

# Primary Source:

## *Declaration of the Front de Libération Nationale (1954)\**

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### PRIMARY SOURCE

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#### INTRODUCTION

#### DECLARATION OF THE FLN

### Introduction

In 1954, Algerian efforts at decolonization were in full swing. Algeria was in the difficult position of being technically legally fully part of France, if one that was highly segregated and colonized. Several groups of anti-colonial intellectuals (the “two clans” referenced below) led small, rival movements calling for independence.

The Front de Libération Nationale (National Libération Front, or FLN) was a group who had broken away from these organizations and called for armed struggle as a ‘national’ front. They demanded that members of the competing groups join together to immediately end colonialism.

The following document is their declaration to the Algerian people, issued November 1, 1954, about six months after the military victory of the Viet Minh, the anti-colonialist and nationalist movement founded by Ho Chi Minh in 1941, against French colonial forces at the Battle of Dien Bien Phu.

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\* Declaration of the Front de Libération Nationale, 1 November 1954, <https://www.marxists.org/history/algeria/1954/proclamation.htm>  
Translated by Mitch Abidor. Edited and annotated by members of the History for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century project.

# Declaration of the Front de Libération Nationale (1954)

1963 stamp commemorating  
Algerian independence,  
gained the year prior



*Members of the FLN, 1955*

To the Algerian people

To the Militants of the National Cause

To you who are called upon to judge us, the Algerian people in a general way, the militants more particularly, our purpose in distributing this proclamation is to enlighten you concerning the profound reasons which have impelled us to act by revealing to you our program, the meaning of our action, and the cogency of our views, the goal of which remains National Independence within the North African framework. Our wish as well is to help you avoid the confusion maintained by imperialism and its corrupt political and administrative agents.

Before all else, we consider that after decades of struggle the National Movement has reached its final stage of realization. In fact, as the goal of the revolutionary movement is to create all the favorable conditions needed for the launching of operations for liberation, we believe that internally the people are united behind the sign of independence and action; and externally the climate of détente is favorable for the settling of minor problems (among them ours) with the support of our Arab and Muslim brothers above all.

The events in Morocco and Tunisia are significant in this regard, and profoundly mark the process of the liberation struggle in North Africa.<sup>†</sup> It is worth noting that for quite some time we have been, in this regard, precursors in the unity of action, unfortunately never realized among the three countries.

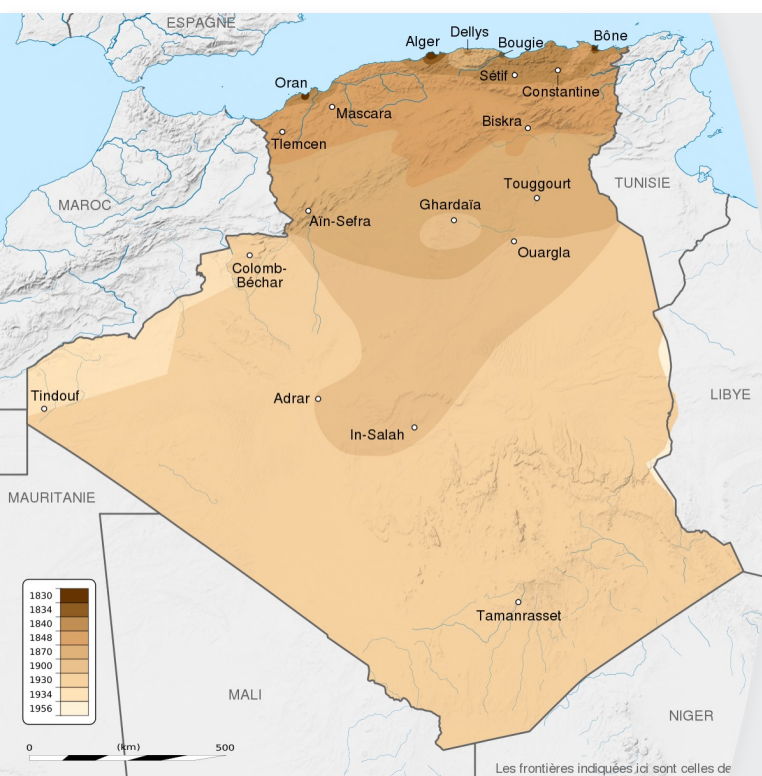
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<sup>†</sup>In the French colony of Morocco, anti-colonial activism dramatically increased after World War II. Sultan Mohammed V began to fall out of French favor as it became clear that he supported national independence, and became an important symbol for anti-colonist protest. In 1953, the French government exiled him and replaced him with Mohmmad ibn Arafa, who had become the target of anti-colonialist hatred by this time. Anti-colonial nationalist activities were also gaining steam in Tunisia, but when widespread protests inspired the French colonial government to impose military rule, violence spread throughout the country. To avert civil war, and in the wake of the French loss at Dien Bien Phu in March 1954, that June the French president began negotiations about Tunisia gaining full independence, which were still underway at this moment.



