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Prisoners Struggle During the Algerian War of Independence: Militant Activism of Mujahid Brahim Ramdane in Barberousse Prison as an Example

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Abstract:

To maintain communication between the revolutionary leadership and imprisoned mujahideen during the Algerian War of Independence, the National Liberation Front (FLN) developed a structured system to infiltrate and organize French colonial prisons through internally managed committees led by carefully selected members. This study aims to analyze the functioning of this system and its role in sustaining revolutionary action and political education within prison spaces.

Focusing on mujahid Brahim Ramdane as a case study, the research highlights his contribution to organizing and educating prisoners in Barberousse Prison, chosen for its symbolic significance in the history of the Algerian Revolution and the national struggle. Methodologically, the study relies on oral testimonies and the mujahid's personal diaries, obtained from his family. It argues that colonial prisons were effectively transformed into spaces of collective organization and ideological formation, reinforcing the continuity of the revolutionary movement.

Keywords: National Liberation Front (FLN) , Algerian War of Independence , French colonialism , Barberousse Prison , Militant activism.

Introduction:

The struggle in the prisons of French colonialism in Algeria formed an essential part of Algeria's history and its fights for independence, dignity, and sovereignty. Algerians who resisted French colonialism faced arrest and imprisonment from the nineteenth century until the country's independence in 1962. During this period, martyrs and freedom fighters endured harsh conditions

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and violations of their basic human rights in various prisons of French colonialism, including torture and inhumane treatment. Nevertheless, the struggle persisted within the prisons, where the prisoners organized various forms of resistance, solidarity, and struggle, aiming to preserve their identity, principles, and connection to the revolution and liberation.

Among the prominent figures in this struggle was the freedom fighter Brahim Ramdane, who led his fellow prisoners in the fight against injustice and colonialism under the direction of the National Liberation Front leadership. Thanks to his abundant knowledge, spirit of resistance, and sacrifices, both before and after the outbreak of the liberation revolution, he became a prominent figure in the nationalist movement. In particular, in the notorious Barberousse prison in the heart of the capital, Brahim Ramdane's prison cell became a battleground during his imprisonment between 1960 and 1962, where he continued to spread his message and affirm his principles and values. Despite the isolation and cruelty, his heart continued to beat with hope and determination, refusing to be a prisoner of injustice and tyranny.

The militant activism adopted by Algerians within the prisons of French colonialism is a research issue that requires further studies to expand the research scope, thoroughly examine its details, and analyze its effects on the course of the liberation revolution and its outcomes. In attempting to understand the aspects and dimensions of continuing the struggle within these prisons, and the features of the struggle adopted by the freedom fighter Brahim Ramdane in Barberousse prison, we pose the following problem: What approach did the freedom fighter Brahim Ramdane adopt, according to the instructions of the National Liberation Front, to enhance the spirit of struggle among the freedom fighters in Barberousse prison to resist French colonialism?

From this main question, the following sub-questions arise:

- How did the National Liberation Front succeed in turning prisons into schools for spreading knowledge and political awareness?
- What factors contributed to the emergence of Brahim Ramdane’s personality as a leader in the struggle?

- Why did the leadership of the National Liberation Front nominate him to participate in the management and education of prisoners in Barberousse prison?
- What values and knowledge did Brahim Ramdane disseminate among his comrades in Barberousse prison?

I. Brahim Ramdane's Early Childhood Starts and Academic Career Path

Brahim Ramdane had notable experiences during his upbringing and during his pre-revolutionary intellectual, educational, and social journeys. He was raised in the southern Algerian city of Ghardaia and received his early schooling at Relizane. Later on, he relocated to Guerrara city to continue his education. He attended the « Al-Islaah » School to further his studies, and he was actively involved in its management there. Due to his significant reformist and social actions as well as his opposition to French colonialism, he was repeatedly arrested and imprisoned. It did not, however, stop him from his activism and deeds, which acted as a spur to his participation in the liberation revolution.

I.1- Academic, Educational, and Social Journey Before the Revolution

Before the revolution, Brahim Ramdane son of Salah, who was born in 1918 in the southern Algerian city of Ghardaia, had a busy social and intellectual life. His father worked as a trader in the city of Relizane, where he started his schooling. He attended a Quranic school to study. He studied the Qur'an and Arabic in addition to attending a French private school, where he did exceptionally well academically. His educational journey in Relizane was filled with activity. One notable incident from his youth occurred during the visit of Sheikh Abdelhamid Ibn Badis to Relizane to inspect the reform movement in Algeria in 1932.[1] Brahim participated in a debate between « The Sword and the Pen », portraying the role of the sword, which impressed Sheikh Abdelhamid Ibn Badis and all those present.

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1 . Mohamed Bousaada, The Role of Mzab in the Algerian National Movement and the Algerian Revolution (1930-1962), Ph.D. dissertation submitted to obtain the Doctorate Degree in History, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Shahid Hamma Lakhdar, El Oued (Algeria), 2019/2020, p. 211.

After that, he continued his education at the "Al-Shabab" Institute in Guerrara, where eminent academic Sheikh Bayoud served as one of his prominent lecturers.

Brahim made a name for himself through his social and cultural involvement, leading the « Al-Shabab » Association that Sheikh Addoune formed. Students in this society competed in poetry, lectures, and oratory, and their thoughts and opinions were published in the « Al-Shabab » newspaper (Figure 1). Ibrahim participated in speeches, debates, poetry writings, and the authoring of social and political publications.

Brahim overcame social and intellectual barriers to excel in his academic and artistic endeavors as well as his political involvement prior to the revolution. He actively participated in the "Al-Shabab" Association, enhancing the political and cultural discourse and aiding in the development of the cultures of his peers.

Before the revolution, Brahim Ramdane developed a solid academic, intellectual, and social profile that combined religious and modern education with active cultural and civic engagement. This formative background shaped his intellectual awareness, leadership qualities, and early commitment to social and political issues.

