

French Torture in Prisons and Detention Centers During the Liberation Revolution: Ksar Ettir Prison as a Model

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Abstract:

Since the outset of French colonization of Algeria in 1830, state-sponsored repression became a systematic tool of control, intensifying dramatically during the War of Independence (1954-1962). To combat the National Liberation Front (FLN), the colonial authorities marshalled significant resources and instituted an exceptional legal framework. A central pillar of this strategy was the pervasive use of torture. The French military established interrogation centers nationwide, where thousands of Algerians and FLN prisoners were detained and subjected to brutal interrogation.

This paper will examine the ‘Ksar Ettir’ detention center as a case study, demonstrating how it functioned as a quintessential site for the methods that defined the colonial apparatus: torture, coercion, intimidation, and psychological manipulation. By applying historical and descriptive

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methods, this study interrogates historical corpora to elucidate the systematic nature of French torture in Algeria, with a specific focus on Ksar Ettir prison.

Keywords: colonialism; torture; intimidation; Ksar Ettir; National Liberation Front.

1. INTRODUCTION

Since its occupation of Algeria in 1830, French colonialism employed various methods of oppression, persecution, repression, intimidation, assassination, and torture against the Algerian people. These methods evolved in both scope and brutality, and the torturers became increasingly skilled in their application—especially during the Algerian War of Independence (1954–1962).

While studies on Algerian detention centers under French rule are abundant, the remote geographical location of Qasr al-Tair has resulted in a scarcity of specific research on this site.

2. Introduction to the Ksar Ettir Detention Camp

The detention camp is located in the municipality of Qasr al-Abtal (formerly Ksar Ettir), in the Ain Oulmane District, about 30 km south of the city of Setif. During the Revolution, it was part of the Third Sector, First Zone, First Wilaya. The camp, as has been reported, differed greatly from other detention centers; France had turned it into a model resembling Nazi concentration camps from World War II¹.

The camp covered an area of 12 hectares and was surrounded by three types of barriers:

- **The first barrier:** Barbed wire encircling the camp, 6 meters wide, mined, and equipped with floodlights.
- **The second barrier:** A line of lighting that surrounded the camp.
- **The third barrier:** Two ordinary (non-barbed) wire fences with **police dogs** patrolling constantly between them.

Freedom fighter Mohamed Abd al-Samad confirmed that the camp functioned “as a self-sufficient labor site, where all construction tools were made inside by the imprisoned revolutionaries themselves, who worked continuously, day and night. The enemy adopted this method as a form of psychological and physical torture to weaken the prisoners’ morale and health, while also saving construction costs for the colonial administration”².

3. Torture During the Revolution

With the intensification of revolutionary and military activity in Algeria, the colonial administration moved to secure material, human, and military resources, and established an exceptional legal system to confront the National Liberation Front (FLN) and the National Liberation Army (ALN).

The first law enacted was the State of Emergency Law, declared on April 3, 1955, and later expanded to cover all Algerian territories by decrees issued on April 6, 1955, and May 28, 1955, thereby authorizing large-scale repression.

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Subsequently, the French government, led by Guy Mollet³, obtained “special powers” from the French National Assembly on March 16, 1956, allowing it to take all necessary measures to “restore order, protect people and property, and safeguard the land”⁴.

This meant that the legislative branch had granted the executive branch full authority to take any action deemed necessary to maintain order in Algeria. The law also gave Robert Lacoste⁵, who had been appointed as Governor-General of Algeria on February 15, 1956, special powers. A ministerial directive issued on May 7, 1956⁶, placed full responsibility for restoring security and maintaining order in the hands of the French army.

As a result, the exceptional system established under the State of Emergency (April 3, 1955) and the March 16, 1956 law created a general rule that detention took precedence over prosecution. This allowed the authorities to carry out mass arrests without clear justification, filling numerous detention camps across Algeria.

French torturers became increasingly inventive in devising new methods and techniques of torture, particularly against political and military detainees belonging to the FLN and ALN. Interrogations and torture during the Revolution took place everywhere—in homes, on the streets, in workplaces, in detention centers, police stations, gendarmeries, military camps, and screening and collection centers, among others⁷.