Members of the FLN in Vietnam, 1959

Today, many are resolutely engaged on this path and we, relegated to the rear, suffer the fate of those who events have passed by. It is thus that our national movement, overwhelmed by years of *immobilisme* and routine, poorly oriented, deprived of the indispensable support of public opinion, and overtaken by events, has progressively disintegrated, to the great satisfaction of colonialism, which thinks it has carried off its greatest victory in its struggle against the Algerian vanguard. The hour is serious.



Map illustrating expansion of French Algeria, 1830 - 1962

Facing this situation, which risks becoming irreparable, a group of young leaders and conscious activists, rallying around it the majority of the healthy and decisive elements, has judged that the moment has arrived to move the National Movement out of the impasse into which it was backed by personal struggles and fights over influence, in order to launch it, at the side of the Moroccan and Tunisian brothers, into the true revolutionary struggle.

To this end, we insist on specifying that we are *independent of the two clans* that are fighting over power.<sup>‡</sup> Placing national interest above all petty and erroneous considerations of personality and prestige, in conformity with revolutionary principles, our action is directly solely against colonialism, our only blind and obstinate enemy, which has always refused to grant the least freedom by peaceful means.

<sup>‡</sup> In recent years, anti-colonialists in Algeria had been divided between two groups, the Democratic Union of the Algerian Manifesto (*Union Démocratique du Manifeste Algérien*, UDMA), which advocated for increased rights and nominal independence as a French state, and the Movement for the Triumph of Democratic Liberties (*Mouvement pour le Triomphe des Libertés Démocratiques*, MTL), which called for full independence from France.

These are, we think, sufficient, reasons for a movement of renewal to present itself under the name of NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT, releasing itself in this way from all possible compromises, and offering the possibility to all Algerian patriots of all social classes, of all the purely Algerian parties and movements, to integrate themselves into the struggle for liberation, without any other consideration.

In summary, we spell out below the major elements of our political program:

Goal: NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE by:

- 1) The restoration of the sovereign, democratic and social Algerian state, within the framework of Islamic principles.
- 2) The respect of all fundamental liberties without distinction of race or religion.



*Six leaders of the FLN, including Rabah Bitat, Mostefa Ben Boulaïd, Didouche Mourad, and Mohammed Boudiaf, 1954*

#### INTERNAL OBJECTIVES:

- 1) Political reform by the returning of the National Revolutionary Movement to its true path and by the wiping-out of the vestiges of corruption and reformism, the causes of our current regression.
- 2) The gathering together and organization of all the healthy energies of the Algerian people for the liquidation of the colonial system.

#### EXTERNAL OBJECTIVES:

- 1) The internalization of the Algerian problem.<sup>§</sup>
- 2) The realization of North African unity within its natural Arabo-Islamic framework.
- 3) Within the framework of the UN Charter, the affirmation of our active sympathy with regard to all nations who support our operations for liberation.<sup>||</sup>

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<sup>§</sup> 'The Algerian problem' was a common way at the time for diplomats to describe the tension between French colonial rule in Algeria and widespread opposition to that rule by colonized Algerians.

Starting in 1951, the United Nations (UN) devoted extensive attention to France's rule in North Africa.

<sup>||</sup> Delegates from African and Asia used the United Nations Charter, which called for the "equal rights and determination of peoples" to challenge France colonial rule. Until this point, however, discussion at the UN focused on violations of human rights in French Morocco and Tunisia, not Algeria.



*National Liberation Army Soldiers, 1958*

**MEANS OF STRUGGLE:** In conformity with revolutionary principles, and taking into account the internal and external situations, the continuation of the struggle by all possible means until the realization of our goal.

In order to reach these objectives, the National Liberation front will have two essential tasks to carry out simultaneously: an internal action, on the fronts of politics and action, and an external action, with the goal of the making of the Algerian problem a reality for the entire world, with the support of all our natural allies.

This is a heavy task which necessitates the mobilization of all national energy and resources. It is true that the struggle will be long, but the result is certain.

## Did you know?

Women played a significant role in the Algerian independence movement, including in the 1954 - 1962 Algerian War of Independence. Often, participation in the struggle came at significant costs, and the strategies of the conflict raised ethical questions.

[Hear the story of one of these women here.](#)

*\*Note: Contains descriptions of violence and injury.*



*Zohra Drif, 1957*

In the last place, in order to avoid all false interpretations and subterfuges, in order to prove our real desire for peace, to limit the number of human lives lost and the amount of blood spilled, we propose to French authorities an honorable platform of discussion, if these latter are animated by good faith and recognize once and for all in the people they subjugate the right to dispose of themselves:

- 1) The opening of negotiations with the authorized spokesmen of the Algerian people on the basis of the recognition of sovereignty through Algerian liberation, one and indivisible.
- 2) The creation of a climate of confidence through the liberation of all political prisoners, the lifting of all measures of exception, and the ceasing of all pursuit of the fighting forces.
- 3) The recognition of Algerian nationality by an official declaration abrogating the edicts, decrees and laws making Algeria a "French land," which is a denial of the History, the geography, the language, the religion, and the mores of the Algerian people.

