European Journal of Philosophical Research. 2026. 13 (1)
E-ISSN: 2413-7286
Volume-13/Issue-1/2026

Larbi Ben M'hidi and His Role in the Algerian Liberation Revolution (1956–1957)

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Received: 10-12-2025 Accepted: 15-02-2026 Published:11-04-2026

Abstract:

Larbi Ben M'hidi took charge of the Fifth Region (Western Algeria), which experienced several challenges during the initial months of the revolution, most particularly a shortage of weapons. This prompted him to travel to Cairo twice in search of a solution.

There, he met with the external delegation and the problems and disputes existing among its members on the one hand, and between them and Abane Ramdane on the other, were discussed by him, leading him to decide to return to Algeria in April 1956.

After returning from abroad, Larbi Ben M'hidi moved to Algiers in May 1956. He began coordinating with Abane Ramdane to hold the first meeting of the leaders of the liberation revolution within the country at the Soummam Conference. Larbi Ben M'hidi was tasked with overseeing the guerrilla operations, which were characterised by tight organisation, a clear framework and precise task allocation, after he assumed the role. These efforts culminated in the decision to organise an eight-day strike, provoking a strong colonial reaction. This culminated in the arrest of Larbi Ben M'hidi on 23 February 1957. Following brutal torture, he was martyred on the night of 3–4 March 1957.

Keywords : Larbi Ben M'hidi – Liberation Revolution – Soummam Conference – Guerrilla operation – 8-Day Strike.

Introduction:

There is no doubt that Larbi Ben M'hidi is considered one of the first generation of leaders who contributed to the preparation and outbreak of the liberation revolution. He participated in all the preparatory stages and meetings that led up to the Algerian Revolution. The final meetings were held on 10 and 23 October 1954 and resulted in pivotal decisions, including the division of Algeria into five military zones. Larbi Ben M'hidi was appointed commander of the Fifth Zone (Western Algeria). This zone was not as well prepared as the other zones to declare the outbreak of the November 1 Revolution.

Ben M'hidi, along with a group of nationalist fighters, made a significant effort to ensure they would not be left behind on the night of November 1, 1954. Indeed, they initiated a series of operations aimed at unifying the planned attacks across all of Algeria, despite the severe shortage of resources and logistical capabilities, particularly weapons, which was a major concern for Ben M'hidi and other leaders, who travelled abroad to procure weapons. After two trips to Cairo—the first in 1955 and the second in 1956, he decided to return and rejoin the field operations of the National Liberation Army in Algeria.

This study, titled " Larbi Ben M'hidi and His Role in the Algerian Revolution , 1956–1957," falls within this framework. It examines Commander Larbi Ben M'hidi's revolutionary activities during the period under study, as well as the reasons behind his transfer from the command of the Fifth Region to the Independent Region in Algiers.

Through this study, we seek to highlight the value and effectiveness of Larbi Ben M'hidi's military activities in supporting the continuity of the liberation revolution and restructuring the guerrilla cells in the Independent Zone, To address the elements of this study, we employed a historical approach, utilizing an analytical method to examine the strategy adopted by Larbi Ben M'hidi in the Battle of Algiers to ensure the success of the armed struggle.

1 - Circumstances of Larbi Ben M'hidi's Arrival in Algiers:

Larbi Ben M'hidi assumed leadership of the Fifth Wilaya, where he was closely involved in the preparations for the outbreak of the liberation struggle. After assigning roles to the mujahideen according to the tasks entrusted to them, he personally took part, alongside a group of fighters, in overseeing the November 1st operations in the Ahfir area near Sabra. These operations involved burning cork warehouses, as well as cutting down power poles and sabotaging roads[1] .

The liberation revolution broke out with limited resources, facing various challenges, the most prominent of which was the shortage of weapons. Various historical accounts indicate that the Fifth Province was the hardest hit compared to the other provinces, This is what is stated in the memoirs of Mohamed Boudiaf, who clearly revealed the difficult situation the mujahideen were facing in this province, such that they carried out the November 1st operations with nothing but 10 weapons, and even Larbi Ben M'hidi himself had nothing but a 7.65-caliber pistol, and no ammunition other than two bullets[2] .