In the Ksar Ettir detention camp, prisoners were divided into categories and treated unequally, whether in sleeping quarters, food, or labor assignments. From the moment a prisoner entered the camp, they were subjected to brainwashing

operations conducted by psychological experts seeking to understand their character and behavior. Based on these assessments, prisoners were classified into different groups accordingly.

Classification of Prisoners:

3.1 The Category of “Hardline Prisoners”:

This category includes the freedom fighters who firmly adhered to revolutionary principles and rejected France’s colonial policy. These individuals were subjected by the enemy to various forms of torture and were isolated from other detainees to prevent them from influencing them. They were placed in solitary cells and assigned more exhausting forced labor than others. Each of them was given two sheets of paper and a pen, and was asked to write whatever came to his mind, whether against or in favor of France. Those who complied and wrote were rewarded with a sixth of a loaf of bread, a cup of rice, and a blanket. Those who refused to write were deprived of this “reward,” even if their refusal lasted for a month. If a prisoner’s health deteriorated, he was transferred to a location in the city of Sétif for treatment until he recovered his strength, after which he was offered the chance to join the enemy’s ranks in exchange for safety and better treatment. If he refused, he was returned to the same torturous conditions as before⁸.

3.2. The Category of “Hesitant Prisoners”:

These were individuals torn between loyalty to France’s policy and adherence to revolutionary ideals. They suffered from psychological distress and a kind of split personality as they wavered between the temptations of bribery and the threats of punishment. They were paralyzed by indecision, unable to take a firm stand either way⁹.

3.3 The Category of “Pro-Enemy Prisoners”:

These were those whose morale had completely collapsed; they surrendered to the enemy, accepted its demands, and joined its ranks. The prison administration adopted a policy suited to their betrayal: some were released on the condition that they continue to serve France anywhere and under any circumstances, while others were retained in the camp as spies and assistants to the torturers, often proving more brutal than the French themselves. Since their treachery had been exposed, they lost hope of returning to the revolutionary side and sought to prove their loyalty to the colonial administration through cruelty against their fellow prisoners¹⁰.

However, a number of prisoners from this group eventually repented and rejoined the revolutionary cause. This was thanks to the strategic efforts of two senior freedom fighters imprisoned at Ksar Ettir (the Palace of Birds). In 1959, the two devised a plan to win back some of the defectors. They divided roles: one remained openly loyal to revolutionary principles, while the other pretended to have surrendered to the enemy. The latter worked covertly to bring the pro-enemy group back to the revolution and prepare an escape plan. The operation succeeded, resulting in the defection of an armed unit of eighty fighters who rejoined the National Liberation Army¹¹.

4. Types and Methods of Torture:

The crimes committed by the colonial repressive forces during the Algerian War of Independence surpassed imagination in their brutality and in their destruction of the Algerian people's humanity and dignity.

Torture in Algeria under the French army evolved "from chance to habit, then to addiction, and finally to a profession." During November and December of 1954, torture was still experimental, but it escalated daily. By early 1956, repression and torture had entered a new phase-genocidal warfare-implemented according to a systematic and deliberate strategy¹².

Torture accompanied the revolution from its beginning to its end, representing the worst of human crimes. In both Algeria and France, an Algerian's life was deemed worthless compared to other creatures¹³.

These brutal methods were supervised in detention centers and prisons by French officers specially trained in torture techniques at specialized institutions such as the Dube Center in Annaba and the Joan of Arc School in Skikda, assisted by Algerian collaborators who had betrayed their country and participated in the torture of their compatriots.

4.1. Torture at Ksar Ettir (Palace of Birds) Prison

Freedom fighter Mohamed Bouquassa recounted:

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“When we were transferred to the camp, the first thing the enemy soldiers did was unleash their dogs on us. They tore at our flesh. Among them was a terrifying black dog, huge in size, weighing more than 75 kg, named Momos. Whenever he attacked, he would pounce like a wild beast on its prey. The soldiers even awarded him the rank of sergeant. After the dogs had their way with us, we were taken to the rooms where we were given boiling-hot soup and ordered to finish it and wash the dishes without water in less than five minutes. Anyone who failed was punished severely and forced to spend the night in an isolation pit. Then we were ordered to take off our shoes and run fifteen laps around the camp on sharp gravel, chased by the 34 guard dogs. The torture on that first day was so horrific that we thought it was the worst possible, but in the following days we realized that it was only a small part of what was yet to come”¹⁴.

