public interest.

Therefore, proponents of this theory believe in the necessity of establishing ethical and professional standards for the media, such as: honesty, objectivity, balance, accuracy, pluralism, diversity, and involving everyone in expressing their opinions in a way that serves the public interest of society.

### **Analytical Findings:**

#### **5.1 Formal Categories (“How It Was Said”)**

##### **5.1.1 Language Use**

Nearly all content appeared in Modern Standard Arabic (73.2%), reflecting the scholarly background of contributors such as Ibn Badis, Al-Ibrahimi, Abu al-Yaqdhan, and Al-‘Aqbi—figures is deeply rooted in Qur’anic and classical Arabic studies. Journalistic Arabic accounted for 24.1%, while colloquial and foreign languages were minimal.

| <b>Language Type</b>   | <b>Al-Basā’ir Newspaper</b> |                   |
|------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------|
|                        | <b>Frequency</b>            | <b>Percentage</b> |
| Modern Standard Arabic | 246                         | 73.2%             |
| Journalistic Arabic    | 81                          | 24.1%             |
| Colloquial Arabic      | 02                          | 0.5%              |
| Foreign Languages      | 07                          | 2.2%              |
| Total                  | 336                         | 100%              |

##### **5.1.2 Page Placement:**

Social responsibility themes appeared across all sections, with front pages most prominent (38.8%), likely to capture reader attention and signal editorial priorities.

| A website showcasing topics related to social responsibility | <b>Al-Basā’ir Newspaper</b> |                   |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------|
|                                                              | <b>Frequency</b>            | <b>Percentage</b> |
| Front pages                                                  | 14                          | 38.8%             |
| Middle pages                                                 | 13                          | 36.2%             |

|            |    |       |
|------------|----|-------|
| Back pages | 09 | 25.0% |
| Total      | 36 | 100%  |

### 5.1.3 Space Allocation:

Full-page articles dominated (42.9%), consistent with the newspaper's didactic, essay-driven format aimed at an educated elite.

| Space per Item      | Al-Basā'ir Newspaper |            |
|---------------------|----------------------|------------|
|                     | Frequency            | Percentage |
| Less than half page | 39                   | 25.9%      |
| Half page           | 47                   | 31.2%      |
| Full page           | 65                   | 42.9%      |
| Total               | 152                  | 100%       |

## 5.2 Content Categories ("What Was Said"):

### 5.2.1 Thematic Distribution:

Social issues predominated (40.2%), followed by religious (30.7%), political (16.4%), and cultural (12.7%)

| Theme     | Al-Basā'ir Newspaper |            |
|-----------|----------------------|------------|
|           | Frequency            | Percentage |
| Social    | 55                   | 40.2%      |
| Religious | 103                  | 30.7%      |
| Political | 135                  | 16.4%      |
| Cultural  | 43                   | 12.7%      |
| Total     | 336                  | 100%       |

### 5.2.2 Target Audience:

The Algerian public was the primary audience (53.6%), followed by Arab nations (28.5%), colonial authorities (13.4%), and the Western world (4.5%).

| Audience        | Al-Basā'ir Newspaper |            |
|-----------------|----------------------|------------|
|                 | Frequency            | Percentage |
| Algerian People | 180                  | 53.6%      |
| Arab Nations    | 96                   | 28.5%      |

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|                             |     |       |
|-----------------------------|-----|-------|
| French Colonial Authorities | 45  | 13.4% |
| Western World               | 15  | 4.5%  |
| Total                       | 336 | 100%  |

### **5.2.3 Persuasive Sources:**

The Qur'an constituted the primary source of argumentation (66.2%), followed by the Sunnah (24.6%).

| <b>Source of Argumentation</b> | <b>Al-Basā'ir Newspaper</b> |                   |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------|
|                                | <b>Frequency</b>            | <b>Percentage</b> |
| Qur'an                         | 43                          | 66.2%             |
| Prophetic Sunnah               | 16                          | 24.6%             |
| Other Islamic Sources          | 06                          | 9.2%              |
| Total                          | 65                          | 100%              |

### **5.2.4 Intended Objectives:**

Liberation from colonialism was the foremost goal (35.1%), followed by combating ignorance and polytheism (28.7%).

| <b>Objective</b>                        | <b>Al-Basā'ir Newspaper</b> |                   |
|-----------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------|
|                                         | <b>Frequency</b>            | <b>Percentage</b> |
| Liberation from colonialism             | 51                          | 35.1%             |
| Eradication of polytheism and ignorance | 58                          | 28.7%             |
| National mobilization                   | 47                          | 23.2%             |
| Informing international opinion         | 14                          | 7.0%              |
| Exposing colonial crimes                | 12                          | 6.0%              |
| Total                                   | 202                         | 100%              |

### **5.2.5 Journalistic Genres:**

The essay dominated (60.1%), reflecting the paper's intellectual and reformist orientation.

| <b>Genre</b>       | <b>Al-Basā'ir Newspaper</b> |                   |
|--------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------|
|                    | <b>Frequency</b>            | <b>Percentage</b> |
| Essay/Editorial    | 202                         | 60.1%             |
| Poetry             | 92                          | 27.3%             |
| Maxims & Aphorisms | 26                          | 7.8%              |
| Narrative/Story    | 16                          | 4.8%              |

|       |     |      |
|-------|-----|------|
| Total | 336 | 100% |
|-------|-----|------|

## 6. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that *\*Al-Basā'ir\** was not merely a newspaper but an instrument of civilizational resistance. Its social responsibility was manifested through:

1. Awareness and Reform: It diagnosed societal problems—ignorance, polytheism, moral decay—and proposed Islamic-ethical remedies.
2. Educational Mission: It prioritized doctrinal and moral education, believing individual ethical and intellectual development was key to collective liberation.
3. National Identity Preservation: It upheld Islam, Arabness, and homeland as pillars of Algerian identity.
4. Anti-Colonial Mobilization: It exposed colonial crimes, rallied national unity, and internationalized the Algerian cause.
5. Scriptural Authority: It grounded its discourse in the Qur'an and Sunnah, resonating with the spiritual values of its audience.
6. Revolutionary Forerunner: It ideologically prepared the ground for the 1954 uprising by fostering consciousness and cohesion.
7. Model for Contemporary Media: It stands as a counter-model to today's superficial, value-deficient media landscape.

*\*Al-Basā'ir\** remains a timeless exemplar of purposeful, ethical journalism—one that alerts society to threats against its faith, language, and homeland, and calls it to dignity, knowledge, and resistance.

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