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The massacres of Ramadan 1376AH/April 1957AD in the Valley of Souf: a witness to the brutality of French colonialism in Algeria

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Abstract

The article deals with one of the most important topics in the history of Algeria during the colonial period, which is the massacres that expressed the brutality of the French colonizer. During the 19th and 20th centuries, the French committed a large number of massacres against the Algerians. The incidents of Ramadan 1376AH / April 1957AD are considered one of these horrific massacres that were carried out against the residents of Wadi Suf over the course of a month of torture and killing that affected all segments of Soviet society without discrimination. Given the brutality with which the colonial soldiers dealt with the unarmed population, the toll was very heavy. Live testimonies indicated that the region lost more than 140 martyrs during these events, in addition to the suffering of the population as a result of arrest, torture and confiscation of property. It is certain that the goal of the colonizer from all this is to isolate the Algerian people from the revolution that entered its second phase at that time.

Keywords: massacres; Ramadan 1376AH; April 1957AD; Wadi Suf; brutality of colonialism.

INTRODUCTION:

Since the French colonizer set foot in the land of Algeria in 1830, all its inhabitants were considered enemies that must be eliminated, and a number of massacres were carried out against them to which the forehead was called, and this situation continued until 1962, although some of these massacres took their right from research and study, such as the massacre to which the Awfiya tribe was subjected in 1832 with an easy result, or the massacre of the wind tribe in a cave in the Dhahra Mountains in 1845, as well as the massacres that followed all popular resistance during the 19th century, and the most important of these massacres "08 massacres In May 1945, in the areas of Setif, Guelma and Karta after the Second World War, which received wide resonance in the world press because of the huge number of victims estimated by studies at more than 45,000 dead, many of these massacres are still unknown to the vast majority of Algerians because they have not been sufficiently studied and excavated, and one of these massacres was what the Sof region knew during Ramadan



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1376AH / April 1957AD, which prompted us to address this important subject and try to uncover some aspects of it that are still shrouded in mystery.

Through this study, we will try to answer a problem that revolves around the reasons that prompted the French colonizer to commit the massacres of Ramadan/April 1957 in the province of Suf and its consequences on the region and its impact on the revolutionary process until independence.

Research Objectives:

The study aims to demystify one of the massacres of the French occupier in the Sof region during the liberation revolution, exactly in 1957, which did not receive enough research, on the one hand, and to highlight the barbarism of the French colonizer and his forces, which are deprived of all the human values advocated by the French revolution since 1789.

Research Methodologies:

In our research, we relied on the historical approach that adopted description and analysis, which was necessitated by the nature of the topic.

I. Introducing the Souf area

Will: Location and origin of naming

Site :

Wadi Suf is located in the southeast of Algeria, which is part of the great eastern race, bordered to the east by Tozeur, Nafta and Nafzawa in Tunisian countries, to the west by Wadi Rig and Ouargla, and to the south by the oases of Ghadames on the Libyan border, while to the north its borders reach to the land of Zab and the land of the freckles. It is astronomically located between longitudes 6° and 8° E and between latitudes 31° and 34° N, and thus sits on an area of about 82,800 square kilometers (Voisin, 2004, p 15). As for the surface, the sand

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covers three quarters of ⁴ its area, which is the dominant appearance of the large eastern race to which most of the area of the region belongs (Qusaybah, 2021, p. 146).

Name Origin:

The narratives differed about the name of the area in the valley of Sof, and from what the owner of the Suf mentioned that it was a place for the people of Sufism, because every Sufi worshiper interrupts to worship in it, and it was said that it was taken from the word Azov, a Berber word that means the valley or the lowland on the banks of the valley, and by virtue of the difference of the circulation of tongues, it became Sof, and he also mentioned that the people of Sof; an area in the Levant near the city of Aleppo, when the Arabs entered Africa entered it, so it was named in their name, and it was said that it was called Suf after the band of masked barbarians, and he also pointed out that the parcels; they are from the tribes that inhabited the area coming from the Tunisian country, when they came, they said We inhabit these swords, which is the dune sword of the extended sand and its top is sharp (Al-Awamer, pp. 38-39).

The word will also mean the water river that used to run in the region from the north to the south, called "Oued Zouf", that is, the abundant river of water, and over time this valley has sunk into the depths of the earth and only its trace remains, and by matching the word Sof with the ancient Berber words (isouf) and (asouf), which its meaning in modern Berber (assif), we find that it corresponds to the meaning of the river (Brik, 2013-2014, page 3). The word valley was coined with the word souf and became Wadi Souf, and the first mention of

this plural is the Laghouti nomad around 1829AD, and this term became common in the second half of the 19th century AD(Osmani, 2022, p. 99).