The prison was overseen by trained French officers under the command of Captain Archonot, assisted by Captain Poisson, Captain Arvhenot, Lieutenant Leroux, Lieutenant Rio, Sergeant Major Simon, Sergeant Rimon, and Sergeant Dimolin, along with several Algerian collaborators, notably Lieutenant Mansour¹⁵.

4.1.1. Physical Torture

Physical torture took many forms, including:

Torture through Brick-Making

French soldiers forced prisoners to dig soil and fetch water to prepare materials that included straw, dry thorns, barbed wire, and broken glass. They were ordered to mix this with their bare feet, then mold the mixture into bricks measuring 40 cm long, 20 cm wide, and 20 cm thick.

The prisoners were divided into groups:

- One group mixed the clay with shovels — the least painful task.
- Another mixed it with their bare feet — a torturous ordeal as the mixture contained glass and barbed wire.
- A third transported the clay in carts.
- A fourth carried the bricks on their shoulders to the camp, where they were smashed and then carried back to be remade, sometimes repeatedly into the night before being ordered to demolish what they had built¹⁶.

By the end, their feet were torn and bleeding from glass shards and wire, their shoulders skinned from the heavy loads, and their hands swollen and blistered from digging and breaking bricks continuously, all while suffering from exhaustion and severe fatigue¹⁷.

4.1.2. Torture by Stone Breaking:

This work is no less painful and exhausting than brick-making. Detainees are ordered to collect stones and smash them against each other until they break into gravel, the type used for paving roads (3/8, 8/15, 15/25)¹⁸. The process begins at sunrise and continues until sunset. Detainees suffer extreme fatigue that harms both their bodies and minds. Flying shards from the stones injure the mouth, nose, and eyes, while the dust causes breathing difficulties, tuberculosis, and chest damage¹⁹.

4.1.3. Torture by Stagnant Water:

Detainees are taken to a nearby valley where stagnant water, dirt, and filth accumulate, emitting unbearable foul odors. The area also contains broken glass, infectious germs, and harmful insects such as leeches.

Prison supervisors select this method during winter, especially on extremely cold nights, around midnight. Detainees are forced out naked and barefoot, then dragged into the valley, where they remain for hours cleaning the dirt and insects by hand. From time to time, some prisoners faint due to the extreme cold, leech bites that drain their blood, or walking on broken glass. Anyone who attempts to leave the valley becomes prey for dogs²⁰.

As a result of this brutal torture, the water turns red with blood. Even detainees with disabilities, such as the blind, amputees, or patients transported in carts, are subjected to the same treatment as others²¹.

This process is repeated frequently in both winter and summer, causing eye, nose, chest, skin, and joint diseases among detainees.

4.1.4. Torture by Running on Glass:

This occurs in a special circular area within the detention facility, over 1 km in length, whose ground is covered with broken glass and sharp gravel. Prisoners who remain steadfast in their revolutionary principles are subjected to this form of torture, forced to run barefoot across this area while dogs chase them.

As a result, their feet are cut by the glass and pierced by the gravel, while the dogs bite their bodies, and they are struck

on their backs with rifle butts, causing injuries that sometimes lead to broken bones²².

4.1.5. Torture through Digging, Filling, Building, and Demolishing:

As soon as the sun rises, signaling the start of a new day for those who enjoy freedom, in the Ksar Ettir detention center, it marks the beginning of a dreadful ordeal. Each prisoner carries a pickaxe and a shovel on their shoulder and marches in order to the digging site. They are then ordered to fill in every hole they dig and repeat the digging and filling process until they collapse from exhaustion.

Prisoners are then moved to another location to build walls. Once completed, they are ordered to demolish them again, and this cycle continues day after day, week after week, month after month, and year after year, ensuring that they never experience rest or relief²³.

