



## **The Civil Organization of the Liberation Revolution in the OUED Souf Region and its Role in Supporting the National Struggle: Taghzout Region as a Case Study 1955-1962**

**Dr. Ayoub Chargui, Dr. Salem Elhabib**

University of El Oued (Algeria)

University of El Oued (Algeria)

### **Abstract:**

This research explores the role of the civil organization of the Algerian Liberation Revolution in Taghzout during the War of Independence (1954–1962). It highlights the contribution of local inhabitants in supporting the National Liberation Front (FLN) and the National Liberation Army (ALN). The civil organization was responsible for collecting funds, providing supplies, transmitting information, and sheltering revolutionaries. It also played an important role in spreading national awareness and mobilizing the population. Despite colonial surveillance, arrests, and repression, its members continued their activities in support of the revolution. The study concludes that the civil organization in Taghzout was a key factor in strengthening the revolutionary movement and contributed significantly to Algeria's independence in 1962.

**Keywords:** Algerian Revolution, Civil Organization, Taghzout, FLN, Independence.

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### **Introduction:**

The Algerian War of Independence is considered one of the greatest revolutions in contemporary history. Thanks to the sacrifices of its people and its meticulous organization, it was able to confront one of the most powerful colonial forces of the time and achieve independence after more than seven years of armed and political struggle. The success of the revolution was not solely dependent on military action, but also relied on an effective civilian organization that played a fundamental role in organizing and mobilizing the population and providing various forms of support to the freedom fighters. The Taghzout region, located in the Souf Valley, witnessed remarkable revolutionary activity embodied in the establishment of a civilian organization linked to the structures of the National Liberation Front (FLN). The people of the region contributed to the revolution by collecting subscriptions and donations in their hometowns or in places of exile in Algiers, Tunisia, and eastern Algeria, etc., securing communications, sheltering fighters, transmitting news and instructions, as well as spreading national awareness among the population, as exemplified by the efforts of the two student activists from the Zitouna Mosque, Yembaï Ahmida and Sahraoui Sayeh. This organization enabled the revolution to establish a broad popular base, which helped it to endure and withstand the various attempts at repression and restrictions imposed by the colonial administration.

The civil organization in Taghzout also emerged as a vital link between the people and the revolution. It served as an effective means of mobilizing and directing human and material resources to serve the national cause, making it a constant target of surveillance and persecution by the colonial authorities, who sought to dismantle its networks and weaken its influence. Given the importance of this topic in highlighting the contribution of the inhabitants of the Taghzout region to the liberation revolution, this study aims to shed light on the emergence of the civil organization in the region, its structures, its

functions, and its role in supporting the national struggle. Therefore, we pose the following question: To what extent did the civil organization of the liberation revolution in the Taghzout region contribute to supporting the revolutionary action and achieving the goals of the Algerian revolution?

First) The Emergence of the Civil Organization of the Liberation Revolution in the Taghzout Region:

The Algerian liberation revolution was not a purely military endeavor, but rather a comprehensive national project that relied on the integration of efforts between armed action and civil organization. The leadership of the National Liberation Front (FLN) recognized, from the outbreak of the revolution on November 1, 1954, the importance of involving various segments of society in supporting the liberation struggle. It worked to establish civil organizations to organize and mobilize the population and provide the necessary support for the mujahideen. The civil organization in the Souf Valley emerged after the leader, Taleb Larbi Gammoudi, asked his uncle, Bachir Gharbi, to assume responsibility for establishing the civil organization in the Hassi Khalifa region. Cells were subsequently established throughout the Souf Valley. Within this framework, the Taghzout region of the Souf Valley played a prominent role, as its inhabitants contributed to embracing and supporting the revolution through an active and effective civil organization.

1) General Conditions in the Taghzout Region Before the Revolution

A) Geographical Location and Strategic Importance:

The Taghzout region is located within the Souf Valley province in southeastern Algeria. It is bordered to the north by the regions of Guemar and Reguiba, to the south by the regions of Kouinine and Ourmas, to the west by Reguiba, and to the east by Hassani Abdelkrim. Its desert location made it a transit and communication hub for many population centers in the eastern part of the country. Its desert terrain and vast geographical area provided suitable conditions for the movement of activists and freedom fighters, and facilitated communication between the various revolutionary structures, especially since its inhabitants were scattered across numerous migration routes.