French occupation.

The Souf region is part of the so-called Constantine desert, and the French authorities began thinking of occupying this region after they were able to occupy the city of Constantine in the autumn of 1837AD, because it became the backbone of the popular resistance and its leaders, and the Souf region, by virtue of its important position and strategic location, was the focus of attention of the French, and that its occupation was one of the episodes of colonial expansion in Algeria(Osmani, 2022, p. 106). The occupation forces began in the north of the region and were able to occupy Biskra in 1844AD, and were able to eliminate the resistance to Za 'asha in 1849AD, and occupied Laghout in 1852AD, then Ouargla in 1853AD and settled in December 1854AD, and Sultan Takrit Suleiman al-Jalabi had asked for help from the people of Sof who responded to the call and were in the first ranks during the battles fought by the people of Takrit in defense of their city.

After the completion of a campaign that was approved, the French forces headed towards Wadi Suf on the tenth (10) of the same year, and after fierce fighting between the two parties that lasted for days, these forces were able to control Suf, and Ali Bay bin Farhat was the commander-in-chief of both Taqrit, Warkala, the valley and their mediators, and His Excellency indicated that during the 19-year rule of Ali Bay, the region was not known, and from it Suf al-Raha (Al-Awamer, pp. 307-309). However, the French authorities did not leave military forces in an area that will maintain its occupation, which made the region the subject of a bitter conflict and continuous resistance that lasted for nearly 30 years, and the French forces were able to settle in Suf until about 1887, after they surrounded the resistance and eliminated its leaders(Gnabzieh, 2022, p. 24).

II. The massacres of Ramadan 1376AH/April 1957AD: Motives and events

The pretexts of French colonialism and its motives for committing these massacres

The importance of Wadi Suf in the liberation revolution:

The importance of the region comes from the fact that it is located in the southeastern region of the country on the borders with Tunisia and Libya, as we have already mentioned. This location is very strategic for the process of buying weapons from the two countries mentioned(Awadi, 2020, p. 41) , as the battles of the Second World War left a large number of weapons in the population. Since 1947, when the private organization was established, its leaders needed weapons to train militants. It found in the Suf region the appropriate destination, which provided it with shipments of various weapons transported to Aures via Zab by various means (convoys, buses, trucks). These efforts continued even after the colonial authorities discovered this organization in 1950. Between 1948 and 1953, Muhammad Belhadj made several trips to Tunisia and Libya, during which he brought significant quantities of weapons(Ghanabzia, 2009, pp. 46-48).

It should be noted that the role played by the Soph region during the years preceding the revolution is no less important than the organization of military operations in the face of the French army, which would not have been successful without the availability of the necessary weapons, so we find that the Revolutionary Command excluded the region from the first operations of the revolution on 1 November 1954, taking into account the strategic dimension of the region until it continues to supply the mujahideen with

weapons(Ghanabziyah, 2022, p. 102).

Revolutionary activity in the region before the massacres :

Although we pointed out that the leadership of the revolution excluded the Suf region from the first operations of the revolution for organizational reasons, its flames soon spread to the region after about two weeks, when its fighters fought its first battles known as the Battle of Hassi Khalifa on November 17, 1954AD, and the battles that were then fought by the Mujahideen of the region against the French colonialism during the years 1955 and 1956AD continued, including the battle of artem in March 1955, Hod Shikha in August 1955, and the battles of Al-Dubaibi and Hod Sultan in January 1956 (Al-Lamamra, Aoun, 1988, pp. 15-54). This intense revolutionary activity surprised the colonizer and made him impose a military siege on the region, especially since security and intelligence reports confirmed the outbreak of battles during the same period in Tebessa, Qurein, and Awras, all of which are close to Sof, and are considered a refuge for the revolutionary elements responsible for work and activity in Wadi Sof(Ghanabziyah, 2022, pp. 122-123). On the other hand, this revolutionary activity encouraged the people of Suf to rally around the revolution, as it provided them with money, supplies, weapons and mujahideen, through the secret organization, and this continued until April 1957.