I.2- Engagement in Educational and Reform Endeavors

In 1939, Brahim Ramdane made a substantial contribution to education at the « Al-Islaah »[2] School in Ghardaia. He was a gifted teacher who took a unique approach to teaching history, enthralling his students and inspiring them with a love of the past as well as a zeal for justice and the truth. He was well-known for his captivating and dynamic teaching style, which had a long-lasting effect on his

2 . The « Al-Islaah » Association in Ghardaia was established in the year 1346 AH / April 14, 1928 CE. After a long struggle, the French authorities approved it on December 24, 1928. Its first president was Sheikh Saleh Babeker. Subsequently, the « Al-Islaah » School was founded in 1932, with classes commencing in November of the same year under the guidance of a select group of scholars and teachers. The association continues its educational efforts to this day.

pupils. They looked forward to his lessons and respected his teaching strategies.[3]

Apart from his pursuit of education, Brahim Ramdane also held several administrative positions, including membership in committees that in 1945 were tasked with standardizing educational initiatives throughout the Mzab area (Picture 1). As a result, internal policies were established and a thorough curriculum for primary schools was developed.[4]

Brahim Ramdane also actively promoted girls' education by overcoming social impediments and arranging talks to highlight its significance. The effective start of girls' education on December 10, 1950, was the result of this work. [5]

Brahim Ramdane had a significant role in a number of social and political projects outside of education. In his capacity as secretary-general of the Al-Islaah Association's administrative council, he actively participated in processes that led to the community's betterment (Picture 2). In addition, he promoted clan participation in social change by using his power to oppose detrimental traditions and impose reforms.

Among his other social contributions was his election, through secret balloting in December 1948, as the president of the first administrative council of the Association of Graduates of Sheikh Bayoud Institute, branch of Ghardaia (Figure 2).

This association was one of the fruits of intellectual endeavors in the field of reform, and among its objectives was to enlighten students religiously, politically, and socially. This objective had a noticeable impact on intellectual maturity, political

3 . Ramdane Mustapha, Brahim Ramdane: Man of Knowledge and Struggle, Dar Nouzhat Al-Albab for Publishing and Distribution, Ghardaia (Algeria), 2018, p. 67.

4 . Bakelli Abderrahmane, The Reform Movement in Generation 1918-1948, 2nd Edition, Al-Bakri Library, Ghardaia (Algeria), 2004.

5 . El-Haj Said Youssef Ben Bekir, History of the Beni Mzab: A Socio-Economic and Political Study, 2nd Edition, Al-Matbaa Al-Arabiya, Ghardaia (Algeria), 2006, p. 279.

awareness, and literary formation, loosening the grip imposed by French colonization on Islamic Arabic education.[6]

Ramdane was dedicated to bringing about social change even outside of the classroom. He showed his commitment to promoting social consciousness and patriotism during the colonial era by being a founding member of the scout organization in southern Algeria. In addition, he was instrumental in the founding of the covert group « The Unknown Soldier », which sought to oppose French colonial practices and address social and political issues. [7]

Brahim Ramdane persisted in his activism until the end of the colonial era, despite being imprisoned and having his travel limitations enforced by the French government. He promoted social change and political awareness.

II. Brahim Ramdane's Participation in National Liberation Movement

Initially, armed revolutionary activity in the desert areas was primarily focused on providing material and moral support to the northern regions. This involved collecting weapons, supplies, and financial contributions and sending them there due to the challenges of conducting military operations in the barren desert regions. The area became semi-isolated, and the only means of receiving news was through radio and newspapers, leading to a complete communication cutoff with the revolution's leadership.[8]

This situation prompted the revolution's leadership to address the issue and recognize the danger of leaving the desert without military structuring from the outset, similar to other regions of the country. Consequently, they organized the Soummam

6. Aissa Hammou Mohamed Al-Nouri, The Role of the Mezabites in the History of Algeria: Past and Present, Volume One, Dar Al-Baath, Constantine (Algeria), 1982, p. 393.

7 . Ramdane Mustapha, op.cit. pp. 121-154.

8 . Dahma Bakker, Revolutionary Activity in the Ghardaia District in Confrontation with French Colonialism in Algeria (1956-1962), Ph.D. thesis submitted to obtain the Doctorate Degree in Modern and Contemporary History, University of Ghardaia (Algeria), 2019/2020, p. 78.

Conference for the Sahara region, establishing a separate sixth province (wilaya).[9]

II.1- Circumstances of Engagement in Revolutionary Work

Following the outbreak of the liberation revolution, the colonial authorities regarded Brahim Ramdane as a threat to their stability and control, subjecting him to continuous persecution and harassment. Nevertheless, he remained steadfast in his principles and values, persisting in his struggle for freedom and national dignity. This unwavering commitment made him a symbol of resilience and determination against colonialism and oppression.

He was constantly under surveillance by the colonial authorities, who received reports about his movements and activities. Among the reports obtained by the researcher was a message addressed by the Bashagha to the colonial administration on July 17, 1956, containing information about Brahim Ramdane's tasks and activities, in response to an inquiry from the colonial authority (Figure 3).

In the meantime, the first FLN congress took place in August–September 1956 in the Soummam valley, situated between Great and Little Kabylie, bringing together the FLN leadership to assess the progress of the war and its objectives. Algeria was divided into six autonomous zones (wilayas), each overseen by guerrilla commanders who later played pivotal roles in the country's affairs

The congress also formulated a written platform outlining the aims and objectives of the war and established the National Council for the Algerian Revolution (Conseil National de la Révolution Algérienne) and the Committee of Coordination and Enforcement (Comité de Coordination et d'Exécution), the latter serving as the executive branch of the FLN.[10]

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9 . Bouaziz Yahia, Revolutions of the Twentieth Century, Dar Al-Basa'ir for Publishing and Distribution, Algeria, 2009, p. 180.

10 . L. Carl Brown, Salah Zaimeche. The Algerian War of Independence. Encyclopaedia Britannica. Last Updated: Apr 5, 2024. https://www.britannica.com/event/Algerian-War

In those circumstances, Brahim Ramdane began initiated revolutionary planning with his colleagues in Al-Islaah Association, namely Ali Nasri and Saleh Babeker. They established connections with Sheikh Mohamed ben Omar Bouhmida, who opposed both the French administration and the proselytizing movement in the region. Sharing numerous reformist views related to revolutionary activities, they reached a consenus on the imperative of liberating the country from colonialism. practices, agreed on the issue of liberating the country from colonialism, They aligned on goals and objectives, emphasizing unity among all the inhabitants of Ghardaia, to ensure Algerian participation in determining its destiny.