The region acquired particular importance during the War of Independence due to its proximity to desert routes used for the movement of people, information, and supplies. This made it a focus of attention for both the National Liberation Front (FLN) and the French colonial authorities. B) Socioeconomic Conditions:

Before the outbreak of the revolution, the inhabitants of Taghzout lived in difficult economic circumstances as a result of colonial policies that marginalized the desert regions and deprived them of genuine development. Most of the population relied on simple agricultural and commercial activities, in addition to some traditional crafts, which constituted their primary source of income.

Despite these conditions, the local community maintained its social cohesion and its religious and national values. Families, religious lodges (zawiyas), and mosques played a crucial role in spreading awareness and preserving the Arab-Islamic identity that colonialism attempted to erase. This social cohesion helped create a conducive environment for accepting the ideas of the Algerian national movement and participating in the liberation revolution.

C) The Growth of National Consciousness in the Region:

Like other regions of Algeria, the Taghzout region witnessed the spread of anti-colonial nationalist ideas during the first half of the 20th century. This was particularly true as its residents in Algiers had become involved early on in political and national movements, such as Belkacem Kasmi's involvement in the North African Star, followed by the joining of many Taghzout natives in the People's Party, including Khfach El-Eid, Kasmi El-Eid, Dassia Hafoudha, and Hamou El-Bachir. Additionally, a group of young men joined the Association of Muslim Scholars during Abdelhamid Ben Badis's visit to Souf in the late 1930s, including Darwish Maamar, Achour Ali, and others.

The inhabitants were influenced by the activities of the Algerian national movement and the political events that the country experienced, especially the colonial massacres that revealed the true nature of French policy in Algeria. Mosques, scholars, and some activists also contributed to spreading national consciousness among the population, increasing the sense of the need for liberation from colonialism and the restoration of national sovereignty. When the War of Liberation broke out in 1954, the call for armed struggle resonated widely with the people of the region, who engaged in various forms of support and assistance. 2) Establishment of the Civil Organization in the Taghzout Region

#### A) Circumstances of the Emergence of the Civil Organization:

With the expansion of the liberation revolution and its spread to various regions of the country, the need arose to establish civil organizations to support the military action and ensure its continuity. The civil organization in the Taghzout region was established within the framework of the organizational policy adopted by the National Liberation Front (FLN) with the aim of organizing the population and mobilizing human and material resources to serve the revolution.

The Taghzout cell of the civil organization was established in mid-1955, headed by Sheikh Yembaï Mohieddine, and its members were: Omrani Abbas, Hamou El Aid, Awadi Maamar, and Yembaï Hamida. The establishment of this organization came in response to the conditions imposed by the revolutionary phase, as the mujahideen needed a support network to provide supplies, information, communications, and safe places for meetings and movement. Therefore, civilian cells were formed, comprising a number of activists known for their patriotism and the trust the population had in them. ( )

#### B) The Civil Organization's Connection to the National Liberation Front:

The civilian organization was not an independent body from the revolution, but rather an essential part of the National Liberation Front's structure. It operated under the supervision of revolutionary officials, receiving instructions and directives from them, and was responsible for implementing decisions related to mobilizing the population and organizing popular support.

Hajj Abbas Omrani, a native of the region, played a significant role in connecting the Taghzout region with the Aurès Mountains through his effective contribution in sending funds, weapons, and medicine to Wilaya I. The National Liberation Front relied on this organization to maintain contact between the revolutionary leadership and the citizens, and to ensure that instructions and news reached various social groups. ( ) The organization also contributed to maintaining secrecy and discipline, two essential elements for the success of revolutionary action.

#### C) The Early Fighters and Their Role in Building the Organization:

The civil organization in Taghzout relied on a group of men and women who believed in the justice of the national cause and were prepared to sacrifice for the independence of Algeria. Many of them played a leading role in national organizations, such as the Mujahid Soudani Mohamed, who joined the Movement for the Triumph of Democratic Liberties in the Chelghoum El Aid region early on in 1947, in addition to Taghzout natives who had emigrated to Algiers.

These individuals contributed to establishing the first organizational cells, recruiting sympathizers for the revolution, collecting donations, delivering messages, and providing various forms of support to the Mujahideen. Their activities were characterized by caution and secrecy due to constant colonial surveillance. They worked in difficult conditions and faced the risk of arrest and torture at any moment. Despite this, they managed to build an effective civil network that helped the revolution achieve its goals in the region.