The lack of arms was a major concern for Larbi Ben M'hidi, and he therefore made great efforts to resolve it. To this end, he traveled twice to Cairo to meet with members of the external delegation to find ways and means to bring in weapons. The first trip took place in early 1955[3] , There, on January 11, 1955, he attended a meeting between Algerian officials (Ahmed Ben Bella, Mohamed Boudiaf, Larbi Ben M'hidi, and Hocine Aït Ahmed) and Marrakesh representatives (Allal El Fassi, Abdelkbir El Fassi), as well as Egyptian officials Ezzat Suleiman and Abdel Moneim El-Naggar. At this meeting, ways to coordinate and activate armed operations between Algeria and Marrakesh were discussed, and it was also decided to organize arms supplies for both sides[4] . It appears clear that Ben M'hidi's trip was successful,

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[1]-Ibrahim Ben Abdelmoumen, Profile of Mohamed Larbi Ben M'hidi (1923–1957), Sources of Contemporary Algerian History, Vol. 17, No. 1, National Center for Research on the National Movement and the November 1 Revolution, Algiers, 2019, p. 275.

[2]-Mohamed Boudiaf, The Preparation for November 1, 1954,[2nd]Edition, Darelnoamane, Algiers, 2011, p. 66.

[3]-Mohamed Abbas, Great Revolutionaries: Testimonies of 17 National Figures, Dar Houma, Algiers, 2012, p. 80.

[4]-Fathi al-Deeb, Nasser and the Algerian Revolution, 2nd ed., Dar al-Mustaqbal al-Arabi, Egypt, 1999, p. 73.

as a significant quantity of weapons reached Algeria—specifically the Fifth Province—via the yacht Dina in March 1955[1] .

As for the second time Ben M'hidi traveled to Egypt, was in January 1956, when he attended a meeting in Cairo of the leaders of the Maghreb Liberation Army[2] , accompanied by Ahmed Ben Bella and Mohamed Boudiaf on the Algerian side, and Dr. El Mehdi Ben Aboud and Mohamed Ben Abdallah El Masadi representing Marrakesh, in the presence of the Egyptian government representative Atef Abdo Saad. After reviewing the reality of the armed struggle in both countries over several sessions, it was decided to send a memorandum on January 21, 1956, to Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser, outlining the strategy and prospects of the struggle for the coming six months[3] .

In addition to the issue of arms, the liberation revolution faced another problem: the difficulty of coordination among its leaders. As shown in various historical accounts, the last meeting of the six leaders (Mohamed Boudiaf, Didouche Mourad, Mustapha Ben Boulaïd, Larbi Ben M'hidi, Karim Belkacem and Rabah Bitat) took place on 23 October 1954. At this meeting, the leaders agreed to hold a conference in January 1955. The purpose of this conference was to assess the results of the revolutionary activity that had taken place in the first phase and to establish a clearly defined strategy for the future of the revolution. [4]Given the escalation of the armed struggle, the colonial regime worked to crush the revolution by all means and methods, which made communication and coordination between the interior regions difficult, as most of their leaders had been martyred or arrested. Didouche Mourad (commander of the Second Region) was martyred on January 18, 1955, while Mustapha Ben Boulaïd (commander of the First Region, “ ”) was arrested on February 11, 1955, and Rabah Betat (commander of the Fourth Region) on March 23, 1955. As for Ben Mehdi, he reached Cairo after great effort[5] .

In addition, the situation of the external delegation (Ahmed Ben Bella, Hocine Aït Ahmed, and Mohamed Khider) in Cairo was not going well due to a lack of coordination and consultation among them. In this context, Larbi Ben M'hidi observed a major disagreement between Mohamed El-Amin Debaghine and Ahmed Ben Bella, He also expressed his deep annoyance and absolute rejection of the interference of Egyptian officials in the affairs of the National Liberation Front’s external delegation, and strongly condemned the support for the intervention of Egyptian intelligence officer Fathi al-Deeb and his presentation of Ben Bella as the leader of the National Liberation Front, According to Ben Youssef Ben Khedda, the situation escalated to the point of altercations between Ben Bella and Ben M’hidi[6] , following which Ben M’hidi decided to return to Algeria, carrying a negative impression of the

[1]-Ibid.
[2]-Mohamed Abbas, op. cit., p. 80.
[3]-Fathi al-Deeb, op. cit., pp. 149–161.
[4]-Mohammed Boudiaf, op. cit., p. 75.
[5]-Mohammed Abbas, op. cit., pp. 368–369.
[6]-Benyoucef Benkhedda, Abane-Ben M’hidi: Their Contribution to the Algerian Revolution,[3rd]Edition, Echatibia Publishing and Distribution, Algeria, 2012, p. 74.

relationship among the members of the external delegation. Consequently, the revolutionary leadership that had declared the outbreak of the armed struggle became fragmented[1] .