Establishing and discovering the civil organization in Wadi Suf:

The Algerian Revolutionary Civil Organization consists of several militant cells spread across cities, villages and madrasahs. These cells are supervised and managed by a unified leadership of senior Algerian politicians. This organization provided the revolution with material and human resources, which made it a supporter and supporter of military action and a guarantor of its continuity. The civil organization appeared in Wadi Suf since 1948AD and stopped its activity after that in 1950AD when the private organization was discovered. After the outbreak of the liberation revolution, the Mujahid assigned the Arab student Qamoudi to awaken these cells, and placed on his head the Mujahid Bashir Gharbi at the beginning of 1955AD(Bisr, 2020, p. 55).

Since March 1956, the organization has taken its official capacity, after the Arab student took over the leadership of the border army in February 1956(Gnabzia, 2022, pp. 190-191), and cells have been placed for him in each of Hassi Khalifa, Al-Muqrin, Al-Wadi, Al-Ruqayba, Amish, Rabah, Al-Tarifawi, Qamar and others. The Mujahid Abdul Hamid Bisr, in his book The Martyrs of the April Massacres, counted 23 cells distributed throughout the Wadi Suf region (Bisr, 2020, pp. 62-66).

The civil organization contributed effectively to the success of the revolution in the Wadi Suf region, and the militants were able by this device to recruit a large number of young people for the National Liberation Army, collect contributions and donations, take care of the families of martyrs, recruits and the poor, and was able to instill the spirit of jihad and patriotism in the hearts of the people again and reveal the plans of the enemy(Brik, 2014, p. 130), and therefore it was followed up by the colonial authorities, and by 1957 the French authorities were able to collect accurate information regarding this organization and its leadership, and the places of the meeting(Masmoudi, 2023).

The massacres:

There are many narratives in determining the reasons for the discovery of the civil system in Wadi Suf in April 1957, after the colonizer confirmed that behind this revolutionary

activity are groups that support and support it, and it is likely that the reason was a snitch from one of the colonial aides called (Gharib) who lived in the Eastern Nezhah in Hassi Khalifa on Thursday 04 April 1957/ 04 Ramadan 1376AH, where the latter gave the colonizer the head of the thread regarding the network of the civil system, and he is the activist Bashir West, the imam of the mosque of 'Umarah in Hassi Khalifa(Awadi, 2020, pp. 213-215).

The discovery of the civil organization in Wadi Suf resulted in a great massacre that lasted more than three weeks, during which the French army committed the most heinous crimes against the men of Suf al-Mujahideen and its people. The beginning of the implementation of the arrests and massacres was on the day of the snitching itself. By order of the commander of the valley garrison and in coordination with the head of the Hassi Khalifa Center, the French authorities began to make extensive arrests of the militantYen, and the beginning was in Hajj Gharbi-Bashir, where he was arrested with Mina and Nissi and taken to the center. The French army began to interrogate the detainees with the aim of exposing the rest of the elements(Masmoudi, 2023).

From tomorrow, the occupation authorities surrounded the mosque of Omar in Hassi Khalifa, and after the inspection, two Stati rifles, two 9 mm pistols, and a box filled with bullets were found, in addition to quantities of dynamite and a book of contributions that includes lists of militants and donors, although before the arrival of the French army, a group of militants burned and destroyed many documents and lists containing the names of the fighters of the civil organization, and as a result, the mass arrests expanded to include all the villages and schools of Wadi Suf with all brutality. The testimonies indicate that the raids and arrests affected more than 1,353 militants, as well as the escape of hundreds of those who fled towards Tunisia and the cities of the north(Brik, 2013-2014, pp. 231, 233).

After the extensive arrests, the time of liquidation came, and for this reason, the occupation authorities imposed a curfew from the time of Maghrib to the morning, and began to carry out executions outside the urban areas. The eastern region, whose center is Debilah, was liquidated in the nave of Berri east of Hassi Khalifa. As for the areas of gambling, the executions were carried out in the Fuliya area near Al-Ruqayba. As for the city of Al-Wadi, the militants were executed in the western race of the city, while the liquidation was in the southern region, whose center is Omeish near the center of Al-Dubaibi.

Third - The results of the massacres on the region of Suf and its revolutionary activity

Its results on the people of Suf

Desecration of the Sacred:

The colonial authorities turned the Omar Mosque into a military barracks and the French flag was raised above its silo, and mosques in other cities and villages were besieged and narrowed to their buildings, and prayers were disrupted in some of them and people were deprived of morning and evening prayers and taraweeh due to the presence of roaming(Gnabzia, 2022, p. 202).