In 1956, a revolutionary group in Ghardaia was formed under the leadership of the mujahid Ziane Achour. Prior to the outbreak of the armed revolution, martyr Mustafa Ben Boulaïd tasked him with overseeing the desert region and establishing revolutionary cells, one of which was led politically by Mohamed Ben Omar Bouhmida. Brahim Ramdane and his associates in « Al-Islaah » association were actively involved in this revolutionary cell. The cell successfully raised awareness among citizens to support the armed revolution, provided moral backing, and prepared strategic centers for positioning the army.

These centers operated in coordination with Sheikh Ziane Achour's revolutionary organization. However, internal strife within the organization led to challenges. Following an eight-day strike in 1957, the enemy intervened and apprehended numerous leaders of the revolutionary cells in Guerrara and Ghardaia regions. Sheikh Mohamed Ben Omar Bouhmeda was detained in January 1957 and subjected to various forms of torture while in prison. Additionally, Ali Nasri, Saleh Babeker, and Brahim Ramdane were arrested and transferred to Lagouat prison, where they remained from February 1957 to July of the same year (Picture 3).[11]

II.2- Return to Revolutionary Activity

11. Oulad Said Ahmed, Mohamed Ben Omar Bouhmeida and His National Efforts: His Message from Baraki to the People of Ghardaia as an Example, Algerian Journal of Historical Research and Studies, Volume 03, Issue 06, December 2017, pp. 242-257.

After his release in the summer of 1957, Brahim Ramdane sought to reconnect with the revolutionaries in the region, always eager to push forward. He possessed an extraordinary ability to overcome obstacles in his path. He initiated mobilization efforts, employing various means to collaborate with fellow revolutionaries who were bound together by a strict system, fostering intense enthusiasm that transcended barriers. Consequently, in 1958, an organizational structure for the revolution was established in the region. Its foundation lay in the revolutionary councils associated with division (El-Kissma) 59, the third area (Nahiya) within the third region (Mintaqa) of the sixth wilaya. Subsequently, the Revolutionary Municipal Council of Ghardaia city was founded by the first political sergeant of the revolution (El-Arif El Awal), El Zubairi El Zubairi. This council comprised five members, adhering to the provisions of the Soummam Conference. Brahim Ramdane, appointed by the revolution's leadership, assumed the role of its president, alongside:[12]

- Mujahid Ibrahim Dadiouameur (Finance Office Manager), who was a close companion of Bahim Ramdane in teaching at « Al-Islaah » School.
- Mujahid Mohammed Ramdane (Trade Office Manager), who was arrested after the Battle of Qasr Melika near Ghardaia on October 6, 1961, and remained imprisoned until the ceasefire.
- Mujahid Yahya Houache (Reforms Office Manager).
- Mujahid Hammou Houdjedj (Police Manager).

When Brahim Ramdane and Brahim Daddiouameur were imprisoned in 1960 - as will be mentioned - they were succeeded by the mujahideen Abbouna Aissa and Babeker Hammou. At that, the presidency of the council was entrusted to the mujahid Hammou Houdjedj until independence.

It should be noted that the municipal councils of the revolution operate, as per the decisions of the Soummam Conference, under the leadership of the first political sergeant. He establishes, activates, supervises, and continuously directs them,

12 . Houdjedje Kacem, The Municipal Council of the Revolution in Central Ghardaia (1958–1962): A Monographic Profile of a Revolutionary Case, Al-Afaq Press, Beni Isguen–Ghardaia, January 2026, p. 64.

with each member assigned specific duties. Ongoing communication was maintained between the first political sergeant (El-Zubair) and this council, as evidenced by several correspondences between the two parties. These documents are still preserved to this day by some families of these mujahideen.[13]

The Municipal Council of the Revolution stands as a significant entity that arose during the era of the liberation revolution. Its primary role lies in organizing local affairs within villages and cities, channeling efforts towards bolstering the revolutionary cause, and countering French occupation. Additionally, it is answerable to vertical structures such as division, district, region, and wilaya councils. The selection of its members hinges on consultation, taking into account individual's social, behavioral, and ethical standing.[14]

II.3- A Battle Before Independence's Last Arrest

The military actions of the National Liberation Army in Ghardaia's regions were responses to colonial propaganda, affirming the inhabitants' desire for independence. These actions included battles, clashes, ambushes, and sieges between 1958 and 1962. The Liberation Army conducted numerous operations against the French enemy, totaling 28 battles, 24 clashes, 11 ambushes, 11 attacks, and 90 fedayeen operations. Supplying the army was challenging due to desert conditions, requiring transportation via camels, mules, and donkeys. Despite difficulties, the army persisted in its efforts, facing ambushes and engaging in fierce battles against the colonial army.[15]

Supplying the army with provisions collected by the municipal councils of the revolution proved challenging due to the harsh natural conditions of the desert. Transportation primarily

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13 . The Provincial Secretariat of the National Organization of Mujahideen for Ghardaia, Report on the Base Organizations of the Liberation Revolution in Ghardaia Province, Presented at the Sixth Historical Provincial Forum Held in Ghardaia, December 1st, 2nd, and 3rd, 1993, pp. 3-11.

14. Darwaz Al-Hadi, The Sixth Historical Province: Organization and Events (1954-1962), Dar Huma, Algeria, 2009, pp. 62-64.

15 . The Provincial Secretariat of the National Organization of Mujahideen for Ghardaia,op.cit, p. 13.

relied on camels, mules, and donkeys, necessitating traversing vast distances along barren desert routes while under the watchful eyes of aerial patrol and subjected to surprise inspections. This endeavor demanded individuals familiar with the terrain and unwavering vigilance.

