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Marie-Josée Keswani

The Evolution of the Role of Women in Algeria (1830 – 1992) : Between Rhetoric and Reality

Submitted for the award of PhD.
Centre for Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies
University of Durham
February 2002

ABSTRACT

The thesis studies the evolution of the role and status of Algerian women from 1830 to 1992. It adopts a methodology that combines a broad historical narrative of the period, with close attention to key events, government policies, popular influences such as Islam, and features of women's political participation. This methodology has been chosen in order to provide a panoramic historical context for the changing role and status of women, as illustrated through those particular factors. The period covered includes the colonial era, the war of independence and the post-independence era in order to take account of long-term developments. In particular, the broad historical narrative allows the author to demonstrate the continuing influence of France's particular style of colonial administration on the successive post-independence governments wrestling to resolve the tensions generated in a traditional society going through a modernising process. The period under study ends in 1992, as this was a new turning point in the political history of the country.

Within the framework of the historical coverage of events, policies and influences, the thesis focuses on three indicators of women's role and status (education, employment and political representation) in order to assess the level and scope of change.

The thesis concludes that the modernising process introduced by colonialism only benefited women in certain areas such as access to education and, to a lesser extent, salaried employment. The successive post-independence governments refrained from fundamentally altering the role and status of women. By distancing themselves from any perceived colonial influence they attempted to retain the support of the traditionalists and prevent the destabilisation of the domestic political arena. However limited the effects of the modernising process have been for women, and despite the continuing tensions, Algerian women have started developing new attitudes and expectations which denote a significant shift from the past.

The Evolution of the Role of Women in Algeria (1830 – 1992) :

Between Rhetoric and Reality

Marie-Josée Keswani

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Thesis submitted for the award of Doctor of Philosophy

Centre for Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies
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Declarations

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Introduction and methodology

My personal interest in both the position of women in society and the complex links between France and Algeria have affected the choice of this thesis. As a French national, born in Algeria just before the start of the war of independence, I have always been interested in the history of Algeria which is a constant subject of debate in France, and yet remains shrouded in secrecy.

This thesis attempts to evaluate the impact of successive governments' policies and statements on the role and status of women in Algeria. It also examines the extent to which France's particular style of governance during the colonial period and during the war of independence has had a continuing influence on the successive post-independence governments wrestling to resolve the tensions generated in a traditional society going through the modernising process. The role played by Islam in shaping policies, particularly those which impacted on women, and the population's reactions to these are also examined.

The study of women's status in developing countries is usually approached from sociological perspectives. Social science research on women and development evolved over the years, from the cultural dualism model of development, emphasising the 'nature/culture' divide as an explanation for women's subordination (De Beauvoir 1952), to the social evolutionary approach which led to both the modernisation theory (Talcott Parsons 1966) and the Marxist analysis of stages in the development of capitalism.

Modernisation theory, however, ignored the fact that men and women are not affected in the same way by modernity. Recognising this, researchers began to study the obstacles preventing women from participating in the development process. The 'developmentalist' model, therefore, concentrated on the analysis of factors such as women's working conditions and wages, women's attitudes and decisions regarding change and women's informal work. A further factor, the influence of international forces on development, led to the 'dependency' theory which originated in the 1960s. Advocates of this theory claim that Third World poverty has been caused by the exploitation of these countries' raw materials for the benefit of the West and of the small number of Third World elites who acted as *intermediaries between the rich purchasers and the poor (peasant) producers [Webster 1990, p 85].* The recent trend in development theory recognises the undeniable influence of capitalist economic interests but also considers the specific political and cultural factors at play in each developing country as additional and crucial determinants enhancing or hindering development *[ibid, p 97].*

As a consequence of the French colonial presence in North Africa, and the continuing close links between France and the three Maghreb countries, French is still one of the main

languages used in these countries, both by the public and in official documents. This explains the fact that a substantial proportion of research on Algeria has been conducted in French by scholars living or studying in France, Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco. However, some European, Middle Eastern and American studies on Algeria have been conducted in English.

In the first half of the 20th century, studies on Algerian women could be classified as mostly 'Orientalist', depicting them either as mysterious and exotic 'objects' or as powerless creatures (Auclert 1900). Some studies on the legal status of Algerian women (Bousquet 1950, Millot 1910) and anthropological studies on particular tribes (Goichon 1951) were also conducted. The French government produced reports on education, economic development and health. More specific surveys were also conducted on the Algerian family structure and the role of women (Gouverneur Général, Documents Algériens 1947-48, Ministère de l'Education Nationale 1958, Délégation Générale du Gouvernement en Algérie 1959, Commandement en Chef des Forces en Algérie 1960).

In the 60s and 70s, a number of comprehensive studies started to emerge, analysing the socio-economic effects of modernisation and colonialism (Bourdieu 1962, 1974, 1977, Tillion 1966, Berque 1962, Bennoune 1976, M'Rabet 1969, Gordon 1966, 1972). In the 80s, greater attention was directed to specific areas such as women's employment (Khodja 1981, 1985, Ainad-Tabet 1980), women's political participation (Khodja 1980, Sai 1984, Vandevelde-Daillière 1980) and demography (Chevallier Kessler 1989, Ladjali 1985). Valuable research was also conducted at the Centre de Recherches et d'Information Documentaire en Sciences Sociales et Humaines based in Oran University, which included the CDSH and the GRFA[1]. At the same time, a number of academics from around the world published comparative studies on women in the Muslim world (Alami 1988, Minai 1981, Minces 1980, Saadaoui 1982, Delcroix 1986, Glendora-Gates 1987).