Psychological warfare against the people:

The occupier did not only take revenge on the militants in various ways that were not related to humanity, but also to the intimidation of the unarmed people, regardless of their races and ages. During this stage, the Soviet people were subjected to abuse in various ways. Forced labor was imposed on men to accomplish management projects, and the people were subjected to sudden raids, verbal insults, vandalism of house furniture, severe beatings, and

theft of everything of value. Even women were not spared, as happened with the Lamamra family and the activist Masouda Hima, who was taken to a sucker center and subjected to torture, interrogation, and burning her body with fire. The people were also subjected to an economic sabotage war that included all the homes, shops, guitans, and their families, where they were looted of money and goods, and confiscated all goods transported outside the city unless they were licensed (Brick, 2013-2014, page 236).

Children were also not spared from the repercussions of these massacres. Some schools were transformed into military barracks, detention centers and torture centers, the school of Tarifawi, Hassi Khalifa, Rabah and Raqiba. This group was deprived of education during this difficult period, and it lasted a long time (Ghanabzia, 2022, p. 202).

Assault on the symbols of society and its elite:

The occupation authorities have targeted the group of scholars and intellectuals and all those who have a high status, due to their strong influence in society in general and the youth group in particular, and their goal is to cut off popular support for the revolution. During these events, Imam Hajj Bashir Gharbi was arrested and killed, Sheikh Muallem Aliya Al-Azouzi, Sheikh Al-Mosleh Abdul Rahman Maamari in Zigm, along with the revolutionary scientist Ibrahim Kalakami, and Sheikh Ahmed Al-Tijani, who linked the spiritual and jihadist side and is one of the men of Al-Zawiyya Al-Tijaniyah in Al-Bayyadah (Ghanabziyah, 2022, page 203).

Its results on revolutionary activity B will

Armed action affected by massacres:

We have already referred to the strength and fervor of revolutionary activity in the Souf region during the period between November 1954 and April 1957, and Mr. Gnabzia divided this period from the age of the revolution into two stages: the first stage (November 1954-January 1956) and this stage was characterized by its intense war activity against the forces of the French enemy, which we dealt with in some detail during our talk about revolutionary activity in the region, and its most important battles, as we pointed out: the battle of Hassi Khalifa, Sahn Al-Ratam, Houd Sheka (mother of the battles), Al-Dubaibi and Houd Sultan (Al-Amamra, Aoun, 1988, p. 7), while the second stage was (the beginning of 1956- the beginning of 1957). This stage was known by the political leadership and its leader, Said Abdel-Hayy, and the presence of the army led by Jilani bin Omar and the Arab student Qamoudi, who was able to confuse the French enemy in fighting it in both Algeria and Tunisia on the border between the two countries, but because of the disagreement over the leadership ended with the end of the revolutionary work in Tunisia in 1957 (Ghabaziya, 2022, pp. 87-88).

What interests us most in this study is the stage that followed the massacres of Ramadan 1376AH/April 1957AD, which was called the "Nakba Phase" and lasted from April 1957AD to the end of 1958AD and the beginning of 1959AD, and by taking a look at the book "Battles and Incidents of the Liberation War in Wadi Suf", we hardly find any mention of any battles during the aforementioned period except for the Qor Ajwali incident in January 1958 on the Algerian-Tunisian border, and Qaws August 1958AD, compared to the previous period, during which we mentioned a group of important battles, as well as the subsequent period starting from 1959AD, in which we counted about fifteen (15) battles (Lamamra, Aoun, 1988, pp. 7-8).

What we can conclude is that during the stage of suffering, during which the people of the region suffered woes as a result of the narrowing and repression that affected all groups of society, revolutionary activity in the region stopped for more than a year and a half, and

this activity did not recover until late 1958 and the beginning of 1959, when groups of mujahideen adopted the armed action again, and the battlefields between the two parties extended from Tebessa and Clickrin in the north to the continent of Hamel in the south at the Algerian-Libyan border, and the mujahideen continued to destabilize the French forces until the cessation of fighting was announced.

Liquidation of the Border Army:

The Frontier Army, especially in 1956 and the beginning of 1957, was funded by the civil organization in Wadi Souf. This organization provided them with money, supplies, weapons and mujahideen. With the discovery of the colonial authorities of the civil organization, the Arab student, the commander of the Frontier Army, who had long been the subject of the French occupation, was charged. Because of the dispute with the Tunisian authorities, it asked him to withdraw from its territory, especially since he was sheltering the Tunisian opposition led by Saleh bin Yusuf. On his way to the Libyan border, the Tunisian army surprised them. The Arab student and his close aides were arrested on 20 June 1957, and the detainees were sentenced to death. The rest of the army were arrested, as they remained in Tunisian prisons until the formation of the Algerian interim government in September 1958 (Gnabaziya, 2022, pp. 182-183).