In the Battle of El Besbasa near Ghardaia, soldiers, accompanied by their leader, would descend from the mountains monthly. They convened sessions with the Revolutionary Municipal Council to receive updates and directives from the leadership. Subsequently, they gathered the funds, clothing, and provisions amassed for them, preparing to depart under the cover of night before dawn broke.

In early 1960, members of the Revolutionary Municipal Council readied themselves to collect all the provisions, clothing, blankets, and weapons stored in hiding places in the forests of Brahim Daddiouameur in « Ahbas » and in the hideout located in the forest of Brahim Ramdane in « Bouchemjane ». Before dawn, soldiers loaded their camels, mules, and donkeys with the gathered supplies, embarking on the route through Oued Mzab.

After they left the area of Dahya El Besbasa, they were ambushed by a colonial army patrol, sparking a fierce battle between the mujahideen and the well-equiped colonial forces, with vehicles and aircraft hovering above them, amidst the barren desert landscape. Leading this battle was the first political sergeant Aissa Amieur, alongside his soldiers.[16]

During this encounter, the French forces acquired documents that enabled them to capture the mujahideen Brahim Ramdane and Brahim Daddi Ouameur.

III. Imprisonment in Barberousse Prison and Continued Revolutionary Activity

In the historical context, individuals who offer themselves as sacrifices for their nation against colonialism often encounter various forms of harassment, surveillance, arrests, torture, and imprisonment. Embracing this path of sacrifice for the nation,

16 . The Provincial Secretariat of the National Organization of Mujahideen for Ghardaia, Report on the Events of the Liberation Revolution in Ghardaia Province for the Period between 1959 and 1962, Third Provincial Conference, October 9th, Ghardaia, 1986, pp. 59-72.

Brahim Ramdane became accustomed to a life of incarceration. Since the era of the reform movement in the 1940s and early 1950s, he was intermittently subjected to arrest until his imprisonment in Barberousse Prison, which he transformed into a stronghold for continuing his revolutionary and educational endeavors.

III.1- FLN's Revolutionary Organization in Barberousse Prison

Following interrogation and torture in Ghardaia and Lagouat, Brahim Ramdane was transferred to Blida Prison. Among his fellow inmates were men of various ages hailing from the regions of Ghardaia, El M'enea, and Laghouat. Among them were his comrade in the Revolutionary Council, Brahim Daddiouameur (Picture 5), alongside others such as Metiaz Elhajj from Ksar Beni Yezguen, and Daoudi Mohamed Sghir from Ksar Bounoura.

The mujahid Brahim Ramdane, along with a group of his fellow mujahideen, faced trial at the Permanent Court of the French Armed Forces in the northern region of Algeria, on July 10, 1961. Various sentences were handed down, including several years of imprisonment and fines, on charges of endangering national security and participating in the revolution (rebellion movement) during the years 1958, 1959, and 1960 as outlined in document (Figure 4). Additionally, they were accused of providing information, weapons, and supplies to the mujahideen (insurgents), as stated in the same document.

The Barberousse Prison was erected during the era of French rule, constructed atop the site of a former Turkish fortification situated above the Casbah of Algiers (Picture 4). Throughout the Algerian War of 1954-62, numerous FLN activists and fighters found themselves incarcerated within its walls, with 58 individuals ultimately meeting their demise by guillotine in the main courtyard. The colonial authorities strategically utilized the name "Barberousse" to evoke fear in the hearts of Algerians at large and revolutionaries in particular, as it became emblematic of the

psychological and physical torment inflicted upon the mujahideen by the colonial power.[17]

The hardship endured by prisoners within the confines of the prison only served to sharpen to resolve of revolutionaries, fueling their determination to persevere until achieving independence. Within these walls, France conducted its initial executions by guillotine, including that of the martyr Ahmed Zabana. Moreover, it was within these confines that Moufdi Zakaria, the poet of the revolution, penned some of his most stirring verses of resistance, including the national anthem « Qassaman », from his cell number 69. Within this same context, martyrs and mujahideen regarded prison as a bastion of the continuation of their struggle and resistance, undeterred by the stringent measures imposed by the colonial administration to suppress their nationalist fervor.

To bolster the psychological and moral resilience of the mujahideen held in captivity and to uphold the connection of the revolution with them, the leadership of the National Liberation Front ingeniously infiltrated the French prison system.

They organized and structured it according to an ascending pyramid system, characterized by utmost secrecy across its various tiers. This leadership diligently activated this system within prisons by establishing clandestine cells that maintained communication with the Front's network outside the confines of the prisons. Initially, the activists prioritized strengthening fraternal bonds among political prisoners and those incarcerated for common law offenses.[18]

This system was implemented through the establishment of a prison management committee, responsible for appointing a prison leader, as well as specialized committees comprised of prominent individuals within each cell. Their duties encompassed maintaining vigilant oversight and assessing the circumstances of each prisoner to guard against colonial plots. Additionally, obedience committees

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17 . APS, Serkadji Prison in the capital: A historical landmark bearing witness to the crimes of French colonialism." Published on Sunday, June 21, 2020. Available at the link: https://www.aps.dz/ar/regions/88550-2020-06-21-14-26-43

18 . Ahcen Boumali, Recruitment and Mass Mobilization Tools During the Algerian Liberation Revolution (1954-1962), Dar Al-Ma'arif, Algeria, 2010, p. 382.

were established to enforce discipline and any instances of rebellion against the internal structure.[19]

The National Liberation Front was determined to establish an education committee within each colonial prison, comprising detainees possessing expertise in medicine, Quran memorization, Islamic jurisprudence, Arabic proficiency, and historical knowledge.

During that period, many of the detainees were illiterate due to the marginalization policies imposed by colonialism on the Algerian populace, particularly in rural and mountains regions. The education committees sanctioned by the National Liberation Front empowered illiterate mujahideen in prisons to attain adequate education levels, thereby equipping them for a post-independence life free from obstacles.

