

Forum: Historical Security Council of the year 1962

Issue: The Question of the Algerian War of Independence

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Introduction

The Algerian War (1954–62) was one of the most violent and protracted decolonization conflicts in modern history¹. It began on 1 November 1954, when coordinated FLN guerrilla attacks struck military and civilian targets across Algeria². What started as rural insurrection quickly escalated into urban terrorism and full-scale counterinsurgency. By early 1962, ceasefire negotiations were underway between the French government and the FLN's provisional government (GPRA)³.

However, the *Organisation Armée Secrète* (OAS), a far-right French settler militia began indiscriminate bombings and assassinations in Algiers, aiming to provoke communal violence and derail the peace talks⁴. Casualties were enormous: French sources estimated about 350,000 Algerians killed, while Algerian sources put the number closer to one million⁵. Meanwhile, roughly 2.4 million Algerians were forcibly relocated into military “regroupment” camps by 1961⁶, creating dire humanitarian conditions (malnutrition, disease, and mortality).

Definition of Key Terms

¹ <https://gtr.ukri.org/projects?ref=AH%2FG007357%2F1#:~:text> Accessed 6.1.2025

² <https://courses.lumenlearning.com/suny-worldhistory/chapter/33-1-2-the-algerian-war-of-independence/> Accessed 26.12.2025

³ <https://courses.lumenlearning.com/suny-worldhistory/chapter/33-1-2-the-algerian-war-of-independence/> Accessed 26.12.2025

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<https://www.encyclopedia.com/social-sciences/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/organisation-armee-secrete-secret-army-organization#> Accessed 6.1.2026

⁵ <https://journals.openedition.org/anneemaghreb/4616?lang=en#> Accessed 26.12.2026

⁶ <https://www.britannica.com/topic/National-Liberation-Front-political-party-Algeria> Accessed 26.12.2026

Front de Libération Nationale (FLN)

The main Algerian nationalist movement was founded in March 1954. It united virtually all Algerian nationalist groups by 1956 and demanded full independence for Algeria⁷. The FLN insisted on Algeria's territorial independence and became the sole internationally-recognized representative of the Algerian people.

Armée de Libération Nationale (ALN)

The FLN's military wing, led by Col. Houari Boumédiène⁸. It was divided into an external ALN, fighters based in Tunisia and Morocco, providing arms and support and an internal ALN, guerrilla units inside Algeria, organized into six "wilaya" combat zones. The Morice Line (an electrified fence constructed by France) largely contained the external ALN. By 1962 the internal ALN was estimated at roughly 10,000–15,000 fighters after years of French counterinsurgency, while tens of thousands of trained ALN troops waited in neighboring countries to enter Algeria once a ceasefire was declared⁹¹⁰.

Organisation de l'Armée Secrète (OAS)

A paramilitary terrorist group formed in 1961 by hardline French generals (after their failed April 1961 coup) to oppose Algerian independence. The OAS pledged that "Algeria is French and will remain so"^[8]. It waged a campaign of bombings, sabotage, and assassinations against both FLN targets and French officials, hoping to provoke a racial civil war. Its terror strikes on cafes, buses, and marketplaces aimed to destabilize Algiers and blunt French withdrawal^[3].

Pieds-Noirs

The roughly one million European settlers of Algeria (mainly of French, Spanish, or Italian origin) who held full French citizenship. They dominated Algeria's political and economic life under colonial rule. Most pieds-noirs viewed the FLN as terrorists; they feared that independence would mean exile or worse for their community. (Notably, in 1955 FLN attacks on

⁷ <https://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/41391> Accessed 26.12.2026

⁸ <https://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/41391> Accessed 26.12.2026

⁹ <https://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/41391> Accessed 26.12.2026

¹⁰ <https://journals.openedition.org/remi/6553#> Accessed 6.1.2026

pieds-noirs at Philippeville and elsewhere brutalized many civilians and led to heavy French reprisals¹¹.)

