

*The French Health Policy in Algeria During the 19th Century:**"Famine" - A Case Study-*

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Received: 20/11/024 Accepted: 14/12/2024 Published:17/12/2024

Abstract :

This study aims to shed light on the impact of French colonial health policies in Algeria during the 19th century, with a focus on the role of famines in exacerbating the humanitarian and health conditions of the local population. The French occupation led to the deterioration of Algeria's economic and social conditions, where healthcare was primarily directed toward serving European settlers, while the health needs of the Algerians were ignored.

Major famines, such as the 1867-1868 famine, demonstrated how colonial neglect worsened the suffering of the local population. Instead of providing the necessary aid, the French response was slow and insufficient, leading to increased mortality, malnutrition, and the spread of diseases. These famines reflect the failure of the colonial system to provide the essential healthcare and humanitarian support to the Algerian people, highlighting the stark disparity in treatment between French settlers and the local population.

Keywords: French colonial policies, Famines in Algeria, Colonial healthcare, Healthcare neglect, Health disparity.

ملخص:

تهدف هذه الدراسة لمحاولة تسليط الضوء على تأثير السياسات الصحية الاستعمارية الفرنسية في الجزائر خلال القرن التاسع عشر، مع التركيز على دور المجاعات في تفاقم الأوضاع الإنسانية والصحية، حيث أدى الاحتلال الفرنسي إلى تدهور الظروف الاقتصادية والاجتماعية للسكان الجزائريين ففي الوقت الذي كانت فيه الرعاية الصحية موجهة أساسًا لخدمة المستوطنين الأوروبيين تم تجاهل احتياجات الجزائريين الصحية.

لقد أظهرت المجاعات الكبرى مثل مجاعة 1867-1868 كيف أسهم الإهمال الاستعماري في تفاقم معاناة السكان المحليين فبدلاً من تقديم المساعدة الضرورية كان رد الفعل الفرنسي بطيئاً وغير كافٍ، مما أدى إلى زيادة الوفيات وسوء التغذية والأمراض، وبذلك تعكس هذه المجاعات فشل النظام الاستعماري في توفير الرعاية الصحية والإنسانية للسكان الجزائريين، مما يبرز التفاوت الكبير بين معاملة المستوطنين الفرنسيين والسكان المحليين، كما تبين أن السياسات الاستعمارية لم تقتصر على الاستغلال الاقتصادي والاجتماعي فحسب، بل امتدت لتشمل الإهمال الصحي المتعمد، مما ترك آثاراً سلبية طويلة الأمد على الصحة العامة في الجزائر.

كلمات مفتاحية: السياسات الاستعمارية الفرنسية، المجاعات في الجزائر، الرعاية الصحية الاستعمارية، الإهمال الصحي، التفاوت الصحي.

Introduction:

Algeria represented one of the most prominent examples of French settlement in North Africa during the 19th and 20th centuries, as the country experienced a prolonged period of systematic exploitation that affected all aspects of its economic, social, and political life. The healthcare sector was one of the areas most negatively impacted by colonial policies, as these policies were entirely focused on serving the interests of French settlers, while healthcare for the local population was marginalized as part of a broader effort to alter Algeria's demographic makeup. In this context,

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famines such as the Great Famine of 1867-1868 ravaged the country, highlighting how colonial policies contributed to the destruction of the health conditions of the Algerian people through several factors, including internal wars and colonial neglect, which refused to provide even the minimum level of healthcare and humanitarian care for the indigenous population.

The French response to these disasters was limited and ineffective, revealing a total disregard for the health needs of the local population, with no consideration for the rights and lives of the Algerians. This study examines some of the negative impacts of French health policies on Algeria in the 19th century, with a focus on famine as a key aspect of this impact, and analyzes the role of colonial occupation in exacerbating humanitarian and health crises as part of the broader colonial dimensions against colonized peoples. From this, we can pose the following problematic:

How did the French colonial health policy in Algeria during the 19th century affect the health of the local population, especially during crises such as famines? And was the neglect in providing healthcare a result of deliberate policies aimed at exacerbating the suffering of Algerians?