The matter was not limited to disagreements within the external delegation; another split emerged between the domestic leader Abane Ramdane and the leaders abroad. This was because, after settling in Algiers in March 1955, Abane Ramdane worked to form a new leadership for the National Liberation Front within Algeria, comprising Abane, Karim Belkacem, and Omar Oumran. This leadership later expanded to include new members such as Ben Youssef Ben Khedda, leaders of the Democratic Union of the Algerian People, and members of the Association of Algerian Muslim Scholars[2] .

The National Liberation Front undoubtedly faced a dilemma regarding the representation of the revolution, both domestically and internationally. This was articulated by Abane Ramdane in his letter dated 4 November 1955 to Mohamed Khider. In this instance, he regarded the members of the external delegation as expatriate patriots. He considered them to have been assigned a mission in the Levant by the Front and the Liberation Army. [3] , Khedher did not accept this, replying to Abane's letter to clarify that their role was no less significant than that of the leadership inside Algeria; although their responsibilities differed, they were equal and complementary in principle, in addition to the fact that they belonged to a single organization[4]

It appears that Abane was seeking to centralize the revolution within the country and, more than that, to become the de facto leader of the revolution. In parallel with this, and to block Abane Ramdane's path, members of the external delegation took action, with Ahmed Ben Bella proposing an initiative to form a new committee for the revolution abroad, comprising: Ahmed Ben Bella, Aït Ahmed, Mohamed Boudiaf, Larbi Ben M'hidi, and Dr. El-Amin Debaghine. However, this initiative was rejected, particularly by El-Amin Debaghine, Kheddar, and Ben Bella[5]

Amid these divisions[6] within the National Liberation Front, Larbi Ben M'hidi decided—after apparently reaching an agreement with Boudiaf and Ben Bella—to resolve the leadership issue and prioritize the revolution's higher interests. We note here that upon his return to Algeria, he restructured the Fifth Province once again, and it was decided that Abdelhafid

[1] -Mohammed Abbas, op. cit., p. 369
[2]- Ammar Bouhouch, The Political History of Algeria from the Beginning to 1962, 3rd ed., Dar al-Basair, Algiers, 2008, pp. 386–387.
[3]-Mabrouk Belhocine, The Algiers-Cairo Correspondence, 1954–1956, and the Soummam Congress in the Revolution, Editions Casbah, Algiers, 2014, p. 109.
[4]-Ibid., pp. 111–112.
[5]-Mohamed Abbas, Historical Rivalries, Dar Houma, Algiers, 2014, pp. 137–138.
[6]-For more on the disputes and problems among the leaders of the revolution, please refer to:
-Mohamed Harbi, The National Liberation Front: Myth and Reality, trans. Kamil Caesar Dagher, 1st ed., Arab Research Foundation, Lebanon, 1983.
-Saleh Belhaj, Crises of the National Liberation Front and the Struggle for Power (1956–1965), 1st ed., Dar Qurtuba, Algeria, 2006.

Bousouf would succeed him in the Fifth Province, on the condition that he relocate to Algiers[1] .

2- Larbi Ben M'hidi 's Participation in the Soummam Conference:

Larbi Ben M'hidi arrived in Algiers in May 1956 to join the new core group preparing for the meeting of the revolution's leaders, which had made significant strides in coordination and communication both internally[2] and externally[3] . Larbi Ben M'hidi quickly demonstrated his competence and leadership qualities within the new leadership alongside Abane Ramdane[4]

In preparation for the Soummam Conference, Ben M'hidi, Abane and Karim Belkacem, Oumran and Ben M'hidi held meetings and reached several key decisions. The most significant of these decisions were to hold a national conference before the summer and to begin preparing for the conference by dividing tasks as follows :

-Ben M'hidi was tasked with contacting other regions and persuading them to participate in the conference.

-Karim and Ouamran were tasked with selecting the venue and ensuring the conference's security.

-Abane would draft the political document to be presented for discussion to the leaders during the conference proceedings[5] .

As part of the coordination and preparations for the conference, Larbi Ben M'hidi, accompanied by Abane Ramdane, visited the Fifth Province, leaving it on June 22, 1956, to pass through the Fourth Province to meet with its commander, Ou-Amrane, and from there proceed to the Kabylie region to meet with Karim Belkacem, the commander of the Third Province[6] .