4.1.6. Torture by Dogs:

Despite the brutal methods employed by the detention administration to terrorize and subjugate prisoners, they resorted to even more horrific measures against Algerians, notably the use of dogs against the freedom fighters in Ksar Ettir²⁴.

These dogs were German breeds, trained for guarding alongside soldiers, and participated in any operation, whether chasing escapees, searching for missing persons, or tracking the tortured. According to the testimonies of the freedom fighters, dog-related torture occurred in several ways, as follows:

A. Individual Struggle:

This occurs between a prisoner and a dog. The prisoner is handed two leather sleeves covering their arms up to the elbows, and the trained dog is commanded to attack. A struggle ensues, and due to the animal's strength and the prisoner's weakened state from exhaustion and emaciation, the prisoner quickly collapses, at which point the dog takes its revenge. In this way, under occupation, Algerians were forced to fight animals, stripping them of human dignity ²⁵.

B. Group Struggle:

Following the outcome of the individual struggle, the administration escalates the torture to a group level. A group of dogs is released on a single prisoner, circling and attacking from all sides. They tear his clothes and rip at his body until he falls to the ground, nearly losing consciousness. Soldiers then pull him aside in anticipation of further torture of equal brutality ²⁶.

During this horrific scene, soldiers watch as if at a Roman arena, observing condemned prisoners fighting lions, laughing at the spectacle until they decide to intervene and separate the dog from the victim after it has inflicted severe damage.

Additionally, dogs were used to maul prisoners inside narrow, dark cells, often resulting in the loss of limbs or parts thereof, including genital organs ²⁷.

4.1.7. Torture by Pursuit:

The prison and torture supervisors release a group of dogs to chase a single detainee from behind, whose only task is to escape. If the dogs catch him or he falls to the ground, they

attack him and inflict severe injuries. It is worth noting that these dogs had ranks and salaries like the soldiers themselves and were trained to bite human bodies. The prison administration often exaggerates the torture of detainees, sometimes burying some of them under stones and soil, then ordering the dogs to find and tear them out²⁸.

4.1.8. Torture by Hunger and Thirst:

Hunger and thirst were prominent features of the Ksar Ettir prison and were considered normal conditions for the detainees. Each prisoner received only one-tenth of a loaf of dry bread in 24 hours and only one liter of water per day. The soup sometimes contained lentils or beans and was occasionally served without salt for several days or excessively salty for several days²⁹.

To further torment the detainees, the prison administration sometimes withheld even this meager food and water for several days. During these times, prisoners were forced to eat paper, insects they found in the yard, and leftovers from trash bins, such as onion and potato peels, turnip leaves, and artichokes (30). Guards often bartered with detainees, allowing them to pick potato peels in exchange for receiving painful beatings from soldiers. This diet led to severe physical deterioration: emaciation, protruding bones, eye atrophy, twisted limbs, pale faces, shriveled skin, hair loss, trembling limbs, internal organs sticking together, rib deformities, gum shrinkage, poor vision, prominent finger and spine bones, and weakness that prevented standing, sitting for long periods, or moving quickly. Detainees sometimes could not urinate or defecate for days³¹.

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Despite these harsh conditions, the agents would provoke the steadfast detainees by eating and drinking in front of them. Yet, the resolute fighters remained unaffected, because to obtain water or food, one would have to break ranks and face their comrades with insults and humiliation, something the free-minded refused to do.

An example recounted by detainees involves "Uncle Saleh Al-Jijli," who was deprived of food and water for several days for refusing to give confessions or concessions to the French enemy. He remained steadfast to the point of collapsing and losing awareness of everything. At one point, he briefly regained consciousness and was asked to leave the line and insult his brothers in exchange for a sip of water. He attempted to comply but could not bring himself to curse them, saying instead, "My brothers," and remained silent. The torturer "Mansour," an agent, returned him to his place and scolded him for saying "my brothers." Whenever he tried to speak, starting with "my brothers," he was sent back to his place without betraying his comrades or abandoning his revolutionary principles³².