#### Secondly) The Structures and Functions of Civil Organization in the Taghzout Region

From the outset, the leadership of the liberation revolution recognized that the success of military action depended on the existence of a strong civil organization to support it and provide it with various forms of assistance. Therefore, the National Liberation Front (FLN) was keen to establish civil organizational

structures in various regions, including the Taghzout region, to serve as a link between the people and the revolution, and to ensure the mobilization of the necessary human and material resources for the continuation of the armed struggle. Initially, the organization's task was to collect funds and send them to the Aurès Mountains. With the rise of national awareness, support expanded beyond this. The civil organization in the region was characterized by its discipline and flexibility, which enabled it to perform multiple tasks despite the difficult security conditions imposed by French colonialism.

## 1) The Organizational Structure of the Civil Organization in the Taghzout Region

### A) Civil Cells and Their Organizational Method:

The civil organization of the liberation revolution in the Taghzout region relied on a cell system, an organizational method aimed at ensuring secrecy and protecting fighters from discovery by the colonial authorities. Each cell comprised a limited number of individuals, ranging from five to six fighters, who carried out specific tasks according to the directives of local officials affiliated with the National Liberation Front (FLN).

This system facilitated coordination among members of the organization and reduced the potential harm resulting from the arrest of a fighter, as their identity was limited to a small number of people. In this way, the organization was able to continue its activities despite the pursuit and search campaigns launched by the colonial forces. In this regard, Qaid Lamine, Qaid Ouled Saoud in Kouinine, and Sheikh El-Bernoussakmazy Abdelkrim, both contributed to concealing the activities of the fighters as much as possible.

### B) Organizational Responsibilities and Tasks:

Responsibilities within the civilian organization were distributed according to the nature of the required activity. Some members, such as Haj Abbas Omrani and Yembai Mohieddine, were tasked with collecting funds and donations, while Sheikh Yembai Hamida was entrusted with mobilization and disseminating nationalist ideas. Other members contributed support through their personal connections, particularly Awadi Maamar and Hamou El-Eid, who were merchants.

Others were assigned the task of communication, delivering messages, or providing supplies to the mujahideen. There were also officials responsible for supervising the cells and monitoring the implementation of instructions issued by the revolutionary leadership. This precise distribution of tasks contributed to a degree of effectiveness and discipline, and ensured the continuity of organizational activity even in cases where some activists were arrested or persecuted. c) Communication and Coordination Methods:

The civil organization in the Taghzout region relied on simple but effective communication methods, consisting of trusted messengers, oral and written messages, and the use of certain agreed-upon signals and symbols to avoid detection of revolutionary activity. Communication was conducted in complete secrecy due to the precarious security situation, as the colonial authorities monitored the movements of the population and sought to uncover the revolution's support networks. The cell members enlisted the help of the activist Soudani Mohamed, who owned a truck and traveled between the northern and southern regions. Despite these challenges, the organization members managed to maintain continuous communication between the various cells and revolutionary leaders.

## 2) The Main Tasks of the Civil Organization in the Taghzout Region

### A) Fundraising and Subscriptions:

One of the most prominent tasks undertaken by the civil organization was collecting funds and subscriptions from the population to support the liberation revolution. The revolution needed financial resources to cover the expenses of the mujahideen and to provide the necessary equipment and supplies to continue the struggle. The residents of Taghzout contributed what they could, whether money, food, or

weapons, as an expression of their support for the national cause. Members of the civil organization played a pivotal role in organizing this process and ensuring that aid reached those who needed it.

#### B) Provisions and Supplies:

Provisions were one of the most important areas of activity for the civil organization. It was responsible for providing food, clothing, and medicine to the mujahideen, in addition to weapons. These weapons were collected by Haj Abbas Omrani and Soudani Mohamed, who personally transported them to the Khenchela and Batna regions. This task required considerable effort due to the difficult security conditions and the colonial forces' control over the movement of goods and people. Despite these difficulties, the organization members succeeded in establishing an effective support network that contributed to meeting the needs of the mujahideen, which enabled them to continue their military activities under better conditions. c) Transmitting Messages and Information:

Transmitting messages and instructions between the various structures of the revolution was a fundamental task of the civilian organization. The nature of revolutionary work necessitated a constant communication system that allowed for the exchange of information and the coordination of operations. Members of the organization carried out this task with great secrecy throughout the period between 1957 and 1962, the year the organization was discovered. They relayed messages between leaders and fighters, and they also gathered information concerning the movements of the colonial forces and delivered it to the relevant authorities. This helped protect the mujahideen and avert many dangers during that period.