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[1]-Abdullah Maklati, "The Martyr Mohamed Larbi Ben M'hidi: Sage and Ideologue of the Algerian Revolution," The Algerian Historical Journal, Issue 09, University of M'sila, September 2018, p. 276.

[2] -Preparations for the National Congress took concrete shape in March 1956, when Abane Ramdane decided to entrust Saad Dahleb with the task of contacting the first (the lack of news from Mustapha Ben Boulaïd and conflicting reports about him) and the second region to ascertain the reality of the situation in the Aurès on the one hand, and to coordinate with Zighoud Youssef on the other. Accordingly, Saad Dahlab prepared a detailed report on his mission and submitted it to the revolutionary leadership. Abane Ramdane studied this report with great care and decided to publish it in the Algerian Resistance newspaper, the mouthpiece of the National Liberation Front, in two consecutive articles under the title "**Returning from the Mountains."** See:
Saad Dahlab, Mission Accomplie pour l'Indépendance de l'Algérie, Éditions Dahlab, Algeria, 1990, pp. 48–50.

[3]-Abane made great efforts to communicate with the foreign delegation and keep them informed of all developments regarding the conference. He corresponded with them and informed them of the details of the preparations planned for the conference. For more on Abane Ramdane's correspondence with the foreign delegation, see:
-Mabrouk Belhocine, op. cit.

[4]-Mohamed Abbas, Great Revolutionaries, op. cit., p. 81.

[5]-Ibid., pp. 123–124.

[6]-Mabrouk Belhocine, op. cit., p. 50.

In any case, the Soummam Conference was held on August 20, 1956, in the Third Province[1] . What concerns us and what we will focus on is Larbi Ben M'hidi's chairmanship of the conference and his role in the decisions that emerged from it. He managed to establish himself within the leadership tasked with preparing for the conference, alongside Abane Ramdane[2] , He was the ideal leader of the revolution, known for his calmness and wisdom. He also possessed a clear philosophy and vision for the success of the armed struggle, which earned him the respect of the revolution's leaders[3] . In this regard, we recall what Saad Dahleb said about him: In this regard, it is worth recalling what Saad Dahlab said about him: "He was overflowing with ideas… his comrades used to call him a blazing fire." '[4] .

It was these qualities and others that earned him the honor of presiding over the Soummam Conference under Larab Ben M'hidi, conducting its sessions, and formulating its political and military platforms[5] . The conference proceedings were marked by the raising of various issues, with Ben M'hidi playing a major role in prioritizing the interests of the revolution and overcoming the differences among the leaders participating in the conference. One example of this was his silence regarding the issue of the foreign delegation's absence from the conference. He also intervened each time to oppose the decisions that Abane Ramdane attempted to pass in the name of the Front. In this regard, he stood up to him, asserting that he represented the Fifth Province and not the foreign delegation, in his response to Zeghoud's inquiry about the foreign delegation's absence. On the other hand, Ben M'hidi offered his interpretation of the principle of primacy, which prioritises internal affairs over external affairs and politics over military action. He believed that the primacy of the political meant the primacy of thought over military action and that revolution was a military endeavour that was subject to theory [6] . He was among those who argued that achieving political victory would necessarily lead to France's military defeat[7] .

Whatever may be said about the Soummam Conference and the controversy surrounding the decisions it produced, as well as their implications for the course of the liberation revolution, this in no way diminishes the role of L'arbi Ben M'hidi, This was affirmed by Ben Youssef Ben Khedda, who considered that the great success achieved by the Soummam Conference was primarily due to Larbi Ben M'hidi[8] , as his symbolism and personality fostered

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[1]-Among the leaders who attended the meeting were: Mohamed Larbi Ben M'hidi (representative of Zone 5), Abane Ramdane (representative of the National Liberation Front), Zighoud Youcef and his deputy Lakhdar Ben Toubal (representatives of Zone 2), Karim Belkacem (representative of Zone 3), Omar or Omran (representative of Zone 4); see: Mustapha Hachmaoui, The Roots of November 1954 in Algeria, Dar Houma, Algiers, 2010, p. 92.

[2]- Mohamed Abbas, Great Revolutionaries, op. cit., p. 81.

[3]- Hamid Abdelkader, Abane Ramdane: A Plea for the Truth, Al-Shihab Publications, Algiers, 2003, pp. 99–100.

[4]- Saad Dahlab, op. cit., p. 58.

[5]- Mohamed Abbas, Great Revolutionaries, op. cit., p. 101.

[6]- Benyoucef Benkhedda, op. cit., p. 76.

