

Algeria: A Victim of France's Nation Statehood

The French occupation of Algeria lasted for 132 years from July 5, 1830 until July 5, 1962. During the course of the colonization, over 10 million Algerians were martyred and hundreds of thousands more were injured, missing or were forced from their homes.

The era saw France subjugate the Algerian people in a multitude of ways, with the sole intention of pillaging the nation and its people of their character, strength and resources for its own benefit.

France imposed its own schooling system upon the Muslim populace, through its missionaries, opening the first Catholic school in 1836 in a bid to undermine the Islamic identity of the population and sever the link with their honourable heritage. For the same reason, French was made the official language of the state, an act of humiliation to deconstruct the Algerian heritage.

As the colonialists put the masses to work in mines in slave-like conditions, the great mineral, oil and agricultural wealth of Algeria was looted to the sole benefit of the French economy. The occupiers were also responsible for the abuse and torture against Algerian civilians through mass incarceration - where electric shocks and the use of water wells as prisons have since been proven by historians through many witness testimony.

Naturally the French colonial rule faced fierce resistance, which in turn was met with a brutal crackdown by the colonisers. In 1880, France killed and kept the skulls of 37 resistance fighters (Mujahideen), which to this day remain stored at the Museum of Mankind in Paris. All demands for their return have to date been rejected. Data suggests at least 2 million Algerian resistance fighters were martyred during the course of the struggle for independence from France.

However, France's despicable crimes didn't end there. Algerians were massacred on several occasions for protesting the occupation, right up until 1961 - but on May 8th, 1945 after the fall of Nazi Germany, protests for independence saw 45,000 people killed in two weeks in the towns of Setif, Guelma and Kherrata.

The inhumanity of the French occupiers knew no bounds as nuclear tests were conducted in the southwest of Algeria in the 1960's. Gerboise Bleue or Blue Desert Rat, among other operations, led to the death of 42,000 and thousands more suffered severe illness from the radioactive fallout.

No longer able to hide from their sordid past in an era of information, historian Raphaëlle Branche told Le Monde, "It will no longer be possible to deny the systemic nature of torture in Algeria"; and in 2017 the Algerian League for the Defense of Human Rights estimated the victims of French colonial rule to be over 10 million.

In 2019, France officially acknowledged for the first time that it carried out systematic torture during Algeria's independence war – a landmark admission about its conduct in the conflict which ended 56 years ago and that has been shrouded in