1. Famine:

Throughout the colonial period, Algeria endured numerous economic, social, and health crises caused by various factors and conditions. These crises primarily affected the Algerian people, who lacked adequate protection, unlike the settlers who had access to resources that ensured their security—chief among them the fertile agricultural lands forcibly taken and granted to settlers. One of the most severe crises of the 19th century was the repeated famines that devastated the Algerian population, causing demographic catastrophes with numerous consequences.

Thus, the questions arise:

- What were the true causes of these famines, and what were their impacts?

1.1 Causes of Famine in Algeria:

1.1.1 The Role of Colonial Policy in Causing Famines (France's Responsibility):

To realize its colonial settlement project, France mobilized all its material, human, administrative, and legal resources to support the settler agenda, which centered on seizing land from its indigenous owners. This resulted in the destruction of traditional agricultural production by French expansionist forces. The *Senatus-Consulte* law of 1863 had particularly devastating effects on Algerian society, as it dismantled collective land ownership and established individual ownership, making it easier for settlers to purchase land. This process transformed Algerians from landowners into sharecroppers, stripping them of their livelihood and exposing them to severe famines and social crises. Moreover, heavy taxes and fines were imposed on locals¹

to facilitate the confiscation of land and the impoverishment of Algerians. European migration to Algeria was also encouraged, with the European population growing from around 37,000 in 1841 to 100,000 in 1845².

By then, settlers owned approximately 40% of Algeria's fertile agricultural land, with 25,000 farms established for them.

¹ Ibrahim Lounissi, **Real estate in Algeria Through the Newspaper Al-Mubashir under military rule. In Proceedings of the First and Second National Conferences on Real Estate in Algeria during French Occupation 1830-1962**, Ministry of Mujahideen Publications, Algeria, 2007, pp, 156-157.

² Iswi Charles, **The Economic History of the Middle East and North Africa**, Dar al-Hadatha for Printing and Publishing, Beirut, 1985, p, 236.

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As a result, the production of staple grains declined, livestock numbers dropped, and local industries deteriorated. The situation worsened when the colonial administration prioritized cash crops over the Algerians' basic needs. By 1868, more than 18,000 hectares were planted with vineyards for wine production, and there was an emphasis on tobacco and cotton cultivation—known as “cash crops.”¹

This impact is evident in the responses provided by Hassan Ben Brahim, El-Makki Ben Badis, and Ahmed Ould al-Qadi to questions from a commission led by Marshal Randon on May 5, 1869. They refuted the claim that Algerians' ignorance of agriculture caused the famine, instead condemning the exploitative practices of moneylenders, especially Jewish lenders, against locals. They also decried the division and sale of tribal lands to Europeans, warning that it fractured Algerian families and deprived them of their primary means of livelihood².

Between 1860 and 1870, French economic policies emphasized development projects like railroads, mining, and export agriculture—profitable sectors for immediate colonial gains but at the expense of Algeria's internal economic growth. This imbalance in colonial investments and the limited financial resources allocated to Algeria further exacerbated the crisis³.

1 Yahia Bouaziz, *The struggle of Algeria through documents*, Algeria, 1986, pp. 173-178.

² Fouad Kebdani, ***Famine and the spread of Diseases, Marking the humanitarian tragedy in Algeria 1866-1868 through foreign writings***, Democratic Arab Center, Germany, 2021, p. 245.

³ Jilali Sari, ***"The Demographic Catastrophe in Algeria 1867-1868"***, *Culture Journal*, 76, July-Augus, 1983, p. 227.

In addition, France treated Algeria as a grain reserve for Europe to secure its own food security, prioritizing European needs over those of the Algerians. Combined with climate changes and droughts, this policy sacrificed the welfare of Algerians to meet the demands of northern Europe.

1.1.2 The Role of Natural Disasters in Causing Famine:

Most historical sources agree that the primary cause of the 1866-1868 famine was a series of locust invasions, which spread across much of Algeria beginning in 1864 and peaked in 1866, a year remembered as the "Year of the Locust." The locusts were indeed a significant factor, as they consumed wheat and barley crops, destroyed gardens and orchards, especially in 1868. For instance, in the Oran district, locusts destroyed 34,061 hectares of grains, legumes, fodder, and industrial plants, with losses amounting to 3.3 million francs; the eastern district suffered losses of 2.4 million francs, and Algiers recorded damages worth 13.9 million francs¹.