4.1.9 Torture through the "Yobag" Process:

This method required the prisoner to lie on the ground and breathe rapidly hundreds of times. These strenuous exercises were extremely taxing on frail individuals with little strength, unable to stand for long or walk fast. Prisoners often refused this process, resulting in harsher punishment for their defiance³³.

4.1.10 Torture by Physical Mutilation:

This included removing eyebrows and eyelashes, shaving half of the mustache, plucking head hair, and extinguishing cigarette stubs on the detainee's body. Sometimes soldiers

burned fingernails and genitalia, causing burns that took months to heal. Torturers also slashed bodies with razors, sprinkled salt on wounds, and used dogs to bite prisoners³⁴. Other injuries resulted from broken glass, barbed wire, and thorns, in addition to extracting teeth and nails, amputating fingers and ears, dragging detainees over nailed wooden boards, or inserting axe handles, sticks, and bottle necks into the anus³⁵.

This brutal torture led to various permanent disabilities, including the loss of organs, insanity, chronic illnesses, and congenital deformities. Muhammad Taqiyya wrote in *Algeria in War*: “After police torture, many detainees went insane...”³⁶.

4.1.11 Torture by Sleep Deprivation:

While sleep is meant to restore the body from daily fatigue, the supervisors at Ksar Ettir prison used sleep deprivation as a method of torture. When prisoners attempted to sleep, they were awakened by beatings and shouting, moved from one wing to another, forced to lay on meager bedding, and returned to sleep between half-consciousness and wakefulness. This process repeated throughout the night.

Detainees spent the night moving between beds, often naked, bumping into walls or each other, or falling. Those too weak or sick to rise were punished by being locked in cells for several days without food or water, followed by dog attacks upon release³⁷.

4.1.12. Torture in Cells:

According to the testimony of fighters who endured captivity, the cells measured 1.20 m in length, 1 m in width, and slightly over 1 m in height, with floors covered in sharp gravel and ceilings lined with barbed wire separating them from tin roofing. Prisoners were confined for several days, only able to sit or stand, without bedding or cover, and deprived of ventilation. Upon release, they were often paralyzed, pale, with impaired vision from darkness, and sometimes blind, crippled, or insane³⁸.

Despite this extreme torture, particularly for those steadfast in revolutionary principles, prisoners refused to reveal secrets or surrender to the enemy, viewing their suffering as a “martyrdom for the liberation of the homeland”³⁹.

4.1.13. Torture by Digging Graves:

The French colonizers left no method of torture unused against prisoners, perhaps considering each new method more effective and impactful than the previous one. This time, they resorted to torture through grave digging. The mere sight of a grave instills fear and panic in the soul, suggesting torment, worms, and the decay of the body⁴⁰.

At the Palace of the Bird detention center, prisoners were forced to dig their own graves by hand. The digging process could take several days, aimed at affecting the psyche and terrifying the captured freedom fighters⁴¹. After digging the grave, the prisoner was forced either to submit to France’s will or be buried alive in it. If the prisoner submitted under the weight of this terrifying ordeal, they were transferred to the ranks of collaborators; if they stood by their principles, they were forced to fill the grave back in and place headstones as if it

contained a real corpse. Another prisoner would then be brought to stand by the grave and given the choice of submission or being buried alive, as had happened to their predecessor⁴².

This process continued with other prisoners to break the will of the weaker-minded, forcing them to yield to the enemy. The administration also spread rumors among prisoners that certain individuals had been buried alive, warning that if they did not accept French policy, the same fate awaited them⁴³.

This psychological tactic was intended to intimidate prisoners and crush men through psychological warfare carried out by experts in psychology, causing prisoners to suffer mental crises and nervous exhaustion, resulting in various illnesses such as stomach ulcers, nervous disorders, and heart problems. Torturers sometimes forced prisoners to dig their graves and bury themselves up to the neck, leaving them exposed to hunger and thirst until death. Many prisoners were subjected to this type of torture, and others were buried alive while shackled⁴⁴.

4.2. Psychological Torture:

This method was initially applied against political prisoners and later generalized during the De Gaulle era to force detainees to confess and abandon their revolutionary principles. The process involved threatening questions, promises of release, or intimidation⁴⁵.