The introduction of multi-party politics in Algeria in 1989, and the increasing presence of women on the political scene from the mid-eighties, gave rise to a number of studies on Algerian women's political participation (Daoud 1993, Gadant 1995, Tlemçani 1992, Knauss 1992, Gadant Kasriel 1990, Lazreg 1994). In recent years, the political instability in Algeria alongside the rise of Islamic revivalism[2] have attracted international attention and resulted in numerous publications on Muslim women in general and Algerian women in particular (Rouadjia 1990, Al Ahnaf Botiveau Frégosi 1991, Assouline 1992, Cheriet 1992, Engineer 1992, Mernissi 1991, Mogghissi 1999).

[1] Centre de Documentation en Sciences Humaines (1980), Groupe de Recherche sur les Femmes Algériennes (1982).

[2] I have intentionally used the terms 'Islamic revivalistm' instead of the emotive and value-ridden term 'fundamentalists' which should properly be left as a judgement of history.

The question of the war of independence added a further dimension to the debates on Algeria. However, women's participation in wars is rarely documented and the Algerian conflict is no exception. Despite the abundance of publications on this period, both by French and Algerian historians, only one comprehensive study of the role of women during the war of independence has been published so far (Amrane 1992). The only other work is an autobiographical portrayal of the life of Algerian women in French prisons published in 1993 (Guerroudj).

This thesis departs from the sociological approaches described earlier. The methodology adopted here has been that of a broad historical narrative focusing on events and actions which had particular impact on the role and development of women. The long historical period studied (1830-1992[3]) has been necessary to allow the research to paint a panoramic view of the evolution of the position of women in Algeria. The broader picture which emerges, provides a clearer understanding of the present situation. For example the analysis of the attitudes of the French colonial administration, those of the successive governments after independence and those of the Islamic revivalists has exposed repeated patterns towards women, in particular the fact that women are seen as custodians of the cultural identity of the country. The war period has also been studied in detail as women's unexpectedly active involvement took both the French and the Algerian authorities by surprise and remains a landmark period in Algerian women's history.

Other methodological approaches which use the theoretical frameworks of post-colonial discourse or of gender studies were both rejected. The former, which *involves a political analysis of the cultural history of colonialism, and investigates its contemporary effects in western and tricontinental cultures, making connections between that past and the politics of the present [Young 2001, p 6]* subordinates women to historical events. Gender studies, on the other hand de-contextualises women from history, starting from a *standpoint specific to women and, with the feminist cause placed resolutely in the foreground [Hakiki, Talahite in UNESCO 1984, p 86].* The broad historical narrative adopted here has the advantage of tracing women's development over a long period of time by examining the specific events and government policies which have impacted on women's status. The merit of this approach has been to provide a comprehensive picture deriving from the chronology of events, which hitherto, has never been presented. In order to contextualise the research on Algerian women, relevant comparisons with other Arab countries have been made.

The broad perspective, both in time and in the different aspects of women's development which have been examined, necessitated the selection of historical events and government policies. The criteria used in making this selection were their relevance to and particular impact on the status of women. The study of the war period, for instance, does not claim to be an exhaustive

[3] The period of study starts in 1830 the beginning of French colonisation and ends in 1992 which constitutes a turning point for Algeria with the cancellation of the elections and the declaration of a state of emergency.

examination of all aspects of the war, but focuses on women's involvement, the reactions it provoked and the short and long term consequences for women and the country as a whole. Certain political factors have also been overlooked as peripheral to the evolution of the role of women. The political behind the scenes role played by the army since independence has, for instance, not been analysed. Although an important consideration in Algeria's history, it did not have direct and identifiable repercussions on women. For the purpose of this thesis, the actual actions and policies adopted by the FLN were of prime concern, not which group helped support the FLN in the internecine power struggles which have been a recurring feature of post-independence Algeria.

The political instability in Algeria prevented me from conducting field research and consulting documentary sources in the country. I have, nevertheless, examined an extensive range of both French and Algerian documents including official government publications, archival material, periodicals and literature produced by various political parties and women's associations. Most of these have been in French (which has been and continues to be extensively used in Algeria). I have also consulted translations of documents originally produced in Arabic as well as secondary evidence, in French and English, published by researchers and organisations throughout the world, including material in electronic form on the Internet. Since this study was carried out within an Anglophone context, I have included my own translations of all French quotes alongside the original texts. I have kept to the French transliteration of Arabic words and names as I felt that anglicising them could be misleading and might be considered by some to be inaccurate. The most frequently used Arabic and French terms have been shown in *italics* in the text and their translations given in the glossary.

This extensive analysis of secondary data, involving a wide range of materials on different areas and eras, has remained focussed, however, on the particular issues concerning the role and development of women. This approach has the advantage of giving new insights into how and why women have evolved into their current position in Algerian society and the historic events which acted as determinants in this evolution. Nevertheless, it is important to question the reliability of the data and the possible bias in the collection and presentation of the information *[Hyman Herbert 1987, p 306].* A constant endeavour of this thesis has been to obtain as wide a range of sources as possible to counter these dangers. Statistical data, for instance, was correlated from several government and independent sources before being used here. The broad spectrum of sources, in a variety of languages, has provided the thesis with a balanced view of events from which it draws its conclusions. This is not to say that other interpretations will not be made. Historical debates on Algeria have been and will continue to be heated. Whilst this thesis' methodology is that of a historical narrative, important sociological factors could not be ignored. Algeria is a Muslim country undergoing development, continually buffeted by the conflicting imperatives of preserving tradition whilst attempting to

adapt to modernity within an Islamic context. The position and status of women is one of the key issues in this debate.