Losses among the fighters and the people of the region:

After the discovery of the civil organization order in Wadi, a wide campaign of arrests was launched among the militants in particular and the population of Suf in general during the month of Ramadan 1376AH/April 1957AD. Mass arrests began in the militants of Hassi Khalifa, and then spread to the rest of the cities and villages of Suf, and then expanded to the area of Al-Mughayyir, Jamia, Taqrit and Warkala, and these arrests resulted in large losses among the militants and civilians.

execution

The first killings were launched on the night of Sunday, the seventh (07) of Ramadan 1376AH/ 0 April 7, 1957AD from Al-Wadi Prison, under the responsibility of the French officer "Les Catinot" who ordered the execution of the militants:

Al-Tijani Ahmad	Ayadi Ali	Wanesi Al Hashimi
Benmoussa Bachir	Sarwati Mohammed (Al-Absi)	Bani Al-Arabi
Drone Ramadan	Lomé	Zalasi Al-Jilani
Alia Al-Azouzi	Musbahi Mustafa	Ramadani Al Hashimi
Moayza Al-Tayeb		

The second regiment was from Omeish prison on April 11, under the responsibility of Officer "Kornboa", who ordered the execution of:

Shushan Soltani	Bakary El Tayeb	ibn 'Umar
Asila Mustafa	Sassi Ben Kaddour	Jadidi Mohammed Al-Saghir

On April 16, the operation was from the prison of Raqiba, under the supervision of Officer Hiberti, who ordered the execution of the gentlemen:

Bashir Jaballah	Taher Kadiri	Al-Hadi Baha
Salehi Building	Ali Khashiba	Chancre

Hashemi Shadow	Sassi Rizwani	ABD UL RAZZAK
Al-Arusi Budabiyeh	Taher Azouzi	zbedi

Under the responsibility of Officer "Locar" from Al-Dabila Prison, the latter ordered the execution of the following militants:

Gharbi Bashir (Imam of Umrah Mosque)	Al Amamra	Abdul Karim, go ahead!
Ahmad Khazazna	Lemine and Nessie	Al-Mawlidī Nusayrah

From the same center, the fighters of the Muqrin cell were executed, namely:

Ben Ali Khazani	Omar Taher Ayachi	Laroussi Ghraissa
Binh Al-Obaidi Butteh	Binh Battah Building	Belgacem
Lamine Aounallah	Tijani Fever	Ben Ali Building

Certainly, these lists did not come up with the names of all those against whom the crime of execution was committed because the number was much more (Awadi, 2020, pp. 217-220). This massacre continued in the region until 26 Ramadan/ 26 April, but follow-ups continued throughout 1957 and 1958. Statistics indicate that the total number of martyrs exceeded 140 martyrs, in addition to more than 400 detainees, and dozens of widows and orphans. The French authorities did not, as usual, observe the sanctity of the month of Ramadan or the holiness of the houses of God (Masmoudi, 2023).

Imprisonment and torture:

Mr. Abdelkader Awadi notes that about 400 activists and participants were arrested and detained in prison centers scattered in the region. He adds, quoting Mr. Eid Ghouri, that they were 82 individuals in a cell that accommodates 12 people. The reader can imagine the rest of the scene in a position to sit, stand, sleep, and even breathe. These elements were also subjected to the most heinous methods of torture, such as physical burning, cutting meat or organs, for example, torture with electricity, water, dragging cars and horses, and other brutal methods that call for humanity (Awadi, 2020, pp. 221-223).

Afterword:

Since the beginning of the revolution and even before its launch, the Sauf area was a strategic center that provided it with the weapons it needed to make the launch a success, and it was also one of the militarily active centers.

Because of the military activity of the area, the occupier tightened the noose on it, which led to the discovery of the civil organization, which was the backbone of the revolution.

The discovery of the civil organization in April 1957 led the occupation authorities to retaliate, as massacres were committed in the region during the holy month of Ramadan, killing more than 140 martyrs and hundreds of detainees, and the arrest and torture of most of the Soviet people without exception.

After the massacres of Ramadan/April 1957, revolutionary activity in the region froze for more than a year and a half, but activity returned at the end of 1958 and the beginning of 1959, and this continued until the goal of independence was achieved, although the colonial authorities tightened the noose more and more on the region at that time.

The French occupier confirmed his excessive brutality as usual since he set foot in the land of Algeria, which is incompatible with all the values of humanity advocated by the French Revolution, which this colonizer has long been singing about.

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