However, this raises a question: why did European settlers not suffer from the locust invasion as much as the local Algerians? Was the locust infestation somehow selective, sparing settler lands and affecting only indigenous crops? This leads to the conclusion that locusts may not have been the primary cause of the famine.

In addition to the locust invasion, drought was another factor contributing to the famine. Rainfall began to decrease in 1865 and became extremely scarce by 1867, leading to water shortages for drinking and irrigation, and drying up springs. Dr. Vital described this situation in a letter to Ismail Urbain on May 21, 1867, saying, "Bad news is coming from all parts of the Constantine province: crops are lost, livestock is beginning to die, and everyone is hopeless due to

¹ André Nouschi, **Correspondence of Dr. A. Vital with Ismail Urbain 1845-1874**, Algiers, 1958, pp. 210-211.

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hunger and thirst..." The cost of food soared, astonishing Dr. Vital, who reported in another letter to Ismail Urbain on June 25, 1867, that the price of wheat had exceeded 100 francs per *sa'a* (a traditional measure), and barley was selling for 45 francs per *sa'a*, compared to 26 francs per *quintal* before the crisis¹.

In 1867, *Le Moniteur Algérien* frequently reported that many Algerian regions experienced heavy rainfall and snow, bringing hope to the locals, who began planting and sowing. However, the rains and snowstorms actually damaged the weak crops, killed livestock, and worsened the dire conditions².

Adding to these challenges, a violent earthquake struck Blida and parts of the Mitidja region on January 2, 1867. *Le Moniteur Algérien* published a letter on January 17, 1867, from the governor-general to the governors of the three provinces, dated January 12, detailing the destruction and hardship caused by the earthquake, which left many villages and farms in ruins, putting the people in severe hardship and deprivation³.

1.2 Major Famines in Algeria (1838-1869):

During the French occupation, Algeria faced numerous famines, especially in the 19th century, which had devastating effects on Algerian society. These famines led to severe demographic declines, outbreaks of epidemics, economic hardships, and forced sales of properties under dire social conditions. Key famines included:

¹ **Al-Mubashir, February 21 - March 14, 1867**

² Salah Al-Entari, **Famines in Constantine**, Rabah Bounar, Trans, National Publishing and Distribution Company, Algeria, 1974, p15.

³ **Al-Mubashir**, , January 17, 1867.

1.2.1 The Famine of 1838: This famine followed the occupation of Constantine in the fall of 1837, after the devastation wrought by the colonial army. The famine was primarily due to a blight on crops in 1838, coupled with heavy rainfall and snow in Constantine throughout the winter. Farmers hesitated to plant due to the turmoil, which led to skyrocketing grain prices; wheat prices rose to 100 francs per unit in the city and 80-90 francs in rural areas. Many people pawned their belongings to buy food, and Jewish lenders took advantage, buying properties at low prices. Antari noted that Jewish buyers could acquire homes worth 10,000 francs for only 100 francs¹.

1.2.2 The Famine of 1847: This famine lasted three years, primarily caused by locust invasions that devastated crops nationwide, leading to price increases. Wheat sold for 60-70 francs, and barley for 5-30 francs².

The famine extended until 1850, worsened by a decree allowing the export of agricultural products to France while locals starved, as settlers continued to arrive³, Some French traders sought to mitigate the crisis by importing grains from various areas, distributing

¹ Moustapha Khayati, **Epidemics and Famines in Algeria**, ANEP, 2013, Algeria, p, 219.

² Salah Farkous, **The Administration of The Arab offices and French Occupation in Algeria** 1st ed, Al-Basaair New Publishing, Algeria, p, 216.

³ Salah Al-Entari, **op.cit**, p, 16.

them to needy people in Constantine through tickets issued by the Arab Bureau¹.

However, this distribution by French traders was seen as an attempt to improve the image of the colonizers and distance them from the blame of causing the famine. These traders, particularly Jewish ones, exploited the crisis through hoarding and price manipulation. The grain distribution through the Arab Bureau was also a tactic to pressure Algerians into selling their lands and properties under the motto "land for bread."

1.2.3 The Famine of 1866-1869: This was one of the most severe famines in 19th-century Algeria, often described as a "black famine" unparalleled in its horror. Its causes included crop and vegetation failures, an outbreak of "rhema" disease ², and a massive locust invasion in April 1868 that destroyed crops and trees³.