It is essential, at this point, to examine the concepts of 'tradition' and 'modernity' before discussing the specific aspects of the modernising process in Middle Eastern countries. According to Durkheim, the characteristics of the 'traditional society' are that it is typically agrarian, organised around groups of families forming clans or village settlements, its social cohesion is based on common beliefs and lifestyle. All the groups are similar and self-sufficient. There is no interdependency between the groups and individuals are ascribed a social status within their group. This type of social organisation is therefore termed 'segmented' since each group (segment) is self-reliant. The 'modern society', on the other hand, is described as 'organic' because each group (organ) specialises in a certain function and is dependent on the other groups for its survival. The modern system is less rigid, it adapts to the needs of the society and gives greater freedom to individuals who 'earn' their social status. It creates new patterns of morality and new systems of norms *[in Webster 1990, pp 44-46].* According to the sociologist Daniel Lerner, the passage from tradition to modernity requires *a systematic transformation of lifeways [Lerner 1964, p VIII]* and not a mere combination of economic factors. *Modernity is primarily a state of mind - expectation of progress, propensity to growth, readyness to adapt oneself to change [ibid].* Western societies took centuries to evolve to modernity through the slow development of social processes (urbanisation, secularisation, industrialisation and population participation). Middle Eastern societies, on the other hand, have been exposed to modernity via new modes of communication (radio, television, movies and now the Internet), without having gone through the various stages of the development process. These societies, therefore, are in a state of 'transition' between tradition and modernity. As Lerner explains, *the true Transitional is defined, dynamically, by what he wants to become... When many individuals show deviation in this direction, then a transition is under way in their society [Lerner 1964, p 72].* However, transitional societies are, by definition, unable to respond to all the aspirations of their citizens. This creates frustration among the population, impatient to experience the life portrayed by the Western media. At the same time, the anti-colonial feelings towards the West and the search for a distinct identity have resulted in a rejection of Western ideology. This, coupled with *the failure of the Arab political elites to evolve responsive political systems to take the place of traditional ones which no longer exist [Abdel-Qader Yassine, 1995]*[4] have resulted in the resurgence of Islamic militant movements. What Lerner terms a form of ethnocentrism, *expressed politically in extreme nationalism, psychologically in passionate xenophobia [Lerner 1964, p 47].*

[4] Available on-line at: www.hf.uib.no/smi/paj/Yassine.html

The history of Algeria's development appears to follow Lerner's theory. Through the process of colonisation, the traditional agrarian society based on kinship loyalties and independent units was infiltrated by modernity which created needs and desires among its population. The inability of the successive governments to respond to the economic and political aspirations of the society, after independence, combined with the strong anti-colonial feelings among the population have prevented the country from emerging from its 'transitional' state. The quest for an Algerian form of modernity is ongoing.

As Lerner concludes, *the stakes are nothing less than the meaning of Islam itself [Lerner 1964, p 406].* The question is *how Islam's most cherished symbols can be made compatible with the secular requirements of new lifeways [ibid].* Women's status and their specific role within an Islamic society are at the heart of the debate. Any attempts at changing the role of women are viewed with suspicion by the traditionalists who see this as Western encroachment on their culture. Even among women, there is no consensus, some women's associations demanding a secular state while others consider that women's emancipation can be obtained from within Islam. Nevertheless, as the journalist and writer Nadia Hijab pointed out, *the passion and long duration of the debate is not a cause for hopelessness, but an indication of the significance of the issues at hand -modernisation, independence, and the relationship between religion and state- issues which have taken centuries to resolve in other societies, and which have not yet been completely solved [Hijab 1988, p 62].*

The thesis covers three main periods: the colonial era, the war of independence and the post-independence period. It is divided into four parts: part one looks at women in French colonial Algeria (1830-1954), part two studies women's participation in the war of independence (1954-1962), part three follows the evolution of women's role in post-independent Algeria (1962-1978) and part four analyses the developments in Algeria under Chadli Benjedid (1979-1992). Although the main part of the research focuses on the post-independence period, which saw substantial changes in women's lives, it was important to first establish the main features of the colonial and war periods as they constituted the foundation of independent Algeria. All post-colonial states bear the marks of colonisation, but for Algeria, these have become open wounds which have not healed, to this day. Algeria was deemed to be an integral part of French territory[5], as opposed to a mere trading outpost or a protectorate. This was famously re-iterated by De Gaulle on June 4th 1958 in Algiers when he declared that France and Algeria were one united nation from Dunkirk to Tamanrasset. This particular type of colonialism and the long and bloody war of independence have deeply affected the country and its people. Some of the problems Algeria faces today, particularly regarding women's status in society, have their roots in the colonial era. Women's role during the war is another important thread linking past and

5 The French categorised their overseas possessions into DOMs (Départements d'Outre-Mer) and TOMs (Territoires d'Outre-Mer). These were allowed increasing measures of autonomy in their administrative affairs (TOMs being more autonomous than DOMs). Algeria, however, was considered to be just another *département* of metropole France.

present. The period of study ends in 1992 since the cancellation of the elections and the declaration of a state of emergency which occurred that year, were a turning point for post-independent Algeria and the opening of a new chapter in its history.

In order to trace the evolution of the role of Algerian women from colonial times to 1992, two main strands of research have been followed: women's own participation in civil society and state imposed policies. This involved, on the one hand, an assessment of achievements in key areas, namely education, employment and political representation, and on the other, an analysis of government programmes, policies and legislation, particularly those affecting women. Women's progress is multidimensional. It is embedded in all aspects of the life of the country and can be evaluated from a myriad of angles: basic economic development (with criteria relating to issues such as housing, health and education), gender equality and women's empowerment (with criteria such as the women's share of the labour market, political representation and access to decision making bodies), environment and security issues (examining areas such as crime and violence against women) and national and international legislation (in the domain of family laws and human rights treaties).

Three quantitative indicators of women's progress have been selected in this study: development in the ratio of girls at all levels of education, women's share of the labour market and women's representation in formal politics. These indicators were the United Nation's (UN) own core indicators of progress in gender equality and empowerment of women selected for the United Nations Development Fund for Women's (UNIFEM) report 'Progress of the World's Women 2000'[6].