#### d) Sheltering the Mujahideen and protecting the fighters:

The residents of Taghzout contributed through civil organization to providing shelter for the Mujahideen and fighters wanted by the colonial authorities. This was embodied after the Battle of Ghout Sultan on January 16, 1956, when one of the fighters, Qadiri Muhammad Al-Saghir, took it upon himself to hide one of the surviving soldiers, Shtouh Ahmed. Some houses were turned into safe stops for resting, holding secret meetings, or hiding revolutionary documents. This activity involved great risks, as its discovery often led to the arrest of the homeowners and their exposure to torture or imprisonment ( ), but the high national spirit prompted many to continue this role despite the sacrifices.

#### e) Political Mobilization and Spreading National Awareness:

The activities of the civil organization were not limited to material aspects, but also included political and awareness-raising work. The activists worked to explain the goals of the revolution to the population, encouraging them to rally around the National Liberation Front and resisting colonial propaganda that aimed to distort the image of the revolution. They also contributed to consolidating the values of solidarity and national unity, especially the work done by Sahraoui Sayeh and Yembaï Hamida throughout Taghzout, which strengthened the population's connection to the revolution and made them more willing to participate in various forms of struggle.

### ( ) Thirdly) The Role of Civil Organizations in Supporting the Liberation Revolution and the Difficulties They Faced in the Taghzout Region

Civil organizations represented one of the most important pillars upon which the Algerian liberation revolution relied in its various stages. They were not merely an auxiliary force to the military, but rather a fundamental partner in achieving the revolution's goals and ensuring its continuity. The civil organization in the Taghzout region played a prominent role in mobilizing the population and providing support to the mujahideen, making it a constant target for the colonial authorities, who sought to eliminate it by various means. Despite the persecution and restrictions it faced in 1957, it continued to perform its duties and contributed effectively to the national cause.

#### 1) The Contribution of Civil Society to Supporting the Liberation Revolution

##### a) Supporting the National Liberation Army:

The civil society in the Taghzout region contributed to providing various forms of support to the National Liberation Army (ALN). It ensured the provision of the mujahideen's needs for food, clothing, medicine, and essential supplies to sustain their military activities. This was evident in the considerable quantities of weapons transported by Haj Abbas Omrani and Soudani Mohamed. The local population also participated by providing financial and in-kind assistance, which helped alleviate the burdens faced by the mujahideen in the field. This support was a fundamental factor in enabling the ALN to continue its operations against the colonial forces, especially given the siege and surveillance imposed by the French administration on various Algerian regions.

b) Ensuring the continuity of communication between the structures of the revolution:

The civil organization played an important role in maintaining communication channels between the various structures of the revolution, as it ensured the transmission of messages, instructions and information between the revolutionary leaders and the fighters. A good example of this is all the correspondence that took place between Mohieddine Yembai in Taghzout and the fighter Al-Aroussi Ben Faraj in Al-Muqrin. This contributed to achieving coordination between the various political and military activities, and ensuring the implementation of decisions issued by the leadership of the revolution. Civil communication networks also helped in transmitting news related to the movements of the colonial forces, which enabled the mujahideen to take the necessary precautions and avoid many dangers. ( )

c) Mobilizing the Population and Strengthening Popular Support for the Revolution:

Civil organization played a significant role in spreading national awareness among the inhabitants of Taghzout by explaining the goals of the revolution and the importance of participating in and supporting it. This contributed to strengthening trust between the people and the National Liberation Front (FLN) and consolidating a sense of belonging to the national cause. This was embodied in school programs and national anthems adopted by Sheikhs Sayeh Sahraoui and Hamida Yembai while carrying out their duties secretly in homes and in the Arabic school. The activists also worked to counter colonial propaganda aimed at weakening the national spirit, and they succeeded in maintaining the unity and cohesion of the population around the goals of the revolution, making the region a human and material reservoir supporting the liberation struggle.

2) Difficulties and Challenges Faced by the Civil Organization

A) Colonial Surveillance and Security Persecution:

The colonial authorities recognized the importance of the civil organization in supporting the revolution. Therefore, they intensified their efforts to monitor population movements and uncover networks linked to the National Liberation Front (FLN). During the discovery of the civil organization in Souf in April 1957, the cell was discovered, and Sheikh Yembai Mohieddine was arrested. The activist Soudani Mohamed fled to Touggourt, while the rest of the group remained undetected. Military patrols, searches, and surveillance operations were widespread, and informants and agents were relied upon to gather information about the activists' activities.