This cultural and educational activities within prisons served as a continuation of the struggle and resistance. Every intellectual who attained a degree of knowledge and expertise refused to yield to idleness or seek comfort. It became their duty to organize the detainees based to their levels of education and then initiate educational programs. Consequently, everyone played a role: doctors and pharmacists delivered lectures on medicine and first aid, politicians translated newspapers entering the prison, and teachers provided lessons and religious guidance, transforming prisons into bastions of culture.[20]

III.2- Brahim Ramdane's Struggle in Barberousse Prison

When the leadership of the National Liberation Front learned about the fervent spirit of Brahim Ramdane from veteran prisoners at Barberousse Prison such as Mustafa Fettal and Zerzour,

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19 . Boualsafaf Abdelkrim, The Algerian War and the French Army Centers for Repression and Torture in the State of Setif (1954-1962), Dar Al-Baath for Printing and Publishing, Constantine, (n.d.), p. 149.

20 . Azzwi Mohamed Tahar, The Role of Civil Affairs Officers in Psychological Warfare Inside Prisons During the Great Liberation Revolution, First November Magazine, National Organization of Mujahideen, Algeria, Issues 88-89, January-February 1988, p. 37.

they appointed him to the prison management committee alongside them. In addition to his contributions to the education committee, where he clarified the rules of the Arabic language and read newspapers and books whenever possible, Brahim played a pivotal leading role in organizing and uplifting the morale of the imprisoned youth.

He instructed them ablution and prayer, and trained them in singing national anthems. Whenever they feared one of their comrades was facing execution, they would unite in chanting "Allahu Akbar" and collectively singing the anthem of martyrs.

During a meeting with the sons of mujahid Brahim Ramdane in Algiers, the mujahid Zubeir Boutaldja, a fellow prisoner from Barberousse who was incarcerated at the age of 17 for a martyrdom operation and sentenced to twenty years in prison, expressed, "Mujahid Brahim Ramdane was truly an inspiration for us during difficult times. He encouraged and motivated us, teaching us prayers and instilling in us the hope of independence (...) We eagerly awaited both individual and group meetings with him."

Similarly, during the same meeting, mujahid Boualem Chérif remarked, "When Brahim Ramdane joined us, he uplifted the spirits of the prisoners and infused our hearts with piety, following various conversations some of us had engaged in. He, may God have mercy on him, arrived and awakened us to vigilance. He began to teach us, offering lessons and assuming the roles of teacher, imam, and preacher in every crisis we faced in prison (…) We spent our allotted time in prison with him, enduring with remarkable patience. For some, it was fortunate that their imprisonment was prolonged, allowing them to benefit from his wisdom, literary prowess, and noble character. With him, we felt as though we were one family."

Mujahid Zerzour commented, "He epitomized vitality and dynamism among his fellow prisoners. He instructed and educated, memorized the Quran, and guided those negligent in prayer. The mujahideen attested to his resilience in in adversity, his mockery the colonizers, his optimism for Algeria's future, and his unwavering trust in God in all circumstances."[21]

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21 . Ramdane Mustapha, op.cit, pp. 233-234.

As the prisoners persistently demanded their political rights through strikes and protests, Brahim Ramdane gradually initiated engaging lessons, evolving into an outstanding teacher. In his discussions with fellow prisoners and throughout his lessons, he frequently referenced verses from Quran and noble hadiths, showcasing his commitment to preserving classical Arabic poetry.

Brahim Ramdane was talented in the art of theater since his student days, and he delved deeper into it during the « Al-Islaah » period. He made theater a platform for education, inviting to goodness, lofty ideals, and high morals. In prison, he formed a group of young men and adults in theatrical performance, presenting several purposeful plays despite the limited resources available to them (Picture 6).

Conclusion :

The National Liberation Front succeeded in infiltrating and organizing the French prison system when it took the initiative to establish committees for constant vigilance, management, and educational committees to elevate the level of education among detainees and prepare them for life after independence. These cultural and educational efforts within prisons contributed to motivating the militant activism, struggle and developing knowledge. These committees inside the prisons carried a message of hope, sacrifice, and the revolution's commitment to its martyrs and prisoners, standing by their side. They proved that determination and resolve can overcome any constraints or violations.

Inside the Barberousse prison, the freedom fighter Brahim Ramdane was not limited to mere resilience and resistance against French oppression, but he saw it as an opportunity to spread knowledge and education, and to promote religious and cultural values among his Algerian fellow prisoners. He tirelessly held religious lessons and taught the Quran, making him a beacon of light and knowledge in an environment of darkness and oppression.

Those lessons were not just a source of knowledge but also an expression of his firm determination to strengthen the cultural and religious identity of his comrades and empower them to

withstand the harsh challenges they faced. Thanks to this dedication and devotion, the cells of Barberousse became not only a place of oppression but also a platform for spreading knowledge and education, and a source of hope and defiance in the face of injustice and arbitrariness.

Illustrations :

Figure 1 : This image shows an issue of the “Al-Shabab” magazine featuring contributions by Brahim Ramdane, reflecting his cultural leadership within the association and its activities in poetry, lectures, and oratory.



الشباب

شباب قنع لا خير فيهم ، وبورك في الشباب الطامحين

نشرة علمية ادبية اجتماعية انتقادية تصدرها نخبة من الشبيبة المتعلمة صحيحة يوم الخميس من كل اسبوع

بسم الله مجراها و مرساها

الله ربي لفقوه رحيم

قرآن كريم

المدير المسير

الشيخ عبد الحميد بن باديس — الشيخ العربي التبسي

يوم الخميس ٥ صفر سنة ١٣٥٦ — Ech - Chabab — الموافق ليوم ٢٩ ابريل سنة ١٩٣٧

محتويات هذا العدد

ميزاب يخط خطواته الاولى — لرمضان ابراهيم

وادي ميزاب ج معركة الحياة — لاحمد بن

الى الرجيف الاعلى — للدبوزي

دولة العاشة تتأثرت الا — لبوقاعو

امة بلا تاريخ ليست جديرة — لبومدين الطاه

تتمة مقتطفات

ميزاب يخط خطواته الأولى

لرمضان ابراهيم

هاهو ميزاب العزيز يخط خطوه الله الاولى ج سبيل النهوض والحياة .