Education is a vital factor in women's socio-economic development. The UNIFEM report stated that education is essential for improving women's living standards and enabling women to exercise greater 'voice' in decision making in the family, the community, the place of paid work, and the public arena of politics *[UNIFEM report, 2000, p 13]*. Apart from giving women better economic prospects, research shows that, education also influences women's private life. Not only do educated women delay their marrying age, but they are also much more willing to use contraceptive methods. They also influence positively their children's attitude to education and self-image.

The UN indicator for education only considered the ratio of girls' to boys' enrolment in primary and secondary education, since one of the targets agreed at the Population and Development Conference in Cairo, the Social Summit in Copenhagen and the Women's Conference in Beijing was to close the gap in primary and secondary education by the year 2005. In this study, an attempt has been made to evaluate the gender ratio at all levels of education to

6 The document quoted is an initial report of essential facts published on the Internet prior to the publication of the full report. Available online at www.unifem.undp.org

obtain a fuller statistical picture. Evidently, enrolment figures can only provide a partial view of educational developments. A qualitative analysis of the programmes of education and career guidance given to pupils and a gender audit would be needed to complete the picture and show whether the educational environment was free from gender bias. An evaluation of completion rates and patterns of study would also give a fuller picture of girls' educational achievements. Attempts have been made to include such information whenever possible.

The second quantitative indicator assessed has been the women's share of the labour market. In their analysis, the UN selected the percentage of women's paid employment in non-agricultural activities. The advantage of this indicator is that it looks at sectors of the economy where employment is rising and it avoids counting unemployed women as part of the labour force. However, the Algerian government does not provide such data. The 'active' population as defined in all official documents includes unemployed people aged 15 and over, but does not include housewives. Yet, they represent the majority of the female population, who participate in the economic activity of the country, through their unpaid work, caring for the labour force and participating in farm work or helping in the family enterprise. This unpaid work, however, remains 'invisible' and unrecognised. There are other more qualitative aspects of women's progress in the job market which need to be evaluated in order to paint a fuller picture such as the question of salary differentials between men and women, child care facilities for working mothers, discrimination in terms of promotion or qualifications and sexual harassment at work. This study has incorporated relevant surveys covering such areas.

The third quantitative indicator in this thesis concerns women's political participation. The UN, in its 'Progress of the World's Women 2000' report, considered this to be a major element of women's empowerment, stating that *greater equality in the numbers of women holding political office is important not only in its own right, but also because it may give women more of a voice in determining the laws and policies which regulate women's progress in other areas of life, such as the economy [UNIFEM report, 2000, p 26].*

Recognising this fact, the research has followed the progress of women's representation including their participation in civil society organisations and formal politics. In the industrialised as well as in the Third World, women are under-represented at the higher levels of formal politics. In 1987-1988, only 3.5% of the world's cabinet ministers were women, and 93 countries had no women ministers at all. Those women who did obtain ministerial positions were usually excluded from the more 'senior' areas of government, such as economic policy and defence, and tended to be in 'social affairs'. Even there, the proportion of women was only 9% in Africa and 6% in the rest of the Third World *[United Nations 1991, p 31 in Afshar 1996, p 11].* And yet, in most countries in the world, women have the right to vote and do exercise this right in the same proportion as men, when factors such as levels of education or social classes are taken into account. There are many reasons which explain this under representation. The

UN's 'Forward-looking strategies for the advancement of women' recognised that *the principal reason why women are not selected to office is that women are not put forward as candidates... [this is caused by] the fact that they are not well represented in terms of numbers in the executive leadership of political parties [Commission on the status of women E/CN.6/1995/1 p 4].*

The male dominated party structures and processes (such as selection procedures and times of meetings), the lack of an institutional base (as a result of poor representation of women in high-ranking positions in public and private sector organisations), the prevailing societal attitudes towards women resulting in a lack of self-confidence and a lack of support by other women, all these factors constitute barriers to women's access to formal politics. However, progress is slowly taking place. Between 1975 and 1993, the percentage of women in parliaments increased throughout the world except in Eastern Europe.[7] In Africa, this figure went from 4.6% to 8% *[UN Commission on the status of women E/CN.6/1995/1 p 4].* In order to improve women's representation in politics, some governments and political parties have introduced quotas for women representatives and candidates. In Sweden, the first country to introduce quotas in 1972, 42.7% of parliamentary seats were held by women by January 2000 *[UNIFEM report, 2000, p 27].* It has also been noted that in some countries, women are beginning to vote for female candidates or candidates representing women's interests. This, in turn, has prompted some political parties to nominate women candidates. This was the case in all five Nordic countries in the 1980s *[UN Commission on the status of women E/CN.6/1995/1 p 4].* Some countries have created various institutions such as ministries for women's affairs, advisory groups on women's issues and parliamentary commissions. The effectiveness of these bodies depends, to a large extent, on financial and human resources.

This research also recognised the fact that political participation is multifaceted and often takes place outside the recognised formal political institutions. In Algeria, as in many other countries throughout the world, women who are totally under-represented in official political bodies have, nevertheless, made their views heard by, for instance, organising public demonstrations. Participation in political activity also manifests itself in simple individual daily acts of resistance, such as Algerian women wearing the veil in defiance of the French authorities during the war of independence, or sitting in a café despite the threats of the FIS[8] in the late 1980s. These aspects of women's 'informal' political participation and their consequences have been well documented and form a substantial part of this study.

The analysis of the three core quantitative indicators, education, employment and political participation, supported by qualitative evaluations have provided a broad overview of the

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7 In Eastern Europe, before the shift to democratic political systems, parliaments were made up of quotas reflecting the different class, age and gender groups in society. Ironically, with the democratic reforms, parliaments now reflect the actual economic and political power within the society, hence the dramatic falls in the number of women's seats.