[7]-Hamid Abdelkader, op. cit., p. 100.

[8]- Benyoucef Benkhedda, op. cit., p. 78.

consensus among those present, particularly the representatives of the Second Wilaya, Zighoud Youssef and Lakhdar Ben Toubal[1] .

3-l'Arbi Ben M'hidi's efforts to activate guerrilla operations in the Autonomous Region:

This conference produced the historic Soumam Platform document, which served as a constitution defining the parameters of the revolution. Among its provisions was the establishment of the revolutionary leadership bodies, including the National Council of the Revolution[2], and the Coordination and Executive Committee, which served as the executive authority and consisted of five members: L'Arbi Ben M'hidi, Abane Ramdane, Karim Belkacem, Ben Boussa Ben Khedda, and Saad Dahleb[3] .

The conference also issued a decision to establish the Autonomous Zone of Algiers (Zone Autonome d'Alger), comprising the city center of Algiers and its neighboring municipalities, which included: Hocine Dey, El Koba, El Abiar, Bouzareah, Bir Mourad Rais, and Saint-Eugène[4] . It is noteworthy that this zone was granted the same powers and authorities as any of the other provinces[5] .

The Coordination and Implementation Committee established its headquarters in the Autonomous Region, and its members began implementing the decisions of the Soummam Conference, which called for the activation and expansion of the guerrilla movement among the urban population, so that they might assume their national responsibilities within the framework of the revolutionary struggle, which had spread extensively throughout the Algerian countryside[6] , It is established that Ben M'hidi assumed the task of overseeing the organization of the Fedayeen in the Autonomous Region, which was characterized structurally by a tight framework consisting of two complementary organizations: the political organization and the military organization, under the responsibility of activists trained within the ranks of the independence wing of the Algerian National Movement[7] .

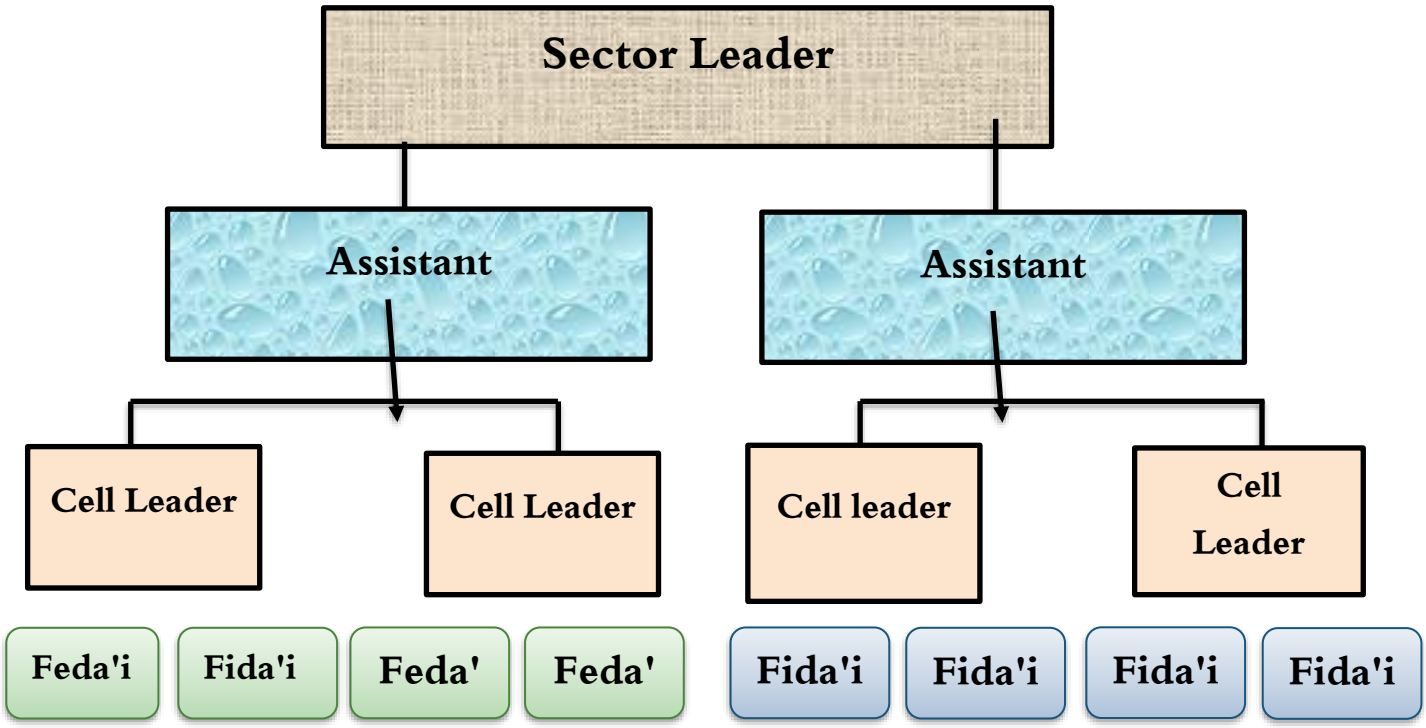
Larbi Ben M'hidi took charge of the military branch, which comprised two or three groups per neighborhood, with the exception of the Kasbah neighborhood, whose population at the time was estimated at 80,000. Consequently, it became a hub comprising about ten groups, each containing approximately 100 members, while the other neighborhoods, such as:

1- Abdullah Maklati, op. cit., p. 278.
2-The highest body of the revolution, acting as a legislative authority, consisted of 34 members—17 permanent members and 17 additional members. For more information, please refer to: Mohamed Harbi, op. cit., p. 154.
3- Ben Youssef Ben Khedda, Testimonies of Stances, 1st ed., Dar al-Umma, Algiers, 2007, p. 74.
4- Lahcen Azgidi, The Soummam Conference and the Development of the Algerian Liberation Revolution (1956–1962), 3rd ed., Dar Houma, Algiers, 2004, p. 337.
5- Ben Youssef Ben Khedda, op. cit., p. 81.
6-Mohammed al-Arabi al-Zubairi, Contemporary History of Algeria (1954–1962), Vol. 2, Arab Writers Union Publications, Damascus, 1999, p. 88.
7-Ibid., p. 82.

Belkour, Madania, El Koba, and El Harrach, served as a reservoir providing the organization with the necessary fighters and mujahideen[1] .

Larbi Ben M'hidi began his mission in Algiers with a meeting of the leaders of the guerrilla movement. They briefed him on the logistical capabilities available in the autonomous zone. He, in turn, took the opportunity to inform them of the political and military decisions that had emerged from the Soumam platform. Then Yassif Saadi, the direct supervisor of the guerrilla operations in Algiers, presented his military report, which drew the attention of Larbi Ben M'hidi[2] .

Ben M'hidi restructured the fedayeen network in the Autonomous Zone on a hierarchical basis. He divided the area into three sectors, each placed under a leader assisted by two deputies. These sectors were broken down into sections, then branches, then groups, and finally into grassroots cells operating across the neighborhoods. At the top, Ben M'hidi was assisted by two deputies : one overseeing military action and the other responsible for political organization[3] . Thus, we see that it took on a hierarchical structure, comprising approximately 12,000 fighters, most of whom were cadres specialized in guerrilla warfare[4] . The following diagram illustrates the approximate structure of the guerrilla organization in Algiers[5] :



[1]- Benyoucef Benkhedda, op. cit., p. 51.
[2]-Yassef Saadi, The Battle of Algiers, Vol. 2, Casbah Publishing, Algiers, 1997, p. 230.
[3]-Mohamed Bouchenafi, "Mohamed Larbi Ben M'hidi and His Role in Organizing the Guerrilla Movement in Algiers (October 1956–1957)," New Eras Journal, University of Oran, Issue 06, 2012, p. 159.
[4]-Benyoucef Benkhedda, op. cit., p. 51.
[5]-National Organization of Mujahideen, Second National Forum on the History of the Revolution, Vol. 2, No. 1, published by the Department of Information, Culture, and Training, Algiers, 1984, p. 99.

In a short time, Larbi Ben M'hidi managed to mobilize the Fedayeen movement, insisting on the manufacture of explosives, He also gave instructions to recruit blonde women to participate in the revolutionary activity, with the aim of allaying the suspicions of French security forces. This clearly highlights the man's foresight and intelligence. He assigned the women the task of carrying out guerrilla operations within French neighborhoods by transporting pistols and delivering them to the sites of the operations[1] .