انظره — يا بشراي — كيف به أن يسلك سبل المعالي الذي نصب ابناؤه الذين كرهوا مض العيش والأوائل اولئك الابناء الذين يحزنهم ان يروا الامم تسعى — وتنهض، وامتهم تحجم وتتركم ، اولئك الذين لا حياة لهم الا بحياة امتهم ، ولا عز يعزون به الا بعزها.

وكيف والله سبحانه — اذا اراد احياء امة ابقاظ شعب ، او رجع ولى من الحضيض الجهل الى اوج الحياة ومن هوة الذل الى اعلى السعادة — فيض لها رجالا يكرهون حياة الذل ويأبون ذل الحياة ، رجالا يحبون عز الممات ويعرفون لموت العز والحياة ، رجالا يتجرعون كؤوس الشقاء ليسيغوا امتهم اكؤس الهناء .

لعمري ان هؤلاء الرجال كالرجال الاان الشمائم هي التي

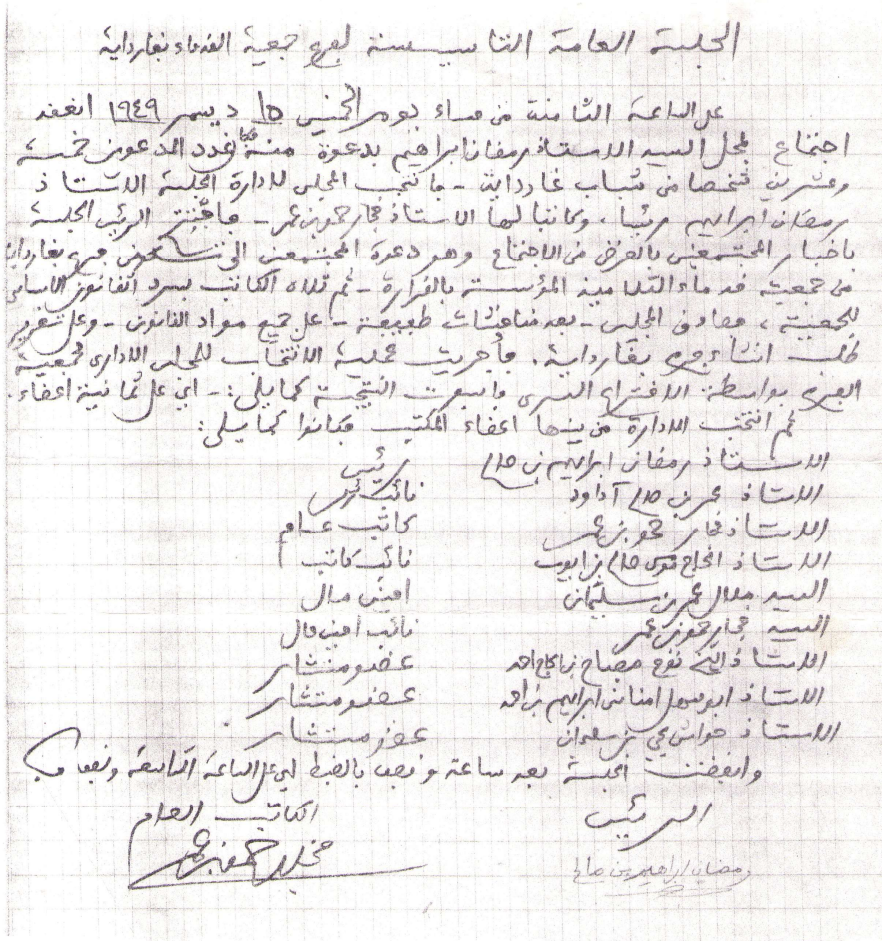
Picture 1 : Brahim Ramdane third stands from the right as a member of the commitee unifying education programms in Mzab Valley. (Berriane city, August 1945)



Picture 2 : Brahim Ramdane played an important role in several social and political initiatives beyond the field of education. As secretary-general of the administrative council of the Al-Islaah Association, he actively contributed to efforts aimed at improving the community. In this picture : The board of directors of « Al-Islaah » association. (Ghardaia, December 1956)



Figure 2 : Among his social contributions was his election in December 1948, through a secret ballot, as president of the first administrative council of the Ghardaia branch of the Association of Graduates of Sheikh Bayoud Institute.



الجلسة العامة التأسيسية لفرع جمعية العلماء بغارداية

على الساعة الثامنة من مساء يوم الخميس 15 ديسمبر 1949 انعقد اجتماع بمحل السيد الاستاذ رمضان ابراهيم بدعوة منه لفيف الدعوة خمسة وعشرين شخصا من شباب غارداية - جانب المجلس للادارة الجلسة الاستاذ رمضان ابراهيم رئيسا، وكاتبا لها الاستاذ قجار حمو بن عمر - فاعلنت الرئيس الجلسة باخبار المجتمعين بالغرض من الاجتماع وهو دعوة المجتمعين الى تأسيس فرع بغارداية من جمعية علماء السنة المحمدية المؤسسة بالقرارة - ثم تلاه الكاتب فصل القانون الاساسي للجمعية، فصادق المجلس - بعد مناقشات طبيعية - على جميع مواد القانون - وعلى تعريب كلمة انا فرع بغارداية. فأجريت عملية الانتخاب للمجلس الاداري لفرع الجمعية العربي بواسطة الاقتراع السري وانبعثت النتيجة كما يلي: - اني على ما نيبة اعضاء.