8 Front Islamique du Salut, the main Islamist Party in Algeria.

overall progress made by Algerian women. Government policies and legislation give an idea of the government's commitment to the improvement of women's status in society. Although the gap between the legislative framework and its actual implementation is often wide and the rhetoric of official government policies is often part of an image building exercise aimed at the Western world, the analysis of the government's official documents has been a valuable indicator of the national and global contexts in which women were operating.

When looking at the position of women in Middle East Islamic countries, two assumptions are often made: the first one is that all women in these countries constitute a homogeneous group, the second is that Islam is the cause of women's lack of progress. These assumptions, characteristic of a Western approach to the study of Muslim countries, have been labeled 'misery research'. Another type of approach, the 'dignity research', has taken the opposite stance, emphasising women's power in the household and their revered status within Islam *[Moghadam 1992, p4]*. It is evident that women's lives, in the industrialised as well as in the Third World, are affected in different ways, depending on their level of education, the social class they belong to and whether they live in urban or rural areas. As far as Islam is concerned, the interpretation of its texts varies from one country to another. Tunisia, for instance, allowed adoption and outlawed polygamy which goes against a strict interpretation of the Qur'an. Furthermore, in all Muslim countries certain local customs have been allowed to survive alongside Muslim laws. Sexual mutilation of girls, for instance, which is a pre-Islamic tradition, has persisted in countries such as Egypt, Somalia and Senegal. It is also important to remember that the status of women in Islam is not immutable. In the past, the wearing of the veil was associated with upper classes and seclusion of women. Today, upper class women, generally, do not wear a veil and have greater freedom and mobility in society. As Kandiyoti noted, a major factor affecting women's status is state policies and legislation. Women's condition is closely linked to the 'state building processes' *[Kandiyoti 1991, p 3]*. Muslim states are faced with the problem of combining the conflicting needs of a modern society and the Muslim societal structures. To create a modern society, the state has to remove all traditional practices which impede progress. The patriarchal structures of extended families, with kinship based loyalties and male domination over women, are undermined by many aspects of modernity such as universal education, industrialisation and urban migrations. However, in order to preserve the Muslim identity of the country, the state also has to maintain certain elements of patriarchal order. Since the domination and segregation of women are at the heart of the traditional patrilineal structure, their status becomes the focus of the controversy between the 'modernists / secularists' and the 'conservatives / traditionalists'. As Shukri noted in her study 'Social changes and women in the Middle East': *Polemics surrounding women and the family are responses to the contradictions of social change and emerge in the context of patriarchal societies undergoing modernization and demographic transition [Shukri 1999, p 39].* The role of the state, therefore, through legislation and government policies, is crucial in determining the extent to which patriarchal control over women is reinforced or undermined.

Government's decisions are often driven by political or economic factors rather than by idealistic motives. Although this is not specific to Muslim countries, the laws relating to women's status are often enacted by Middle Eastern and North African governments to strengthen their own position rather than for the betterment of women's conditions. For instance, the Algerian government's sudden turn-around in the 1980s on the family planning programme, after years of neglect of this issue, was in response to the country's economic difficulties. The intention was to curb the population growth and not, primarily, to give women more control over their lives. Similarly, the patriarchal structure based on extended families plays an important socio-economic role. Governments are well aware of this fact and therefore reluctant to take any action which would weaken this institution. As Moghadam noted in her study on 'Development and patriarchy' in the Middle East and North Africa: *...the persistence of patriarchy relieves the state of the responsibility for the provision of welfare to citizens [Moghadam 1992, p 14].*

Another major factor affecting Middle Eastern women's socio-economic progress is the type of development strategy chosen by the government and whether the country is dependent on oil revenues. Countries opting for an 'Import Substitution Industrialisation' (ISI) strategy of development import machinery to develop local and typically heavy industries which tend to be very capital intensive. Algeria went along this path, relying on its oil revenues to finance its industrialisation. Other countries, such as Tunisia and Morocco developed their own manufacturing industry for export which more often involves the creation of light industries. These two types of development strategies make a considerable difference to women's employment opportunities. Whereas the latter export oriented strategy leads to a fairly high level of female employment in light manufacturing, the ISI option inhibits female employment since heavy industry is generally male-dominated *[Moghadam 1992, p 56].* In Tunisia, for instance, there were 165,700 women employed in manufacturing in 1989, representing 43.3% of the manufacturing workforce. The figures for Algeria in 1985 were respectively: 40,632 and 6.8% *[Khoury & Moghadam 1995, p 21].* Although female work opportunities are extensive in the well developed public sector of oil rich countries, the oil crisis of the 1980s forced governments to make drastic budgetary cuts, which disproportionately affected women's public sector employment. The ensuing economic decline and high unemployment rates further reduced women's work opportunities.

The evolution of women's role in any society is the result of a complex interplay between historical, social and political factors and events. In the case of Algeria, the particular style of colonialism, the long and bitter fight for independence, the rapid and uneven incursion of modernity into a traditional society and the search for a national identity embedded in Islam have all affected the development of the role of women. Therefore, this thesis' methodology is that of a broad historical narrative divided into four time periods, analysing the continuing legacy of the French colonial era, examining the post-independence governments' policies and

their impact on women within an Islamic society undergoing a modernising process. Each chapter of the thesis considers these factors to varying depths, reflecting their particular significance during each historical period.