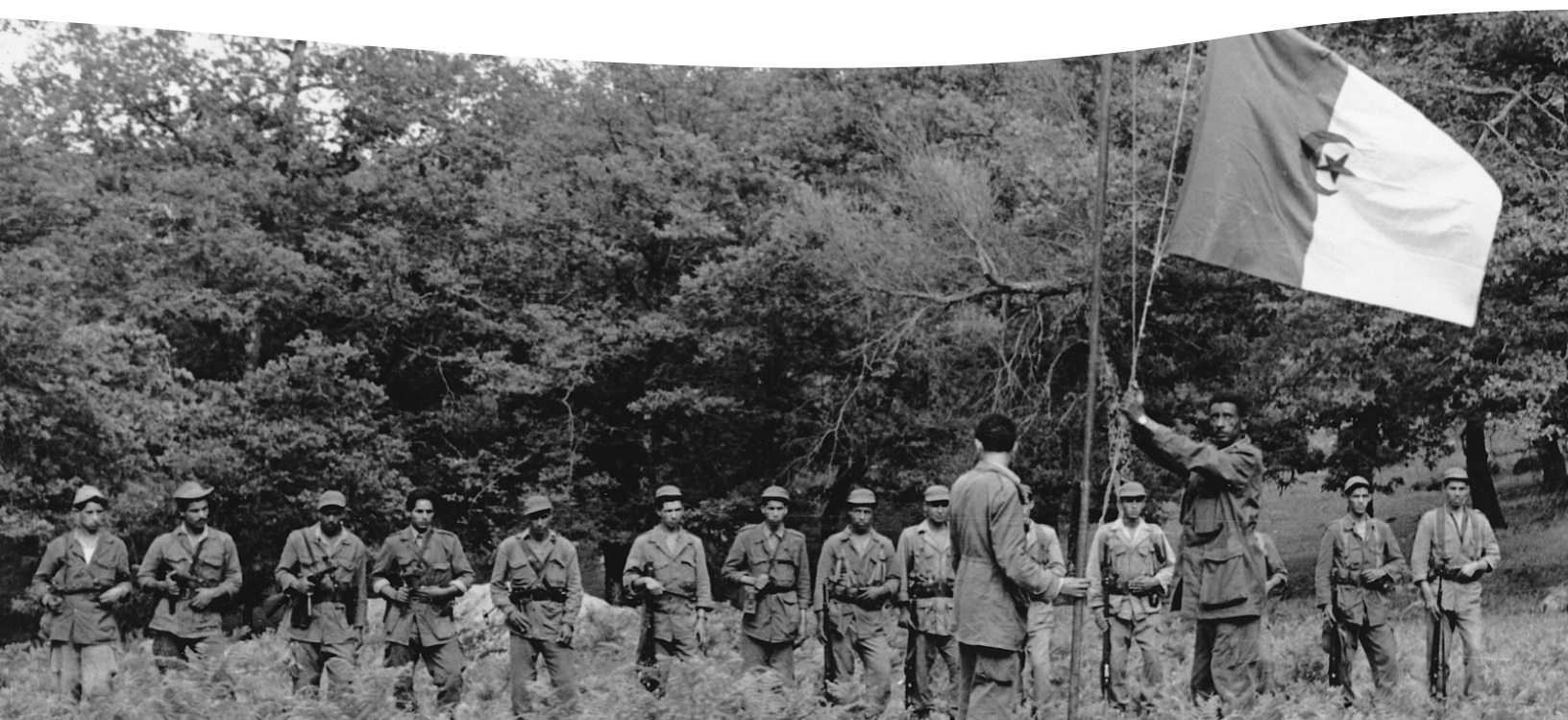
In return:

- 1) French cultural and economic interests, honestly acquired, will be respected, as will persons and families.
- 2) All Frenchmen wishing to remain in Algeria will have the choice between their nationality of origin, in which case they will be considered foreigners vis a vis the laws in place, or they will opt for Algerian nationality, in which case they will be considered such in rights and obligations.
- 3) The bonds between France and Algeria will be defined and will be the object of an agreement between the two powers on the basis of equality and mutual respect.

Algerian! We invite you to think over our above Charter. Your obligation is to join with it in order to save our country and restore to it its freedom. The National Liberation Front is your front. Its victory is yours.

As for us, resolved to pursue the struggle, sure of your anti-imperialist sentiments, we give the best of ourselves to the Fatherland.

The Secretariat



# Image Citations:

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Part of the leadership of the National Liberation Army of Algeria who fought against the French occupation, 1955,  
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Members of a delegation of the FLN in Vietnam, 1959, Public Domain,  
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Six chiefs of the FLN before the start of the "Revolution of November 1, 1954," 1954, Public Domain,  
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