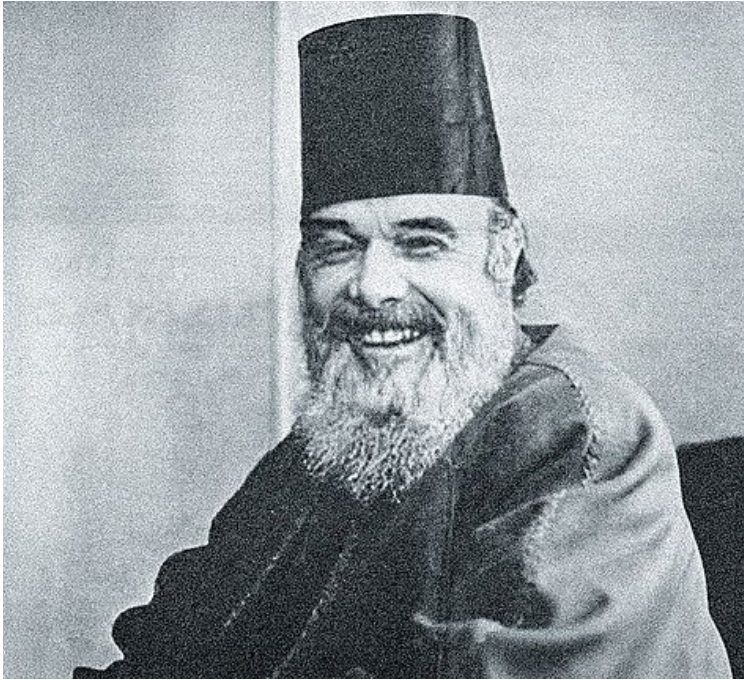


## Primary Source: Messali Hadj



### Primary Source

#### Key Facts

"Constitution of the  
Algerian People's  
Party," April 1937

### Key Facts

- Cheikh Ben Badis was educated at the Zituna mosque university in Tunis and became the undisputed leader of the Islamic reform movement during the interwar years
- In 1925, he and other prominent Islamic reformists (including Bashir Ibrahimi of Bougie and Cheikh Tayyib al-Uqbi of Biskra) began to publish journals calling for the purification and renaissance of Islam in Algeria and for the rejection of "assimilationist" ideas of gaining French rights and citizenship
- They promoted a return to a close interpretation of the Koran and the early Sunna, and at the same time stressed the need to pursue modern scientific scholarship<sup>1</sup>

# "Constitution of the Algerian People's Party," April 1937

*It was in Paris, not in Algeria, that early Algerian nationalist ideas were given the freedom to flourish. As you read this text, pay attention to how the authors reach out to the "Algerian" masses and call for setting aside factional differences. How does the PPA attempt to move the focus away from "assimilation" and "separation" to the idea of "emancipation?" What does it explicitly say, and what does it leave implicit?*

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## Constitution of the Algerian People's Party, April 1937

What are the Algerian People's Party, its political program, and its [plan of] action?

On March 11, 1937, in a meeting with the "Friends of the Umma" in Nanterre, right next to Paris, the Algerian People's Party was created. This happy news was immediately spread through the Algerian communities [in France], each comment[ing] on it in his own way but always with liveliness and joy. This news also became known on the other side of the Mediterranean, and it is there, in our own



*Logo of the Algerian People's Party (in Arabic and French), 1937*

country, that it has been welcomed by all the people and by the youth in particular.

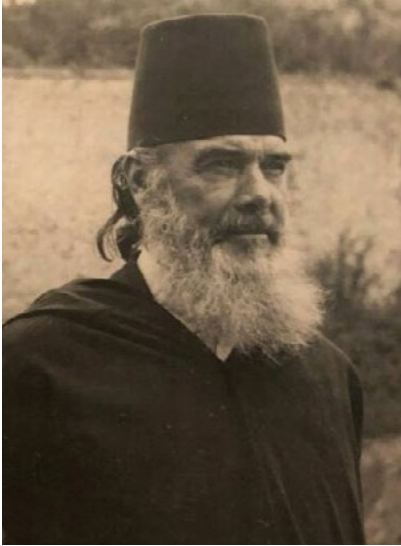
The Algerian People's Party has for its immediate task the struggle for the moral and material amelioration of Algerians. It will fight for the smallest demands and will neglect nothing in order to defend the interests of all. It will

devote itself to . . . [disseminating the] propaganda necessary to enlighten public opinion as to the true "Algerian problem" [emphasis added] . . . and [to finding] a just solution [that] conforms to its past, its traditions, and its future.

The Algerian People's Party calls out to all of the population, regardless of [political] opinion, whom it asks to adhere to its program and to whom it will give the necessary education, in conformity with its ideals and its [plan of] action. The Algerian People's Party will defend all Algerian people, it will make no distinction between its children; it will work, precisely, so that the ensemble of the population, without distinction of rank or religion, will be able to enjoy the same rights, the same liberties, and accomplish the same duties. Neither assimilation nor separation, but emancipation.