Harkis

Indigenous Algerian Muslims who served as auxiliaries in the French Army. Numbering on the order of 150,000–200,000, they provided crucial local knowledge and fought alongside French units. The FLN regarded them as traitors. If France withdrew, these auxiliaries and their families faced likely retaliation by the FLN. Indeed, only about 50–60,000 fled to France in 1962, while roughly 150,000 were reported killed by FLN forces¹². Their plight makes protections for Harkis a critical humanitarian issue after any ceasefire.

Camps de Regroupement

“Regroupement” camps were concentration camps the French Army set up in the late 1950s to remove rural populations from FLN influence. Villagers were herded into barbed-wire compounds (“mattes”), cut off from their lands. Historians estimate some 2.4 million Algerians had been relocated into them by 1960¹³, and many more were displaced. Observers noted that conditions were extremely harsh, overcrowding, poor sanitation, malnutrition, and disease were rampant¹⁴. Such camps became a large humanitarian crisis.

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<https://courses.lumenlearning.com/suny-worldhistory/chapter/33-1-2-the-algerian-war-of-independence/#>
Accessed 26.12.2025

¹²

<https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Journals/Military-Review/English-Edition-Archives/mr-history-page/MR-Categories-Guerrilla-Warfare/Algiers-1957-Kee/> Accessed 26.12.2025

¹³ <https://www.britannica.com/topic/National-Liberation-Front-political-party-Algeria> Accessed 26.12.2025

¹⁴ <https://www.britannica.com/topic/National-Liberation-Front-political-party-Algeria> Accessed 26.12.2025



The Morice line: Electrified barriers along the entire length of Algeria's eastern and western borders

Background

The Legal and Historical Anomaly

Algeria's status made its war unique. Unlike other colonies, it had been annexed and integrated into France proper: by 1848 France declared Algeria as a part of France, divided into three French provinces. In theory, Algeria was legally "France" and Algerians were French. In practice, colonial rule was grossly unequal. A European minority (about one million pieds-noirs)

controlled nearly all fertile land and held full political rights, while the nine million Muslim majority lived under a repressive *Code de l'indigénat*. ("Code of the Indigenous People")

This regime which has been in force since 1881 treated Muslims as second-class, they paid higher taxes, lacked proper political representation, and were subject to collective punishments¹⁵.

Phases of the Conflict (1954–1961)

- **1954–1956: Insurrection.** The FLN launched its war on 1 November 1954, targeting small military posts and gendarmerie stations nationwide. The goal was to galvanize Muslims and eliminate moderate rivals. By mid-1955 the fighting had spread across rural Algeria. In August 1955 the FLN carried out the Philippeville Massacre, which was a series of indiscriminate attacks that killed 123 European civilians and moderate Muslims¹⁶. French retaliations in turn killed hundreds or thousands of Algerians (FLN sources claim up to 12,000)¹⁷. That violence polarised society and convinced many Muslims to rally to the FLN.
- **1956–1957: Battle of Algiers.** To gain international attention, the FLN's urban branch launched a terror campaign in Algiers. Bombings in cafés, clubs, and civilian areas terrorized the European community. In response, the French 10th Parachute Division in January 1957 imposed martial law in the city. French forces captured or killed the main FLN networks, but did so using systematic torture and executions¹⁸. While militarily effective, these brutal methods shocked world opinion. News of torture alienated the French public and undermined support for the war¹⁹.
- **1958–1960: Political Crisis.** The war had shaken France itself. In May 1958, fear of a military coup and riots by European settlers in Algiers brought down France's unstable Fourth Republic. Charles de Gaulle returned to power, backed by the pieds-noirs and

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<https://www.jfklibrary.org/archives/other-resources/john-f-kennedy-speeches/united-states-senate-imperialism-19570702> Accessed 26.12.2025

¹⁶ <https://gtr.ukri.org/projects?ref=AH%2FG007357%2F1#:~:text> Accessed 6.1.2026

¹⁷ <https://gtr.ukri.org/projects?ref=AH%2FG007357%2F1#:~:text> Accessed 6.1.2026

¹⁸ <https://journals.openedition.org/anneemaghreb/4616?lang=en#> Accessed 26.12.2025

¹⁹ <https://journals.openedition.org/anneemaghreb/4616?lang=en#> Accessed 26.12.2025

army. However, de Gaulle gradually recognized that “French Algeria” was untenable in the long run. By 1959 he publicly accepted the principle of Algerian self-determination, infuriating hardliners. He also reasserted that Saharan oil rights and security guarantees for French citizens must be addressed. Paris’s political shift deepened the conflict: the French army and settlers grew distrustful of de Gaulle, while the FLN’s GPRA government-in-exile gained foreign sympathy.