PART 1
Women in the Algerian Society & State: 1830 to 1954

1 Overview: French Colonial Algeria

Algeria covers a vast territory of more than two million square kilometres situated on the northern coast of the African continent. The topography of the country is varied: with fertile coastal hills and plains in the north, the Tell Atlas mountain ranges extending from the Moroccan border in the west and the mountains of the Grande Kabylie in the east. The Sahara desert in the south covers more than four fifths of the land area. These geographical factors have given Algeria a strategic position as part of the African continent on the doorstep of Europe. The vast land area has provided the country with substantial mineral, oil and natural gas reserves. However, only 75,000 km^2 are suitable for agriculture *[Library of Congress Country file [9]]*.

At the time of the French conquest, the country had a small population. In 1856, Algeria had a total population of 2,496,000 of whom 186,000 were Europeans *[Schnetzler 1981, p13]*. Only 5 to 6% of the Algerian population lived in cities. The rest were subsistence farmers and nomadic herdsmen. The two major ethnic groups were the Arabs (i.e. native speakers of Arabic who made up the larger group) and the Berbers, located mostly in the Kabyle mountains, the Aurès range and the Mzab region in northern Sahara. The European settlers who migrated to Algeria in the nineteenth century came mostly from France, but also from Italy and Spain.

A brief study of the main features of the colonial period (1830-1954) leading to the war of independence (1954-1962) is essential in order to fully appreciate the impact of colonisation on the Algerian society and women in particular. During that time, the year 1870 was of particular significance to the country. This date constituted a turning point in the history of both France and Algeria. For the French, it marked the defeat of Napoleon III in the Franco-Prussian war and the annexation of Alsace and Lorraine by Prussia, followed by the establishment of the Third Republic. For the Algerians, it marked the transfer of power from a military to a civilian government, not their own but that of the settlers. This administrative reorganisation brought about a major change of attitude towards the colony. Whilst the military authorities, after the initial land occupation, had established a reasonable working relationship with the local population, the new civilian government had only one purpose: the extension of the settlers'

9 Available on-line at *http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/dztoc.html*

rights and the fulfilment of their aspirations. The first Governor General of Algeria, Vice Admiral Gueydon declared in 1871:

> Je n'ai qu'un but, substituer le gouvernement au commandement afin de réaliser les légitimes aspirations des colons.
>
> *[Ageron 1979, p 10]*
>
> (I have but one goal, to replace the military authorities with a government in order to realise the legitimate aspirations of the settlers.)

A year later, in a letter to the minister of the interior, Gueydon, wrote:

> Il ne faut pas se le dissimuler: ce que veulent les politiciens et avec eux la grande majorité des colons, c'est la souveraineté des élus de la population française et l'écrasement , j'ose dire le servage, de la population indigène.
>
> *[Ageron 1979, p 12]*
>
> (Let us not try to hide the fact that what the politicians and, with them, the great majority of the settlers want, is the sovereignty of those elected by the French population and the crushing, dare I say the enslavement, of the indigenous population.)

The words 'crushing' and 'enslavement' leave no doubts as to the intentions of the new government. Furthermore, land was needed to settle the uprooted farmers of Alsace and Lorraine. Several laws were passed to 'legally confiscate' land. With the civilian government, a new era started for Algeria: that of 'assimilation' of its people and annexing of its land to France. Many changes were made to the administration of the country and many laws were introduced, but the main factor was that Algeria was now in the hands of the settlers, the 'dominant caste' determined to keep the Algerian population, the 'dominated caste', in a position of inferiority *[Bourdieu 1958, p 146]*.

The period between the two world wars was also a land mark in the history of Algeria. It coincided with the beginning of the breakdown of the traditional peasant communities. The increased migrations to France introduced new attitudes and values to Algerian society. The movements of population from the countryside to the cities also rose dramatically and had dire consequences. At the same time, the educated Algerian elite were becoming increasingly dissatisfied with their status and were beginning to make demands on the French authorities. The disillusionment of this active section of the population who realised that the settlers would never allow them equal status, combined with years of abject sufferings inflicted on the mass of peasant population, led to the inevitable war which started in 1954.

2 Legal and social status of women

2.1 Position of women in traditional Algerian society

In France, many misconceptions existed regarding the position of women in the traditional Algerian society. An abundant fictional literature[10] produced at the beginning of the 20th century depicted Algerian women as docile slaves of men who kept them as prisoners in their homes and repudiated them at will. French women were urged to help their poor Algerian sisters,

> ...créatures de misère qui sont un peu moins mal traitées que le chien et beaucoup moins bien traitées que le cheval.
>
> *[Confluences Méditerranée no. 19 1996, p 40]*

> (...miserable creatures who are slightly better treated than dogs but not as well treated as horses.)

These views were also spread by the French settlers, either out of ignorance and lack of understanding of a culture they judged from the outside, or to deliberately create the image of a society of savages who desperately needed the French culture to become 'civilised'. Muslim women who, at first had been depicted by colonisers in *mythical and highly eroticized image*[s], became *a symbol of backwardness [Cherifati-Merabtine in Moghadam 1994, pp 42,43].* The reality was much more complex. The main characteristic of the Algerian social structure was its patriarchal nature within a Muslim cultural context. Bourdieu described the Algerian social structures as follows:

> The extended family, the basic social unit, groups together several conjugal families founded by the direct male descendants of a common ancestor. The patrilinear structure and the patriarchal system imply both the role of the "father" and the absolute predominance granted to the men, women's rights being subordinate to those of the agnate.
>
> *[Bourdieu 1962, p 83]*

10 Such as the book 'Femmes arabes d'Algérie' (Arab women of Algeria), written in 1900 by Hubertine Auclert, a French woman who had spent four years in Algeria.