*A view of Algiers in 1935*



Messali Hadj, between 1945-1954

The Algerian People's Party rejects all policies of assimilation because these are contrary to the traditions of the people, to its past, and also to the Convention of July 5, 1830, which confirms in an absolute manner a respect for Islamic traditions, commerce, liberty, and property.

Assimilation is a chimera and is nothing, at the bottom, [other] than a politics of prostration that benefits the colonizers. Algeria, strengthened by more than six million men speaking the same language, having the same religion and the same past to which the people remain faithfully attached, cannot assimilate or erase itself, but it can ally itself.

Assimilation cannot occur in Algeria, either politically, juridically, or historically; it is in no way a solution, on the contrary, it carries disorder, incomprehension, and suspicion within itself. It is said [even] louder: neither assimilation nor separation, but emancipation. In effect, this word "separatist" is easily toyed with. Peoples cannot live in isolation. While remaining free internally, the force of things, [their] interests, oblige them to unite or to ally themselves in order to ensure their reciprocal security and to [foster the] exchange of their products and their economies.

By rejecting assimilation, the Algerian People's Party will work for the total emancipation of Algeria, without . . . having to separate from France. The total emancipation of Algeria will be the work of its children and the efficient help of the French people, who both must collaborate for the general well-being of both countries and for their security.

As a consequence, emancipated Algeria, enjoying the democratic liberties that she will have conquered through her action, [with] administrative, political, and internal economic autonomy [orig.], will freely engage in a collective system of French and Mediterranean security.

Emancipated Algeria will be the friend and ally of France; the common interests of our two countries and security require an *entente* and an honest, loyal collaboration. The examples of Syria and France, of Egypt and England, of Iraq and England, are all appropriate, and this is what the Algerian People's Party wants.<sup>1</sup> It is entirely clear, then, that there is no assimilation and no separation anywhere in the program of the Algerian People's Party. Total emancipation being our goal—our ideal if you will—it is important to look at the actual situation with courage and to decide, according to its gravity, what is most pressing and what is indispensable. The Algerian People's Party is not a party of dreamers or lunatics. It presents for Algeria[*'s sake*] a list of immediate demands, which it is eager to see put into action as quickly as possible, since our party, which is practical above all, will defend the smallest [requests] as much as the most important demands.

1. These are mandates, established at the close of the First World War. As opposed to colonies, mandates are indirectly ruled and supposedly much less expensive for the occupying power.



The action of the Algerian People's Party will neither be a battle of races nor a battle of class; to the other communities living in our midst, [it] will hold out a fraternal hand, without regard for their race or religion; the only condition that it would ask of all is the union of all and the participation of all in the political, social, and economic management of our country.



*Shop proprietor and patrons in Algiers, c. 1913*

No liberty for the individual or for a clan; what our party wants is liberty for all the Algerian population, without regard for race and religion. Democracy, which exists for all, must be protected by all.

Small business, the artisan trades, the workers, the small fellah,<sup>2</sup> the students, the liberal professions will find in our party their defender and their representative under any circumstances.

Our party will also consider as very important the military territories in the

South and, to this effect, will work on a list of immediate demands, which will have as their initial tasks a water policy and a [system of] credit that will provide money to these populations martyred by lack of water . . .

Here we see clearly defined the Algerian People's Party. It was created in order to illuminate with the light of day all of this confusion, these elite political quarrels which darken the country. The Algerian People's Party calls upon the people to group together, to unite, to love each other, and to fight together for the general interest and for the rebirth of the country. No Algerian who deserves the name, who loves his country [and] his liberty, can remain deaf to this call. The Algerian People's Party has traced the path, has indicated a plan of action; it is important that the whole people work toward the realization of these demands.

Only action [that is] organized, coordinated, [and] animated by the spirit of battle and of sacrifice will save our country from the misery, exploitation, and obscurantism in which it finds itself.

Long live unity! Long live the Algerian People's Party!

Long live liberty for all.

Le bureau politique

(Original Source: *El Ouma*, n. 49, April 10, 1937)



*1937 example of El Ouma, a newspaper first published by Messali Hadj in 1930*

<sup>2</sup>. *Fellah*: peasant.

# Image Citations

## Page 1:

Messali Haj, Journal algérien La Voix du Peuple, numéro du 11 mars 1959 avec Messali Hadj en tête, Public Domain, [https://pt.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ficheiro:Messali\\_Hadj\\_-\\_La\\_Voix\\_du\\_Peuple,\\_num%C3%A9ro\\_du\\_11-03-1959.jpg](https://pt.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ficheiro:Messali_Hadj_-_La_Voix_du_Peuple,_num%C3%A9ro_du_11-03-1959.jpg)

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## Page 4:

Moorish shop with proprietor and patrons, Algiers, Underwood & Underwood, 1913, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Public Domain, <https://www.loc.gov/item/2019630146/>  
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