ثم انتخب الادارة من بينها اعضاء المكتب فكانوا كما يلي:

الاستاذ رمضان ابراهيم بن الحاج	رئيس
الاستاذ عمر بن الحاج آداود	نائب رئيس
الاستاذ قجار حمو بن عمر	كاتب عام
الاستاذ الحاج قدور بن الحاج بن ابويت	نائب كاتب
السيد بلال عمر بن سليمان	امين مال
السيد قجار حمو بن عمر	نائب امين مال
الاستاذ الذي نفوح مصباح بن الحاج احمد	عضو مستشار
الاستاذ ابو يعقوب امانس ابراهيم بن احمد	عضو مستشار
الاستاذ حواس يحي بن سعدان	عضو مستشار

وانفضت الجلسة بعد ساعة ونصف بالضبط اي على الساعة التاسعة ونصف

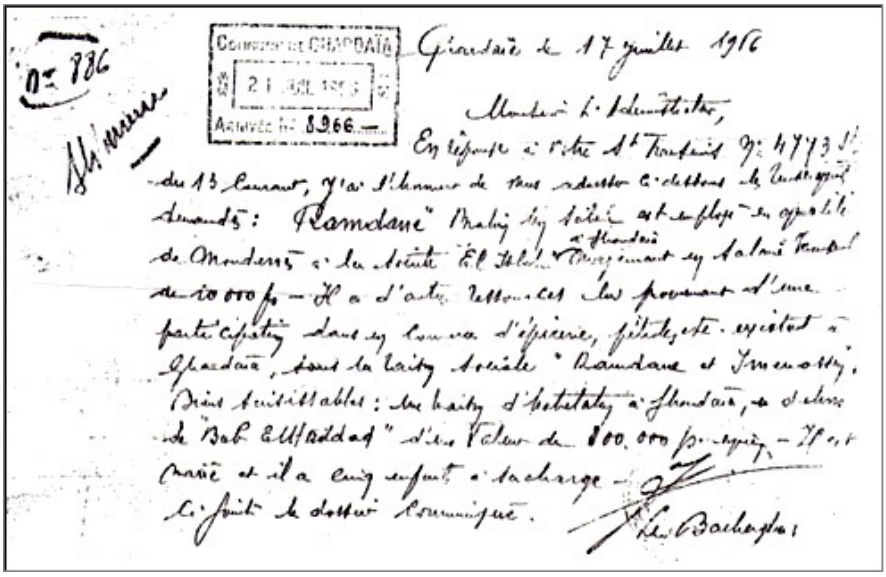
الرئيس

رمضان ابراهيم بن الحاج

الكاتب العام

قجار حمو بن عمر

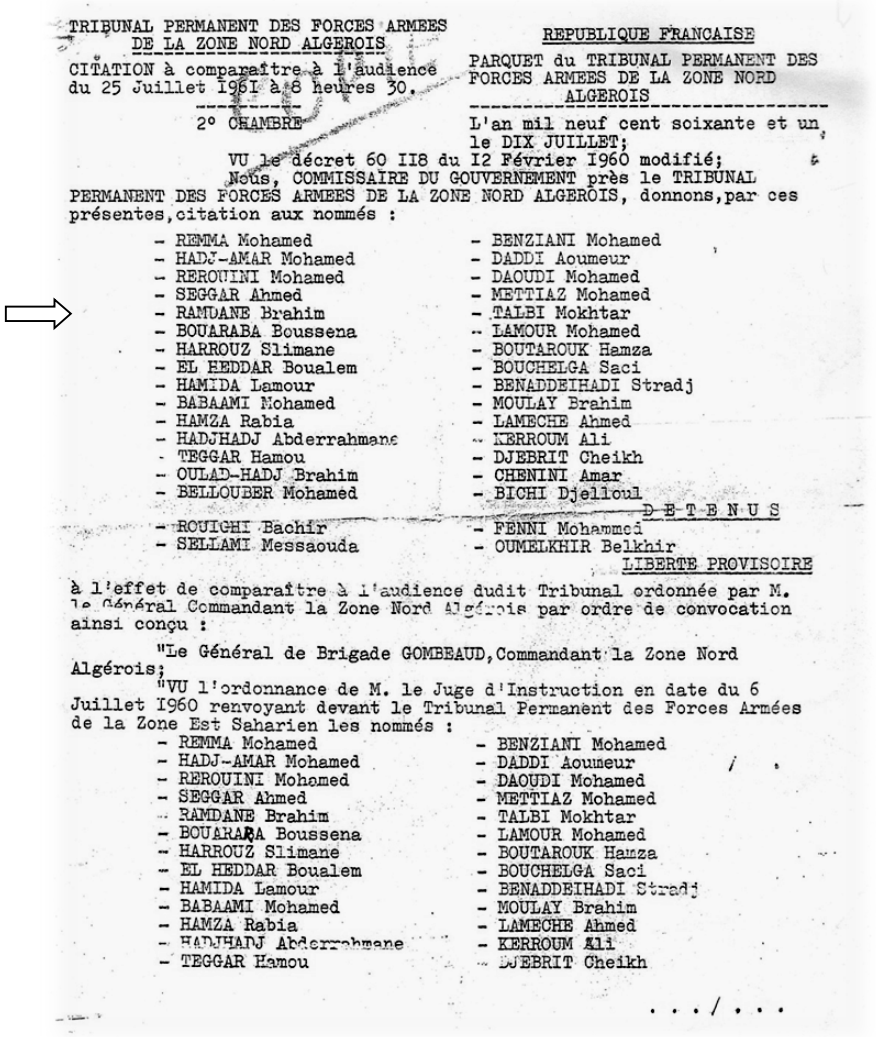
Figure 3 : Bachagha's message to the colonial administration includes information about Brahim Ramdane in response to colonial authorities' request (dated in Ghardaia on July 17, 1956).



Picture 3 : Brahim Ramdane, Ali Nasri, and Saleh Babeker, from right to left, mujahideen and leading figures of the Reform Association Al-Islah in Ghardaia, who were arrested and transferred to Laghouat prison, where they were held from February to July 1957.



Figure 4 : List of the names of the imprisoned militants who were tried by the Permanent Court of the French Armed Forces in the Northern Algerian region and transferred to Barberousse Prison.



TRIBUNAL PERMANENT DES FORCES ARMEES
DE LA ZONE NORD ALGEROIS

CITATION à comparaître à l'audience du 25 Juillet 1961 à 8 heures 30.