The cells succeeded in amassing a substantial stockpile of bombs, and Ben M'hidi ordered Yassif Saadi to escalate the suicide operations in the heart of Algiers, after identifying the target areas for him: cafés, the Air France headquarters, and the Milk Bar. The task of planting the bombs was assigned to Zahra Zarif, Samia Lakhdari, and Jamila Bouhired. and thus the women successfully carried out the operations, detonating the bombs at the agreed-upon time[2] . Among the operations carried out by the commandos on the orders of Larbi Ben Mhidi was the assassination of Amédée Froger, mayor of Boufarik and president of the Federation of Algerian Mayors, on December 28, 1956, in front of his residence in Algiers[3] .

The guerrilla movement was highly active and took various forms; over 3,000 settlers were abducted within a few months and never found. On January 27, 1957, Henri Allag reported that three bombs were detonated in succession at the cafés L'Automatique and Le Coc Hardy. It is worth noting that the bombings did not stop and continued for several months in 1957, Perhaps the most notable of these were those targeting the Abiar and Al-Anwar stadiums and the auditorium at the Corniche Casino in Pointe-Biscade ([4]).

In addition, Larbi Ben M'hidi and the guerrilla cells focused on media propaganda among the working-class population of Algiers, distributing leaflets in an organized manner regarding the National Liberation Front and the National Liberation Army, as well as publishing the newspaper Al-Mujahid, which reported that members of the National Liberation Army had entered the city, The aim of this was to spread terror among the French enemy[5] .

The guerrilla activity in Algiers was not limited to military operations and bombings. For this reason, members of the Coordination and Executive Committee sought new forms and methods of revolutionary action. They proposed a general strike both inside and outside Algiers. Sources and historical accounts agree that It was Larbi Ben M'hidi who first proposed the idea of a strike to the head of armed operations, Yassaf Saadi, and after discussing it with the committee members[6] , the strike was discussed among committee members in a fully democratic manner, with disagreements emerging regarding its duration, start date[7] , and

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[1]-Yassef Saadi, op. cit., p. 230.
[2]-Hamid Abdelkader, op. cit., pp. 120–121.
[3]-Henri Alak, Algerian Memoirs: Memories of Struggle and Hope, trans. Janah Masoud and Abdessalam Azizi, Dar al-Qasbah, Algiers, 2007, p. 833.
[4]-Ibid., p. 336.
[5]-Mohamed Bouchenafi, op. cit., p. 159.
[6]-Al-Tahir Jebli, "The Eight-Day Strike in Algeria, January 28–February 4, 1958: The Great Battle of Algiers," Kan Historical Magazine, Issue 36, Cairo, 2017, pp. 41–42.
[7]-Ben Youssef Ben Khedda notes that the strike was initially scheduled for December 10, 1956, but due to the postponement of the discussion of the Algerian issue in New York

various repercussions. In this context, Saad Dahleb larbi confirms that Ben M'hidi proposed a general strike lasting a full month, while he (Saad) proposed one or two days at most, and in the end the leaders agreed on eight days. In this context, he says: "Since Ben M'hidi strongly insisted on a month-long strike. I had never seen him look at me with such contempt—perhaps even a hint of pity—especially when I suggested it should last no more than a day or two. No one responded to my remark, and I chose to remain silent, without pursuing the discussion further. "[1] .

As for the objectives of the strike, they can be summarized into two main goals: To take advantage of the 12th session of the United Nations General Assembly to draw international public attention to the Algerian issue[2] , thereby refuting French claims and putting an end to the myth that Algeria is French, breaking with the colonial regime, and reaffirming the Algerian people's commitment to the National Liberation Front and their adherence to its directives[3] .

Thus, the strike took place from January 28 to February 4, 1957, during which the Algerian people responded to the call of the National Liberation Front across the country, particularly in the autonomous region, to a significant extent. Life came to a stunning standstill: shops closed, and workers did not report to their jobs in various institutions[4] . The success was attested to by French newspapers; In its January 29 edition, Le Monde wrote, "Silence reigns over an empty city," and the strike participation rate reached 99%[5] .

In truth, the eight days of the strike served as a comprehensive national referendum in which the Algerian people unequivocally affirmed their unity and unwavering commitment to their sole representative, the National Liberation Front, and demonstrated that the revolution is the cause of all Algerians—regardless of their affiliations or ideologies—in the face of the tyrannical colonial regime[6] , As was their custom, and to counter the peaceful strike of the Algerian people, the colonial authorities resorted to military force, implementing a series of repressive measures under the leadership of General Massu. French forces[7] , to raid and vandalize shops and carry out a campaign of arbitrary arrests , forcing residents to leave their homes and transporting them to detention centers, where they were subjected to all manner of brutal torture. Workers were also forced to return to their jobs and workplaces[8] .