The colonial administration treated prisoners according to their level of resistance and adherence to national principles. They sometimes monitored prisoners' correspondence to discern

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their thoughts and used it to manipulate them with promises or threats of torture. Prisoners could also be transferred from one detention center to another and then returned⁴⁶.

New arrivals were met with threats to instill fear, accompanied by propaganda broadcasts glorifying France and denigrating the revolutionaries, claiming the revolution had ended and those who supported it were mistaken. Some prisoners who abandoned their revolutionary principles and became collaborators were made to testify about their “error” in joining the liberation army and praise France’s greatness⁴⁷.

Prison supervisors aimed to break morale, verbally abusing and humiliating prisoners daily. Loudspeakers in the dormitories broadcasted insults against freedom fighters, calling them killers, criminals, bloodthirsty, lawless, bandits, and lunatics. To instill terror, soldiers conducted nighttime raids, taking a prisoner after announcing in the dormitory that he would be executed, and placed him in solitary confinement, only to move him later, leaving others to believe he had been killed⁴⁸.

Prisoners were also subjected to total darkness, forced nudity, or attacks by dogs, undermining dignity and inflicting psychological trauma. Mohamad Boukessa, a freedom fighter, recounted extreme cold, inadequate clothing, and being forced to endure pain from wires sewn into his shorts while pretending to be unharmed, under threat of enemy retribution⁴⁹.

5. Types of Brainwashing Operations:

The French army’s atrocities in Algeria took many forms, sometimes surpassing those of Nazis or fascists. Officers trained specifically for this purpose at the DOP center in Annaba and the Joan of Arc School in Skikda supervised psychological torture

and brainwashing of Algerian prisoners, applying methods learned in Indochina. They presented themselves as humble, gentle, eloquent, calm, and persuasive while concealing malicious intent⁵⁰.

Psychological warfare, accompanying France's extermination campaign against Algerians, relied heavily on psychological torture and brainwashing, targeting captured fighters and political figures to break revolutionary morale and win loyalty to French policy⁵¹.

5.1. Lessons:

At the Palace of the Bird detention center, every morning and evening, about a hundred prisoners were gathered in a classroom where a psychologist, assisted by a translator fluent in Arabic, French, and local dialects, lectured. The expert scrutinized the prisoners' faces, seeking to gauge their intentions⁵².

The lectures glorified French policy in Algeria, portraying France as liberating Algeria from backward Turkish colonizers, eradicating ignorance and disease, promoting science and civilization, and developing agriculture and infrastructure⁵². Simultaneously, the freedom fighters were vilified as criminals, bandits, and murderers spreading hatred between the French and Algerians⁵³.

Evening sessions involved answering questions based on the morning lecture, revealing prisoners' attitudes⁵⁴. Lessons

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continued for a full week without interruption, except for Saturday evenings reserved for written tests⁵⁵.

5.2. Written Test:

The written test involved presenting a set of questions that could be answered with "yes" or "no." Examinees were asked to mark or underline the word "yes" rather than "no." Among the questions posed to detainees, we can mention, for example:

- Can the Algerian people live without France?
Answer: yes or no.
- Has France provided social services to the Algerian people?
Answer: yes or no.
- Is France considered one of the countries that spread civilization in Africa and Asia?
Answer: yes or no⁵⁶.
- Are you well, or are you sick and in need of a doctor?
- Do you love your family?
- Do you want to leave the detention center?
- Don't you think that throwing a bomb in a café full of civilians is a criminal and brutal act?

When negotiations began between the National Liberation Front (FLN) and the French government, the nature of the questions changed, focusing on the issue of cooperation between Algeria and France after independence. Despite strict surveillance, most answers were "no," as the detainees often gestured their refusal to each other during the test⁵⁷.

After the mandatory answers were recorded, the papers—bearing the prisoner's number and name—were sent to Office Five, where the answers were studied and analyzed⁵⁸.