2° CHAMBRE

REPUBLIQUE FRANCAISE

PARQUET du TRIBUNAL PERMANENT DES FORCES ARMEES DE LA ZONE NORD ALGEROIS

L'an mil neuf cent soixante et un le DIX JUILLET;

VU le décret 60 II8 du I2 Février I960 modifié;

Nous, COMMISSAIRE DU GOUVERNEMENT près le TRIBUNAL PERMANENT DES FORCES ARMEES DE LA ZONE NORD ALGEROIS, donnons, par ces présentes, citation aux nommés :

- REMMA Mohamed
- HADJ-AMAR Mohamed
- REROUINI Mohamed
- SEGGAR Ahmed
- RAMDANE Brahim
- BOUARABA Boussena
- HARROUZ Slimane
- EL HEDDAR Boualem
- HAMIDA Lamour
- BABAAMI Mohamed
- HAMZA Rabia
- HADJHADJ Abderrahmane
- TEGGAR Hamou
- OULAD-HADJ Brahim
- BELLOUBER Mohamed
- BENZIANI Mohamed
- DADDI Aoumeur
- DAOUDI Mohamed
- METTIAZ Mohamed
- TALBI Mokhtar
- LAMOUR Mohamed
- BOUTAROUK Hamza
- BOUCHELGA Saci
- BENADDEIHADI Stradj
- MOULAY Brahim
- LAMECHE Ahmed
- KERROUM Ali
- DJEBRIT Cheikh
- CHENINI Amar
- BICHI Djelloul

D E T E N U S

- ROUIGHI Bachir
- SELLAMI Messaouda
- FENNI Mohammed
- OUMELKHIR Belkhir

LIBERTE PROVISOIRE

à l'effet de comparaître à l'audience dudit Tribunal ordonnée par M. le Général Commandant la Zone Nord Algérois par ordre de convocation ainsi conçu :

"Le Général de Brigade GOMBEAUD, Commandant la Zone Nord Algérois;

"VU l'ordonnance de M. le Juge d'Instruction en date du 6 Juillet I960 renvoyant devant le Tribunal Permanent des Forces Armées de la Zone Est Saharien les nommés :

- REMMA Mohamed
- HADJ-AMAR Mohamed
- REROUINI Mohamed
- SEGGAR Ahmed
- RAMDANE Brahim
- BOUARABA Boussena
- HARROUZ Slimane
- EL HEDDAR Boualem
- HAMIDA Lamour
- BABAAMI Mohamed
- HAMZA Rabia
- HADJHADJ Abderrahmane
- TEGGAR Hamou
- BENZIANI Mohamed
- DADDI Aoumeur
- DAOUDI Mohamed
- METTIAZ Mohamed
- TALBI Mokhtar
- LAMOUR Mohamed
- BOUTAROUK Hamza
- BOUCHELGA Saci
- BENADDEIHADI Stradj
- MOULAY Brahim
- LAMECHE Ahmed
- KERROUM Ali
- DJEBRIT Cheikh

. . . / . . .

- 2 -

- OULAD-HADJ Brahim
- BELLOUBER Mohamed
- ROUIGHI Bachir
- SELLAMI Messaouda
- CHENINI Amar
- BICHI Djelloul
- FENNI Mohammed
- OUMELKHIR Belkhir

DETENUS LIBERTE PROVISOIRE,

accusés d'ATTEINTE A L'INTEGRITE DU TERRITOIRE NATIONAL.

"VU l'arrêt de la Cour de Cassation en date du 3 Mai I96I renvoyant l'affaire et les accusés devant le Tribunal Permanent des Forces Armées de la Zone Nord Algérois;

"VU l'article 49 du décret 60 II8 du I2 Février I960;

"ORDONNE que le Tribunal Permanent des Forces Armées de la Zone Nord Algérois, appelé à statuer sur les faits imputés aux susnommés, sera convoqué pour le 25 Juillet I96I à 8 heures 30.

"Fait au Quartier Général à S.P. 89.280/AFN,
le 6 Juillet I96I.
Signé : GOMBEAUD."

et de s'y entendre juger sur les faits de :

ATTEINTE A L'INTEGRITE DU TERRITOIRE NATIONAL : pour avoir, dans le courant des années 1958, 1959 et 1960, en tout cas postérieurement au 30 Octobre I954, dans les régions de GHARDAIA et d'EL GOLEA, entrepris, en participant à l'activité clandestine en faveur de la rebellion, en fournissant des renseignements, des armes et du ravitaillement aux rebelles, de porter atteinte à l'intégrité du territoire national ou de soustraire à l'autorité de la France une partie des territoires sur lesquels cette autorité s'exerce.

Faits qui leur sont reprochés et qui sont prévus et punis par l'article 88 du Code Pénal ainsi conçu :

Art. 88 : Quiconque aura entrepris par quelque moyen que ce soit de porter atteinte à l'intégrité du territoire national ou de soustraire à l'autorité de la France une partie des territoires sur lesquels cette autorité s'exerce sera puni d'un emprisonnement de un à dix ans et d'une amende de 3.000 à 70.000 N.F. ..../.

Dont lecture textuelle leur a été donnée.

Les prévenons en outre :

I.- qu'ils doivent aviser d'urgence les défenseurs qu'ils ont choisi;

2.- que les témoins que nous assignons contre eux sont : NEANT;

3.- que M. le Président dudit Tribunal leur a désigné d'office, à chacun d'eux, un défenseur, les avertissant toutefois qu'ils pourront en choisir d'autres jusqu'au moment de l'ouverture des débats, mais que, sauf autorisation du Président, et en vertu de l'article 42 du décret 60 II8 du I2 Février I960, chacun d'eux ne pourra être assisté que par un seul Conseil.

Fait et clos au Parquet dudit Tribunal les jour, mois et an que dessus.

Le Commissaire du Gouvernement,
signé : NOUVEN.

Copie certifiée conforme.
Le Greffier,

Picture 4 : Barberousse Prison, built during French rule on the site of an old Ottoman fort above the Casbah of Algiers, became a major detention center for FLN activists during the war, where executions were carried out. Its name was used by colonial authorities as a symbol of fear and repression against Algerians and the mujahideen.



Picture 5 : In the center stands Brahim Ramdane, while Brahim Daddiouameur is seated second from the right, surrounded by a group of militants in Barberousse Prison (1960-1962).



Picture 6 : A theatrical scene unfolds with Brahim Ramdane alongside some of the inmate actors in Barberousse Prison



Picture 7 : Brahim Ramdane in Barberousse Prison, after the announcement of the ceasefire on March 19, 1962.



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