The locust disaster was followed by a severe drought, and subsequent heavy rains and snowstorms further ruined crops. Additionally, colonial policies of land confiscation and burning tactics aimed to starve Algerians into submission⁴.

The consequences of this famine were catastrophic: grain shortages, livestock deaths, exorbitant grain prices, and the spread of cholera, typhus, and other deadly diseases. People lost their properties and fell into debt to settlers. Antari described property owners as

¹ Abd el Hamid Zuzu, **The History of Colonization in Africa and Asia**, University Press office ,Algeria,1997,p,104.

13 Salah Al-Entari,**op.cit**,p,17.

3 Rabeh Lounissi, Rachid,Belah, **Contemporary History of Algeria 1830-1989** ,Dar Al-Maaref,Algeria,2006,p,12.

⁴ Salah Al-Entari,**op.cit**,p,17.

becoming indebted and oppressed. Amid worsening conditions, people resorted to eating roots, leaves, and dogs¹.

Ibn al-Arabi described people eating cats, carrion, and whatever the soul typically rejects. In Constantine, there were 46 births compared to 288 deaths, while in Setif, there were 8 births and 222 deaths².

Homeless and starving people roamed fields and roads. Burzet reported finding corpses of men, women, and children daily in streets and fields, having died from hunger and despair (ibid,p.11). After emptying their stores of wheat and barley, people turned to root plants for sustenance, and mothers unable to produce milk begged from door to door. One heartbreaking story describes a mother who gathered enough alms only to find her child had died of hunger in her arms³

A priest recounted the horrifying scenes in Tenes: “We saw women searching through horse dung for undigested grains, which they washed and ate. Children competed with dogs over bones in garbage heaps, which they chewed and swallowed. Lettuce and carrot leaves appeared like luxury items, while people of all ages begged for bread and clothing, with most resorting to scavenging through garbage to find bones and scraps”⁴.

1.3 French Measures Toward the Famine:

¹ Abbé Burzet, **History of Algeria's Disasters 1866-1867: Earthquake, Cholera, Locusts**,1868,p,08.

² Kamel Ben Sahraoui, "**The 1868 famine in Algeria through local and French texts**",**New Ages Journal**, 26, Spring 2017,p,10.

³ Yahia Bouaziz, op.cit, p, 238.

⁴ Moustapha Khayati, op.cit, p, 221.

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In fear of unrest and the social consequences of the famine, colonial authorities rounded up the locals and kept them outside urban areas, preventing them from searching through garbage heaps for bone scraps¹, Police officers detained these destitute people, chaining them in small groups to prevent escape. This tragic episode left a deep mark on the collective memory, known as “The Year of Chains” or “The Year of the Rope”².

Authorities further intensified their suffering by gathering them in general camps in areas like Miliana, Chlef, and Relizane, where they endured hunger, thirst, and the harsh heat, leading to widespread disease and many deaths³.

Despite the immense suffering and the starvation that claimed Algerian lives, colonial exploitation of Algeria continued. *La Gaceta de Madrid* reported that French commercial ships entered Algerian ports, leaving loaded with goods plundered by the French⁴.

Notably, even with critically low grain stocks, France prioritized fulfilling its commitments to European countries, choosing to supply them over addressing local needs. This reveals that the famine camps France established were not aimed at alleviating the crisis but at containing the risks of famine-related diseases. The camps also isolated Algerians from the outside world to prevent damage to France’s claimed "civilized" image and to monitor them closely, ensuring they would not revolt. Evidence of this is seen in the fact that famine camps provided Algerians with no real relief; instead, they

1 *ibid*,p,222.

2 Fouad Kebbani, *op.cit*, p, 245.

3 Kamel Hilal,**Algerian Migration To The Levant 1847-1918** Algeria,2007,p,18.

4 LOUIS Rinn,**History of the 1871 Insurrection in Algeria In Gourdon**, Algeria,1891,p,50.

increased their suffering and deprivation. A revealing question arises: Why did France not include European settlers in the famine camps alongside Algerians? This underscores that colonial policies contributed significantly to the famines of the 19th century, whether through deliberate actions or poor crisis management, ultimately exacerbating the crisis.