5.3. Oral Test:

Following the written test and a review of the detainees' responses, lessons continued as usual, as if nothing had happened, and no attention was paid to answers marked "no"⁵⁹. Teachers ignored what had occurred. Then detainees were summoned one by one to the office of the psychological expert, where they were welcomed with courtesy and artificial kindness. The detainee would sit in a comfortable chair, be offered a cup of coffee, and receive a high-quality cigarette-all designed to psychologically prepare them and make them feel relaxed and safe, as if their lessons had earned them this respect and esteem⁶⁰.

The psychological expert would then begin discussions, asking the detainee about their condition in detention, the reasons they were there, and the motives that led them to revolt against France. He would discuss in detail the demands of the revolution and the detainee's involvement from the beginning, explore the relationships with friendly states, and attempt to confuse or sow doubt in their thoughts⁶¹. Gradually, he would lead the detainee to accept collaboration with the French administration and join its ranks⁶².

Some of the ideas the psychological expert presented to detainees included claims such as: the FLN leaders abroad are enjoying themselves while you suffer here alone; most of the Liberation Army has been crushed, and only a small group remains, which will soon be eliminated; Algeria should not interact with the Soviet Union because it is communist and

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against Islam, and you will become infidels if you continue relations with it⁶³.

Detainees responded differently to these questions. Some emphasized the issue of colonization and argued that aerial bombing of villages was worse than throwing a bomb in a café—this group was subjected to constant torture. Others remained silent, refusing to answer despite the torturers' efforts. Some cooperated, answering positively to satisfy the colonial oppressors⁶⁴.

One method used by the authorities to corrupt the conscience and instill submission was to demand that a detainee abandon their nationalistic tendencies in exchange for stopping torture or providing food they had been deprived of. To receive this “reward,” the detainee had to:

1. Admit they were not part of the FLN, announce it publicly, and repeat it for hours.
2. Then admit they had been part of the FLN, claim it was a grave mistake, and loudly declare, "Down with the FLN."
3. Finally, acknowledge that Algeria's future is French and nothing else, culminating in the statement, "We are French and we love France"⁶⁵.

This humiliating process was repeated constantly as the colonial administration sought to destroy the national and revolutionary spirit of the fighters and secure their loyalty to French policies. Despite the various forms of torture and brainwashing, most fighters remained steadfast, adhering to their principles. Some suffered insanity, amputation, or other bodily harm, yet refused to join the enemy. Their resilience foiled all colonial plans. In one instance, the French proposed that five fighters join their ranks after showing some weakness; after

agreeing, they were integrated into a French army unit for a month. Once trusted, they deceived the unit during a patrol, escaped, and rejoined the National Liberation Army, continuing their struggle until martyrdom.

6. CONCLUSION

It can be said that the Casbah Prison (Ksar Ettir), as a model, represents one of the detention centers established by the French colonial authorities during the liberation revolution. By examining it, we have been able to interrogate the memory of the oppressive colonial history and conclude that detention, interrogation, torture, and execution experienced by the Algerian people during the revolution revealed the extreme brutality of colonial policies. Conversely, it also showcased the resilience, courage, and steadfast commitment to revolutionary principles of the Algerian people, deeply rooted in their religious values and belief that martyrdom for God, faith, and country is the ultimate aspiration of every fighter. Through their resistance, they foiled colonial plans to eradicate national spirit and suppress revolutionary ideas. Prisons and detention centers served a revolutionary purpose, exposing colonial oppression, torture, psychological abuse, and disregard for prisoners' rights and international conventions, revealing to the world the inhumane policies of France.

- Endnotes :