These measures created an atmosphere of caution and secrecy, forcing members of the organization to take significant precautions while carrying out their duties. However, they managed to continue their activities despite these difficult circumstances, especially after the organization was revived in late 1958. Sheikh Yembai Ahmida led the cell, and the activist Lakhdar Djaballah joined it.

B) Arrests and Torture:

Many members of the civil organization in the Taghzout region were subjected to arrest and torture because of their revolutionary activities. Sheikh Yembai Mohieddine was tortured and miraculously escaped execution. The colonial authorities resorted to various methods of pressure to extract information and uncover the organization's structures and networks. Despite the brutality of these practices, the activists demonstrated remarkable resilience and adherence to their national principles.

Many preferred to endure suffering rather than divulge the secrets of the revolution or abandon their comrades.

#### C) Discovery of Some Organizational Networks:

Intensive security crackdowns sometimes led to the discovery of some cells belonging to the civilian organization. This resulted in the arrest of several activists and the temporary suspension of some activities. For example, Soudani Mohamed was arrested in the Chelghoum El Aïd region and imprisoned for fourteen months. Jaballah Lakhdar escaped and remained in hiding for a long time. However, the organization's reliance on a cell system and secrecy helped mitigate the effects of these security blows. The revolution was able to reorganize its ranks and replace the arrested activists, allowing revolutionary activity to continue and preventing the collapse of the civilian networks in the region.

### 3) Results and Impact of the Civil Organization in the Taghzout Region

#### A) Consolidating the National Spirit:

Civil organization contributed to strengthening the national sentiment among the inhabitants of Taghzout, where supporting the revolution became a national duty shared by all members of society. This led to a broadening of the popular support base for the revolution and increased cohesion between the population and the mujahideen. This was embodied in the demonstrations of March 17, 1962, in Taghzout, where the youth of Taghzout took to the streets, raising the Algerian flag and chanting slogans in support of Ben Bella and Algeria. The French authorities pursued the youth and arrested some of them, including Qumazi Ali bin Abdelkrim. This national awareness also helped to counter the colonial attempts to sow discord among Algerians and weaken their connection to their liberation cause.

#### B) Supporting the Revolutionary Path to Independence:

Civil organization formed a fundamental pillar for the continuation of the liberation revolution throughout the years of struggle. It provided the appropriate conditions for the continuation of military and political action despite the various difficulties. The efforts exerted by the people of Taghzout contributed to supporting the revolution at the local level and to strengthening the national struggle that culminated in Algeria's independence on July 5, 1962. Thus, it can be said that the contribution of civil organization was no less important than military action; rather, it was a complementary factor and a guarantor of its continuity and success.

#### **Conclusion:**

In conclusion, this study, which addressed the topic of civil organization of the liberation revolution in the Taghzout region, makes it clear that the Algerian revolution was not merely a military confrontation between the National Liberation Army and the French colonial forces, but rather a comprehensive popular revolution in which various segments of society participated through a well-organized structure that combined military action with civil activity. Civil organization constituted one of the fundamental pillars upon which the revolution relied to ensure the continuation of the struggle and the achievement of its national goals.

The study revealed that the Taghzout region played a significant role in supporting the liberation revolution by establishing an effective civil organization that undertook numerous tasks, including collecting subscriptions and donations, providing supplies to the mujahideen, transporting messages and information, sheltering fighters, and mobilizing the population and raising national awareness among them. The people of the region demonstrated a high level of patriotism and a strong willingness to sacrifice for the independence of their homeland, despite the persecution, arrest, and torture they endured at the hands of the colonial authorities.

The study also concluded that this civil organization was a fundamental factor in forging a link between the people and the revolution, and in creating the conditions necessary for the continuation of revolutionary activity. This, in turn, contributed to strengthening the resilience of the mujahideen and

achieving integration among the various structures of the revolution. Despite the challenges and difficulties it faced, this organization was able to fulfill its role effectively and leave a prominent mark on the course of the national struggle. Therefore, the research question can be answered by stating that the civil organization in the Taghzout region played a vital role in supporting the Algerian War of Independence by organizing the population and mobilizing their human and material resources to serve the national struggle. This made it a key partner in achieving the revolution's goals and attaining independence.

The experience of the civil organization in the Taghzout region remains a shining chapter in the history of the War of Independence, deserving further research and study to preserve national memory and to honor the sacrifices of the men and women who contributed to achieving Algeria's independence and restoring its national sovereignty.

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