The Current Situation (Early 1962)

The GPRA (a temporary government set up in Algeria) has achieved diplomatic success: many countries, especially in the Soviet bloc and Afro-Asian bloc now recognize the FLN as Algeria’s legitimate government²⁰. Negotiations are in final stages, but violence is surging. The OAS has escalated city bombings and assassinations against both Muslims and moderate French authorities²¹. Their tactic is to provoke a massacre of Europeans, hoping this will force the French Army to abandon the talks and reoccupy Algeria. This “scorched-earth” campaign targets cafes, schools, and transportation hubs. Meanwhile, the French-built Morice Line has effectively sealed the Tunisian and Moroccan borders²². This denies the well-equipped external ALN with its tens of thousands of fighters the chance to enter Algeria. Thus a large Algerian force remains massed on the borders, awaiting any ceasefire order. They could enter the interior en masse once the ceasefire is declared, which could upset any internal power balance in a future Algeria.

Key Member States and NGOs Involved

France

President de Gaulle wants to end the conflict and refocus France on rebuilding and modernizing. He is prepared to grant Algeria independence if necessary, but insists on

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<https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/revolution-and-political-transition-tunisia-migration-game-changer#>
Accessed 26.12.2025

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<https://www.encyclopedia.com/social-sciences/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/organisation-armee-secrete-secret-army-organization#> Accessed 6.1.2026

²² <https://journals.openedition.org/remi/6553#> Accessed 26.12.2025

protecting French strategic and economic interests (notably retaining some Saharan military bases and oil rights) and ensuring safety for the 1,000,000 pieds-noirs. Internally, France is fighting the OAS as a domestic insurgency even as it negotiates with the FLN. The army itself is divided: some officers oppose concessions, while others back de Gaulle's goal of a diplomatic settlement.

Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic (GPRA)

The GPRA in exile demands full sovereignty for Algeria, without any partition of territory. In particular, they reject any French retention of the Sahara, where oil fields and military bases lie. The GPRA has garnered sympathy abroad and insists on a fully democratic transition. Tensions exist within the nationalist camp. The *political* leadership in Tunis is urging cautious diplomacy, whereas field commanders push for maximal military gains. The ALN fighters worry that haggling over issues in talks might give de Gaulle a reason to go back on his promises.

United States of America

The USA officially supports decolonization and has quietly pressed France to negotiate. U.S. policymakers fear that continued French intransigence could alienate Arab states toward the USSR. However, given France's central role in NATO and the Cold War, the U.S. has been cautious: it has not publicly condemned France at the UN, preferring to handle pressure diplomatically. President Kennedy, for example, spoke privately with de Gaulle about Algeria but avoided public confrontation, as it was a sensitive NATO matter.

Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

The Soviet Union has vocally backed the FLN's struggle as an anti-imperialist cause. Soviet and Eastern bloc governments grant the GPRA diplomatic recognition and provide moral support. However, Moscow has balanced this with caution: while it encourages independence movements, it has avoided fully breaking with de Gaulle because of realpolitik. In practice, the USSR uses the Algerian issue to embarrass the West but has stopped short of direct military involvement.

Tunisia and Morocco

Both newly independent neighbors host the GPRA and thousands of Algerian refugees. They have paid a heavy price: France has repeatedly violated their airspace and borders, notably the bombing of Sakiet Sidi Youssef in Tunisia, Feb 1958. Both governments strongly support a UN-mediated settlement. They urge the Security Council to intervene, citing their security concerns.