Nevertheless, women did play an important role, in the education of children and the maintenance of traditions:

> This society of women who live in a closed world,...exerts a great influence over the masculine society, both because it gives the children their earliest training and passes on to them the magic beliefs in ritual practices and because it opposes an effective, secret and underground resistance to any modification of a traditional order of which, at first sight, it would appear to be the victim.
>
> *[Bourdieu 1962, p 98]*

Before engaging in a detailed study of the 'women's world', it is important to assess the influence of Islam on the society as a whole. If Islam was so well integrated into Algerian society, it was because there were structural affinities between the existing social organisation and the Islamic social order. Although Islam introduced the concept of the *umma* (community of believers) to replace tribal allegiances, many features of the Muslim social organisation already existed within the traditional Algerian society such as the central role of the extended family, the authority of the patriarch, the concept of honour and the specific role attributed to women.

While the scope of this study does not allow for a detailed analysis of all the Muslim concepts, we will look at the image and role of women within a traditional Islamic society and the concept of honour which affects every stage of women's lives. According to the Moroccan sociologist, Fatima Mernissi, Islam does not consider women to be inferior to men. Mernissi states:

> ... [Islam] affirms the potential equality between the sexes. The existing inequality does not rest on an ideological or biological theory of women's inferiority, but is the outcome of specific social institutions designed to restrain her power: namely, segregation and legal subordination in the family structure.
>
> *[Mernissi 1987, p 19]*

Mernissi goes on to explain that women are powerful and their power resides in their sexual attraction which men cannot resist. This power, if uncontrolled, can cause *fitna* ('chaos', 'disorder'):

> The Muslim woman is endowed with a fatal attraction which erodes the male's will to resist her and reduces him to a passive acquiescent role. He has no choice; he can only give in to her attraction, whence her identification with *fitna*, chaos, and with the anti-divine and anti-social forces... The entire Muslim social structure can be seen as an attack on, and a defence against, the disruptive power of female sexuality.
>
> *[Mernissi 1987, pp 41, 45]*

This view regarding women's equality with men in Islam is not shared by all scholars and theologians. Asghar Ali Engineer distinguishes between the normative and the contextual sense:

> Normatively speaking the Qur'an appears to be in favour of equal status for both the sexes, ... Contextually speaking, it does grant a slight edge to men over women.
>
> *[Engineer 1992, p 42]*

Indeed, Sura 4 Verse 1 of the Qur'an[11] seems to consider men and women as equal:

> O people, fear your Lord who created you from a single soul, and from it He created its mate, and from both He scattered abroad many men and women;
>
> *[p 51]*

However, Sura 4 Verse 34 declares categorically:

> Men are in charge of women, because Allah has made some of them excel the others, and because they spend some of their wealth. Hence righteous women are obedient, guarding the unseen which Allah has guarded. And those of them that you fear might rebel, admonish them and abandon them in their beds and beat them.
>
> *[p 54]*

Whether Muslim men fear women's power or consider themselves to be superior to them, the result is that women have had to accept certain codes of conduct dictated by men such as the segregation of the sexes, division of space into a 'private sphere' (women's world, their home) and a 'public sphere' (men's world, outside the home) and the wearing of a veil whenever women venture out of their 'designated' areas. This attitude towards women is combined with a highly developed sense of honour amongst men. Their honour and that of their family depends on the effectiveness of their control over the women of the family. This has had repercussions on all aspects of women's lives. From puberty to menopause, women have to be watched over by men. They have to be accompanied by a male member of the family every time they enter the 'public sphere', normally reserved to men. This explains the reluctance of many parents to send their daughters to school after puberty. Kerouani, an Algerian woman, recalls in her autobiography how in 1952, at the age of 12, her whole life changed when her father decided to remove her from school:

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[11] The English translation of the Qur'an used here is 'The Qur'an. A modern English translation. Majid Fahry, 1997.

> Mon père, lui, était vigilant. Il ne se soucia pas d'explication, mais prit le prétexte de l'éloignement de l'école pour annoncer, un soir et sans appel, que je resterais dorénavant à la maison... Mon père jugeait que les filles n'avaient pas besoin de grande instruction... Persuadé qu'il fallait préserver la vertu des filles sans se soucier d'enrichir leur esprit... Je me suis retrouvée enfermée, chargée d'aider ma mère, obligée de m'occuper de mes cadets et du ménage... J'étais retirée de l'école pour "prendre le voile".
>
> *[Kerouani 1991, pp 17,18]*

> (My father - he was vigilant. He did not bother with explanations but announced one evening the irrevocable decision that, due to the remoteness of the school, I would, from then on, stay at home... My father was of the opinion that girls did not need much education... Convinced as he was that what mattered was to preserve their virtue rather than worry about developing their minds... I found myself locked up with the tasks of helping my mother, looking after my younger brothers and sisters and doing housework... I was being removed from school to "take the veil".)

Once a girl has reached puberty, her virginity has to be preserved at all costs. As Minai explained in her book 'Women in Islam', a girl's virginity is:

> ... a temple of her family's honor. She must remain chaste until marriage and faithful to her husband thereafter. Otherwise she not only shames herself but also destroys her entire family's honor...
>
> *[Minai 1981, p 100]*

This is such a serious matter, that a husband can repudiate his wife the day after the marriage or even on the very first night if he discovers that she is not a virgin. Minai explains that:

> In ultraconservative areas failure to stain the sheet with virginal blood may bring death to the bride at the hands of her brother or father, whose honor she sullied.
>
> *[Minai 1981, p 147]*

Crimes of honour, women killed by their father, brother or husband for having, or being suspected of having a sexual relationship outside marriage are, even today, very common in Muslim countries. Shaaban, in her book 'Both right and left handed' cites the case of a young Syrian boy who killed his unmarried sister when it was discovered that she was pregnant. The boy was imprisoned for six months *[Shaaban 1988, pp 3-5]*. In Algeria, in colonial times, crimes of honour did occur. Therefore, fathers tended to marry off their daughters very young and often before puberty to avoid such situations. The understanding was that the marriage would not be consummated until the girl had reached puberty. However, this promise was not always kept by the husband. Even if she had menstruated, a young girl of 12 or 13 was not mentally or physically ready for marriage. Nevertheless, the father, who had the right to choose and impose his choice of husband on his daughter, the *droit de djabr* (matrimonial constraint), was keen to 'hand her over' to her future husband. From then on, she became the responsibility of her husband. This meant that women never graduated to the position of independent adults. While living at home, they remained under the tutelage of their father.