After failing to find solutions to the crisis, the colonial administration eventually lifted movement restrictions on locals, allowing them to seek more suitable places to settle. This led to the displacement of many Algerian families to neighboring countries, such as Tunisia, Morocco, Libya, and Syria¹.

An article in *Le Moniteur Algérien*, published on April 17, 1867, reported that Emperor Napoleon donated 20,000 francs, and the King of Italy sent 1,000 francs to the wife of the governor-general through the Italian consul in Algeria, following the Blida earthquake and its aftermath².

1.4 Consequences of 19th Century Famines in Algeria

1.4.1 Military Consequences:

After the locust invasions of the 1860, particularly in the region of Mokrani's rule in Medjana, where crops were devastated, farmers faced worsened economic and social hardship. Mokrani was compelled to take out high-interest loans from banks and Jewish brokers to help farmers obtain seeds for planting³.

These loans created financial difficulties for him, especially when creditors in Constantine demanded repayment, but Algerian debtors were unable to pay due to the severe economic and social

¹ Salah Farkous, op.cit, p, 250.

² **Al-Mubashir**, April 17, 1867.

³ Moustapha Khayati, op.cit, p, 226.

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crisis caused by recurring famines and epidemics, which drained their resources. This situation primed the population for rebellion, as noted by Governor-General MacMahon in June 1869: "Algeria is subdued by force, but its people have not surrendered, and any action by France against them will push them toward revolt."¹ This statement shows that, by 1869, France was aware of the inevitable emergence of revolts as a direct result of its colonial policies, which had largely contributed to the crises affecting Algerians but not the settlers.

Following the Mokrani uprising in 1871, Algerians faced brutal repression. Many were exiled to New Caledonia, and thousands more were forced to migrate to Morocco, Egypt, and Syria².

The famines played a direct or indirect role in weakening local resistance. The French administration exploited the famine to eliminate all forms of resistance³.

As many Algerians, struggling for daily survival, could no longer support the resistance efforts. The famine also drained their economic and human resources, limiting their capacity to aid the resistance. The French extended the duration of famines to reduce the Algerian population and impoverish them, believing that Algerians rebelled because they were wealthy. Consequently, France deliberately exacerbated the impact of the famines to advance its colonial project, which relied on seizing land and property.

1.4.2 Economic Consequences:

¹ Kamel Hilal, op.cit, p,18.

² Moustapha Khayati,op.cit,p,226.

³ Ahmed Manour,**History of Algerian Resistance in The 19th Century**,Dar Al-Ma'arifa, Algeria,2006,p,229.

The severe drought, scarcity, and famine that struck Algeria between 1865 and 1869 led to a drastic reduction in animal and plant production, leaving people without food and animals without feed. Thousands of livestock perished, a fact confirmed by Antari, who remarked, "This famine brought various forms of disaster, encompassing all evils. The crop blight destroyed the harvest, and the shortage of feed led to livestock deaths. The locusts wiped out vegetation and life, causing prices to soar and trade to decline, as commerce depends on production¹.

The price of barley, which was previously 12-13 francs per *quintal*, rose to 16-17 francs by September 1868. Wheat, previously priced at 25.80 francs, spiked to 64.46 francs in the same month².

In Tenes, a *quintal* of wheat rose from 31 francs on July 7, 1867, to 42.50 francs by July 22, while in Algiers, it increased from 23.75 francs to 30 francs over the same period.

Another devastating result of this famine was the loss of half of Algeria's livestock: approximately 13 million heads in 1867 and 8 million in 1870. Interestingly, European settlers' livestock was far less affected, with only 396,000 lost in 1867 and 377,000 in 1870. This disparity suggests that the economic impact of the famine was disproportionately borne by the Algerians, severely undermining their agricultural economy and worsening their poverty³.

1.4.3 Social Consequences:

¹ Salah Al-Entari, op.cit, pp, 56-57.

² Charles Robert Ageron, **Colonial policy in the Maghreb**, Paris, 1972, p, 74.

³ Salah Abad, **Colonizers and French policies in Algeria, 1870-1900**, University Press office, 1984, p, 32.