Timeline of Key Events

Date	Event	Significance
Nov 1, 1954	Toussaint Rouge	FLN launches 30 coordinated attacks (the war begins)
Aug 20, 1955	Philippeville Massacre	FLN kills 123 civilians (mostly pieds-noirs); French reprisals kill thousands. Relations irreparably broken.
Jan–Sept 1957	Battle of Algiers	FLN terror in Algiers; French paratroopers crush FLN cell. Torture by French widely used, provoking outcry.
May 13, 1958	Crisis of 13 May (Algiers)	Settler-led riots in Algiers force the collapse of the Fourth Republic; de Gaulle returns.
Sept 16, 1959	de Gaulle's Speech	de Gaulle publicly endorses Algerian self-determination.
Dec 19, 1960	UN GA Res 1573	The UN General Assembly recognizes Algerians' right to independence.
April 22–26, 1961	Generals' Putsch (Algiers)	Four French generals attempt a coup to block decolonization; fails. OAS was formed soon after.

Date	Event	Significance
Oct 17, 1961	Paris Massacre	French police kill dozens of peaceful pro-FLN protesters in Paris (dozens drowned in the Seine).
Feb 8, 1962	Charonne	Police beat to death 9 anti-OAS demonstrators in Paris. French public opinion turns against repression.
Mar 1962	Metro Massacre Évian Negotiations	France and GPRA reach final ceasefire terms; OAS violence peaks to disrupt accord.

UN Involvement and Relevant Resolutions

France long resisted UN intervention by invoking Article 2²³, deeming Algeria an internal matter. For years the Security Council did not act. However, rising international pressure and the Afro-Asian bloc shifted the debate to the General Assembly. In December 1960, UNGA Resolution 1573 (XV) explicitly recognized the “right of the Algerian people to self-determination and independence”²⁴. GA Resolution 1724 (1961) followed, urging France and the GPRA to resume negotiations on that basis. To date, no Chapter VII Security Council resolution has been passed. Nonetheless, the Security Council has a new legal basis to consider Algeria: the conflict’s regional spillover border incursions in Tunisia and Morocco and the fact that the OAS is effectively a non-state terrorist force destabilizing peace. The Security Council could thus justify action “to maintain or restore international peace and security” even though France opposes it.

²³ <https://journals.openedition.org/remi/6553#> Accessed 26.12.2025

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<https://courses.lumenlearning.com/suny-worldhistory/chapter/33-1-2-the-algerian-war-of-independence/#> Accessed 26.12.2025



Terrorist attacks in Algiers: Muslim quarters (green), European quarters (orange)

Possible Solutions

Possible measures taken by the Security Council could include:

1. **Deployment of a UN Peacekeeping Force (as what was done in Congo with ONUC²⁵).** Once a ceasefire is agreed, the Security Council could authorize a multinational force to monitor compliance, secure cities, and protect civilians. Its mandate would cover surveillance of FLN and French troop withdrawals, dismantling regroupment camps, and guarding vulnerable groups. A force modeled after ONUC in the Congo, which deployed ~20,000 troops in 1960–64 to maintain order and protect civilians would provide impartial security and deter OAS attacks.
2. **International Referendum Commission.** The UN could establish a commission to oversee the self-determination referendum. Its task could be to ensure a free, fair vote once all parties agree to a ceasefire. This would involve voter registration, voter education, and observation. The aim is to prevent intimidation by remaining French forces in the countryside or by FLN cadres in the cities.
3. **Targeted Sanctions on the OAS.** The Security Council can label the OAS a threat to peace. Member states, especially those giving it tacit shelter, as OAS leaders were known to move in Spain and Switzerland. They could freeze OAS funds and extradite its leaders for prosecution. An arms embargo on hardline Pieds-Noirs militias and travel bans on OAS chiefs would impede their operations. A formal Security Council condemnation would also underscore that such terrorism will not be tolerated.
4. **Humanitarian Corridors and Refugee Repatriation.** With roughly 200,000 Algerian refugees in Tunisia and Morocco and millions displaced internally, the UN must address the human crisis. We, the Security Council could direct UNHCR to set up safe return routes into Algeria as stability returns. Emergency aid for food, water, and medicine should be provided to the camps. Critically, “humanitarian corridors” or temporary safe zones should be created to shelter Harki families and vulnerable pieds-noirs during the power transition, preventing summary revenge killings.

²⁵ <https://peacekeeping.un.org/mission/past/onucB.htm#> Accessed 26.12.2025

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