In fact, French forces exploited the strike to establish an intense security cordon around the city of Algiers, which was the most affected by the strike's negative consequences, as the heavy siege imposed by the 10th Parachute Division, reinforced by police and local soldiers,

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and the New Year holidays, the date was postponed to January 28–February 4, 1957. See: Mohamed Abbas, Great Revolutionaries, op. cit., p. 387.

[1]-Saad Dahlab, op. cit., pp. 60–61.

[2]-Ammar Bouhoush, op. cit., p. 462.

[3]-Mohamed Al-Arabi Al-Zubairi, op. cit., p. 96.

[4]- Hamid Abdul-Qadir, op. cit., p. 124.

[5]-Mohamed Abbas, Great Revolutionaries, op. cit., p. 390.

[6]- Al-Mujahid Newspaper, "The First Anniversary of the Terrible Strike," Issue 17, February 1, 1958, p. 9.

[7]-Zouhair Ihaddaden, * * (A Brief History of the Algerian Revolution), 1st ed., Ihaddaden Publishing and Distribution Foundation, Algiers, 2007, pp. 38–39.

[8]-Al-Mujahid newspaper, op. cit., p. 9.

clearly demonstrated[1], in search of the revolution's leadership and to dismantle the cells of the National Liberation Front. Amid these difficult circumstances and the siege, the autonomous region was enduring, the members of the Coordination and Executive Committee held a meeting and decided to leave Algiers on February 25, 1957. However, Larbi Ben M'hidi proposed that the committee split into two groups: the first would remain in Algiers, while the second would leave for abroad or for the 3rd and 4th provinces and settle there temporarily, with the understanding that they would return to Algiers if conditions improved. This proposal was met with approval and acceptance by Karim Belkacem[2] .

Abane Ramdane and Saad Dahleb decided to travel to Morocco via the Fifth Province, while Karim Belkacem and Ben Youssef Ben Khedda headed to Tunisia via the Third and Second Provinces. On May 21, 1957, the committee members arrived in Morocco and Tunisia[3] , As for Larbi Ben M'Hidi, he was arrested on February 23, 1957, and subjected to brutal torture at the hands of Generals Bigeard and Massu, dying on the night of March 3–4, 1957[4] .

Conclusion :

Through studying the figure of Commander Larbi Ben M'hidi and his role in the liberation revolution of 1956–1957, I have reached the following conclusions :

- Ben M'hidi took charge of the Fifth Province, which was the largest in terms of area. Despite the limited material and human resources at his disposal, he played an active role in declaring the revolution in western Algeria. The issue of the shortage of weapons posed a challenge for Larbi Ben M'hidi that had to be resolved. With this in mind, he left Algeria several times for Spain and Cairo to procure weapons, and managed to bring back significant quantities on the ship Dina.

- During his two trips to Cairo, Larbi Ben M'hidi witnessed the living conditions of the members of the external delegation firsthand. He therefore decided to return to Algeria and fight the battle from within, ensuring the success of the revolutionary project. This ultimately led him to join the city of Algiers. He quickly established himself within the new leadership core that was preparing to hold the first conference of the revolution's leaders. He had different ideas from his comrades and was a very good speaker. He was in charge of the Soummam Conference and made it seem important.

Larbi Ben M'hidi realised that urban warfare would have far-reaching effects, and for this reason he sought to turn Algiers into Algeria's Dien Bien . His presence played a major role in reviving, activating and revitalising the guerrilla movement. which saw a significant surge at the end of 1956 and the beginning of 1957, thanks to his strategy and his meticulous organization of the revolutionary cells.

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[1]-Ahmed Chakroun, "The Battle of Algiers by Jacques Doucet," Al-Masadir Magazine, National Center for Studies and Research on the National Movement and the Revolution of November 1, 1954, Issue 06, 2002, pp. 465–460.
[2]-Ammar Bouhoush, op. cit., pp. 366–364.
[3]-Saad Dahlab, op. cit., p. 73.
[4]-Al-Mujahid newspaper, "The Martyr Hero Larbi Ben M'hidi," Issue 19, March 1, 1958, p. 9.

-Larbi Ben M'hidi was the architect of the historic eight-day strike, which marked a significant milestone in the course of the liberation revolution, as it had a profound impact both domestically and internationally, It was truly a popular referendum through which the Algerian people expressed their commitment to the National Liberation Front on the one hand, and their aspiration for freedom and independence on the other, even though it ended with the arrest and martyrdom of this iconic hero.

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