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According to the first official census conducted by the French administrative authorities in 1861, the Algerian population was recorded at approximately 8,765,139. By 1866, this number had drastically declined to 2,652,072—a decrease of more than 113,000. These statistics reveal that 3,000 Algerians migrated, and over 55,000 died due to famine and epidemics. The 1867 famine alone claimed approximately 130,000 lives. Further research, including the work of Burzet, highlights 1867 as a particularly deadly year, especially after locust invasions that destroyed crops, leading to widespread famine and poverty. Burzet estimates that within two months of the 1867 famine, approximately 250,000 Algerians had perished¹.

Djilali Sari, in his book *The Demographic Catastrophe*, estimates that 36% of the Algerian population—equivalent to around 820,000 people—were lost, resulting in the extinction of numerous families and groups² General Winpffer reported that in the province of Algiers, from August 1867 to May 1868, deaths exceeded 10,614.

The following table illustrates mortality rates in the Dellys region from 1867 to 1868:

Population Group	Total Population	Number of Deaths	Mortality Rate (%)
Europeans	1,562	21	1.34%
Local Civilians	10,316	407	3.94%
Local Military District	272,853	9,095	3.33%

The data reveal that the mortality rate among Europeans was significantly lower than that of the local Algerians, indicating the stark

1 Abbé Burzet, op.cit,pp,75-79

2 Jilali sari,op.cit,p,183.

inequalities in colonial policies. The French colonial administration's unjust treatment, including confiscating fertile lands, scorched-earth policies, and forced starvation, greatly worsened the famine's impact on Algerians.

After the devastating famines of 1867-1868, many Algerian farmers were forced to abandon their lands, which could no longer sustain them. Some wandered within the country, while others chose to emigrate, facing risks in search of better opportunities¹.

1.4.4 Religious and Cultural Impacts:

The famine provided an opportunity to spread Christianity, with Cardinal Lavigerie, a prominent figure in Christian missionary efforts in Africa, using Algeria's hardships to further his cause. He founded the White Fathers, a missionary organization, offering aid and assistance to the impoverished, orphans, and needy. Lavigerie visited famine-stricken areas with a cross in one hand and bread and medicine in the other².

Seeking support, Lavigerie traveled to France, where he appealed to clergy and Christian doctors to aid Algeria's orphans and shelters, raising 80,000 francs in donations. His organization welcomed waves of destitute children, many clothed in mere rags. Mothers watched their children handed over to strangers, overwhelmed by poverty and despair³.

In 1867, he founded the *Maison Arabe des Orphelins* initially accommodating 1,753 children aged 8 to 9. Due to malnutrition and disease, only 100 survived. Some children were sent to Rome to the

1 Kamel Hilal, op.cit, p,18.

² Ahmed Taoufik el Madani, **This is Algeria**, World of Knowledge Publishing, Algeria, p,22.

³ Moustapha Khayati, op.cit, p,227.

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Pope, others to France for education, and five graduated as doctors by 1890¹.

These children, educated and raised in Rome's Christian heart and trained in France, were disconnected from their original faith, language, and identity, representing a profound religious and cultural transformation. This was the cultural and religious assimilation inflicted upon Algerians as part of the colonial project, aimed at eroding their identity—a foundation of their resilience and resistance to colonial policies.

A report by *Ch. Curier*, honorary dean of the Faculty of Letters in Strasbourg, dated May 6, 1868, detailed donations received in France for Algeria's famine victims. He noted that as of January 9, 1868, they had received two donations of 10 francs each and further donations totaling 4,046 francs. Curier assured that these funds were distributed effectively by trustworthy priests and known individuals in Algerian cities like Algiers, Blida, Constantine, Oran, Mostaganem, and Tlemcen², Lavigerie acknowledged the difficulty of missionary work in Africa and Algeria, urging France to increase its sacrifices to alleviate Algerian suffering³.

This highlights the complementary role of the clergy in the colonial project. Priests and missionaries aimed to attract international attention by helping Algerians, using respected figures to lend legitimacy to their aid and make it more acceptable. Lavigerie subtly conveyed the challenging nature of missionary work, emphasizing that

1 Khadidja Bachtache, **The French Missionary Movement In Algeria 1830-1870**, Dahleb Printing, Algeria, pp, 119-14.

² Kamel Ben Sahraoui, op.cit, p, 13.