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17. Ibid., p. 89.
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23. Azoui, Mohamed-Taher, op. cit., p. 91.
24. Interview with moudjahid Lamouri Darragi conducted at the Moudjahidin Organization in Batna on 13/04/2005. For biographical details, see the appendix “Profiles of Some Moudjahidin,” pp. 91–99.
25. Azoui, Mohamed-Taher, op. cit., p. 93.
26. Khalasi, Mohamed, “Images of Torture in Algeria during the Liberation War,” *1er Novembre Journal*, n° 35, 1979, p. 47.
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28. Bou Tamin, Joudi Al-Akhdar, *Glimpses of the Algerian Revolution*, 2nd ed., National Book Foundation, Algeria, 1987, p. 158.
29. Azoui, Mohamed-Taher, op. cit., pp. 95–96.
30. Interview with moudjahidin M'addadi Taher, Zidani Farhat, Belaarouq Lakhdar, at the Moudjahidin Organization, Bordj Bou Arreridj, on 17/05/2005.
31. Azoui, Mohamed-Taher, op. cit., pp. 96–97.
32. Ibid., p. 97.
33. Ibid., p. 98.
34. Ibid., pp. 100–101.
35. Qalil, Ammar, op. cit., p. 42; see also Bouaziz, Yahia, op. cit., p. 400.
36. Mohamed Teguaia, *L'Algérie en guerre*, Office des Publications Universitaires, Alger, 1988, p. 256.
37. Azoui, Mohamed-Taher, op. cit., p. 103; see also Mohamed Derrai, "French Army Atrocities in Algeria during the Revolution," *Al-Rou'ya Journal*, issued by the National Center for Studies and Research on the National Movement and the 1st November Revolution 1954, Year 2, n° 3, 1997, p. 186.
38. Filali, Mokhtar, "France and Brutal Repression and Psychological Warfare against the Algerian Revolution," *Al-Turath Journal*, n° 5, Feb. 1992, p. 62; see also: "International Reports Expose French War Criminals," *El Moudjahid*, Part 2, n° 59, 11/01/1960, p. 5.
39. Azoui, Mohamed-Taher, op. cit., p. 104.
40. Ibid., p. 105.
41. Among the moudjahidin subjected to this type of torture was M'addadi Taher, interviewed at the Moudjahidin Organization in Bordj Bou Arreridj on 17/05/2005.
42. Azoui, Mohamed-Taher, op. cit., p. 106.
43. Filali, Mokhtar, op. cit., p. 61.
44. Qalil, Ammar, op. cit., p. 42.
45. Bou Tamin, Mustafa, *Struggles and Stances, 1er Novembre Journal*, n° 68, 1984, p. 42.

46. Azoui, Mohamed-Taher, "Prisons in Algeria during the Liberation Revolution," op. cit., p. 92.
47. Written testimony of moudjahid "Issa Zdam" from Sétif, provided by the president of the 1st November Association in Batna on 13/04/2005.
48. Al-'Ayashi, Ali, op. cit., p. 32.
49. Ibid., p. 33.
50. Bezziane, Saadi, "Pages from French Army Crimes in Algeria during the Liberation Revolution 1954–1962," *1er Novembre Journal*, n° 128–129, Juin 1991, p. 18; see also Mohamed Derrai, op. cit., p. 192.
51. Azoui, Mohamed-Taher, *Dhokirat al-Mu'taqalin*, op. cit., pp. 82–83.
52. Al-Junaidi et al., op. cit., p. 393.
53. Azoui, Mohamed-Taher, op. cit., p. 83.
54. Ibid., p. 83.
55. Ibid., p. 83; see also "Experiences of Persecution against an Invincible People," *El Moudjahid*, Vol. 4, n° 107, 01/11/1961, p. 20.
56. Written testimony of moudjahid Mohamed Abd El-Samad from Batna, op. cit.
57. Bouchareb, Belkacem, op. cit., p. 63; see also Bū al-Şafşāf, 'Abd al-Karīm, op. cit., p. 489.
58. Al-'Ayashi, Ali, op. cit., p. 33.
59. Azoui, Mohamed-Taher, *Dhokirat al-Mu'taqalin*, op. cit., p. 84.
60. French army units were tasked with spreading suspicion among the moudjahidin through forged correspondence, false news, and intelligence analysis.
61. Written testimony of moudjahid Mohamed Abd El-Samad, op. cit.
62. Azoui, Mohamed-Taher, op. cit., p. 84.

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63. Ibid., p. 85; the same testimony was provided by moudjahid Lamouri Darragi during an interview at the Moudjahidin Organization in Batna on 13/04/2005.
64. Azoui, Mohamed-Taher, op. cit., p. 85.
65. Al-‘Ayashi, Ali, op. cit., p. 33.