³ Fouad Kebbani, op.cit, p, 243.

more sacrifices were needed from France, as missionary efforts were essential to undermining Algerian identity and were critical tools for the colonial exploitation project.

The church exploited the Algerians' dire social conditions, offering the Bible in one hand and aid in the other. Desperate parents handed their children over to the White Fathers, fearing for their survival, even if it meant their conversion to Christianity¹.

1.5 Algerian Famines in Foreign Writings:

Western writers documented Algeria's famines from diverse perspectives, including those of doctors, clergy, and historians, and for various motives. Some focused on economic aspects, others aimed to record history, critique France's weaknesses, or defend the colonial project. Noteworthy accounts include:

- **Father Burzet**, a member of the French Scientific Society and a priest in the town of Chebli in the Mitidja region, authored *History of Algeria's Disasters 1866-1867-1869*, which detailed the famines and epidemics that caused massive casualties. He noted that Algerians bore the brunt of these tragedies, describing the devastation visible along roads and burial pits².
- However, Burzet attempted to absolve the colonial authorities of responsibility, stating: "The Arabs did not resist the locusts; when asked why, they said that God sent them and He would remove them." In this statement, he shifted blame onto the Algerians, portraying them as passive and fatalistic, and thus intellectually and mentally inferior.
- **Spanish historian Juan Bautista Villar** explored new documents, including a significant memorandum sent by a Spanish settler, Joaquin Perez, who resided in Oran. In 1866,

¹ Moustapha Khayati, op.cit, p, 227.

² Fouad Kebdani, op.cit, p, 244.

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Perez wrote a confidential 14-page report to the Spanish authorities, highlighting the general conditions of Algeria that year. His report described the social and economic crises of the 1866 famine, detailing the rise in unemployment, spread of disease, deepening poverty, and mass migrations toward cities in search of food¹.

- **La Gazette de Madrid**, a Spanish newspaper, closely followed Algerian affairs and reported on the severe conditions in Algeria due to recurring famines. The Governor of Oran, in an interview with *La Voix d'Oran*, described the catastrophe as monumental, overburdening both the French government and the local population. He referred to it as the greatest tragedy of that time, emphasizing the plight of the destitute laborers².
- **Historian Bautista** dramatically depicted the famine's horrific impact on Algerians, noting that their lives were the tragic price of this catastrophe. After enduring decades of brutal French military campaigns, many Algerians were forced to flee to Morocco, Tunisia, and the Sahara, escaping the oppression and violence. Their suffering was further compounded by famine and widespread epidemics.

These accounts provide varied international perspectives on the Algerian famines, reflecting the complex motives and biases of foreign observers, some of whom sought to highlight the suffering under French colonial rule, while others, like Burzet, aimed to defend the colonial authorities.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, the study of French colonial policies in Algeria during the 19th century, particularly in relation to famines, highlights

¹ *ibid*,p,245.

² *ibid*,p,171.

the destructive impact of colonial rule on the lives of the local population. Famines that struck Algeria, such as the Great Famine of 1867–1868, serve as stark examples of the colonial system's failure to provide even the most basic humanitarian and healthcare assistance to the Algerian people. The French neglect was not merely a result of administrative shortcomings, but rather a reflection of colonial policies that prioritized the interests of European settlers at the expense of the suffering of the indigenous population. Despite some limited attempts at aid, the French response to these disasters was slow and ineffective, further exacerbating the health and humanitarian crises in the country,SO :

- French colonial policies significantly exacerbated the humanitarian situation in Algeria during the 19th century, particularly during famines, where the needs of the local population were ignored.
- The French response to famines and health crises was slow and ineffective, highlighting the failure to provide basic healthcare to the Algerian population while prioritizing the welfare of French settlers.
- The famines of the 19th century in Algeria were the result of multiple factors, including war, administrative corruption, and colonial policies that destroyed the local economy, deepening the suffering of the indigenous population.
- This historical period serves as a reminder of the importance of social and healthcare justice in any political system, underscoring the need to learn from past mistakes to avoid repeating such colonial policies in the present and future.
- Colonial policies left lasting scars on Algeria's healthcare system, and their impact is still felt today, highlighting the need for comprehensive health reforms even after independence.

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