During their married life, their husband was responsible for them. If the husband died, this responsibility was passed on to his sons, if the woman was divorced or repudiated, her family was expected to take her back until her next marriage.

Family laws in Algeria followed the principles of the Maliki Mathhab, one of the four schools in the Muslim Law. Regarding marriage, as mentioned earlier, the father or a guardian (a male relative on the father's side) had the right to choose his daughter's future husband. The validity of the marriage was dependent on the presence of the girl's father or guardian and the agreement of a dowry, which was to be paid by the husband in exchange for the girl. Repudiation and polygamy were legal. A man could have up to four wives as long as he could provide equally for them. The practice of polygamy, however, was decreasing: from 89,000 polygamists in 1886 to 29,571 in 1954 *[Bourdieu 1962, p 97]*.

Husband and wife had very specific rights and duties clearly defined in the Muslim Law. The wife owed respect to her husband and members of his family. After payment of the dowry, the wife had to make herself available to her husband. If, however, the husband could not or would not fulfil his marital duties, his wife could ask the *Cadi* (Muslim judge) for divorce. Once the marriage had been consummated, the husband had the responsibility of providing adequate maintenance for his wife. This included a place to live (the wife could refuse to share her house with a second wife), food, some clothes, accessories and medical expenses. In the event of the husband going away for any length of time, she could ask the *Cadi* to sell some of her husband's property and even ask for divorce if adequate maintenance had not been arranged before the husband's departure. Conversely, the husband could suspend all maintenance if his wife refused to fulfil her marital duties, or disobeyed him by, for instance, leaving the house without his permission. Marriages were very fragile and often ended in repudiation or divorce. In poor families, a husband was often chosen by the father of the girl because of his wealth which often resulted in a mismatch: a rich old man with a poor young girl. There were no stigma attached to repudiation and divorce. A woman could easily remarry, except if she was sterile (the reasons for this will be explained below in the study of motherhood). As far as inheritance was concerned, the woman's share was either a quarter of the estate if she was the sole inheritor or an eighth, if there were other descendants *[Millot 1910, pp 123-144]*.

Despite their seemingly inferior status, Algerian women played a very important role both in an economic and cultural sense within the family unit. The mother was absolutely vital to the economic life of the family. Apart from all the domestic chores such as cooking, cleaning, fetching water and wood for the fire, she would help her husband in the fields with tasks such as picking and drying figs, collecting olives and threshing wheat. She also had the responsibility of making pottery utensils, spinning and weaving wool to make blankets and clothes. She would also collect milk and make cheese and quite often supplemented the family

food with eggs from hens she had reared herself. Occasionally, the mother would earn a small amount of money by selling surplus produce or doing embroidery work from home.

The 'cultural input' of the mother was essential in the up bringing of her children. This earned her love and respect from both her husband's family and the rest of the community. The position of 'mother' within the patriarchal Muslim society was a status symbol. Since the purpose of marriage was procreation, to ensure the development of the *umma*, women's consecrated role was that of mothers. Furthermore, since the traditional society was organised according to patrilineal descent, they had the added burden of providing male heirs. The worst possible fate for a woman was to be deemed sterile. In most cases she would then be repudiated, her husband would divorce her or take a second wife. She would have virtually no chance of remarrying. Her own family would have to take her back. Even a woman who 'only' had daughters was threatened by repudiation, divorce or polygamy. Since a woman's status within her community and her husband's family depended on the number of sons she produced, she ended up equating her own value to her male-reproductive capacity. Consequently, daughters were not welcomed as enthusiastically as boys. Zerdoumi, in her book 'Enfants d'hier' (Yesterday's children), describes the arrival of a girl in the family as follows:

> Accueillie sans enthousiasme, même par la maman qui a peut-être souhaité que son premier bébé soit féminin mais qui sait bien que l'entourage est consterné, la fille aura une enfance très vite différente du garçon.
>
> *[Zerdoumi 1970, p 185]*

> (Welcomed without enthusiasm, even by her mother who might have been hoping that her first baby would be a girl, but who knows that the whole family is disappointed, the girl's childhood will be different from a boy's from an early age.)

Indeed, the girl was soon trained for her future role, that of mother. She was expected to help her mother in the house, doing household chores, but also looking after her younger brothers and sisters. She also learned that the best quality for a woman was to be obedient and silent. Deprived of contacts with men, even the male members of her family, the girl developed a reserved and fearful attitude towards men.

> ... très vite, elle aura eu conscience de la supériorité de l'homme et se trouvera prise d'une affection servile pour ses frères.... Sa mère lui aura appris qu'il faut avant tout obéir et se taire...Vivant ainsi dans la peur révérencielle de l'homme qui lui a été inculquée fondamentalement, sans intimité affective ni intellectuelle avec son père, ... la petite fille connaitra déjà l'isolement de la femme...
>
> *[Zerdoumi 1970, p 186]*

> (... very soon, she will have become aware of the superiority of men and will develop a servile affection for her brothers,... Her mother will have taught her, first and foremost, to obey and be quiet... From an early age, she will have developed a fearful and deferential attitude towards men, deprived of any emotional or intellectual closeness with her father,... the little girl will already experience the isolation of women...)

Like her mother, she soon realised that her only hope of attaining any social recognition was to marry and have a large number of children, preferably boys. This was one of the causes of the high birth rate in Algeria. Women also wanted to compensate for the high rates of infant mortality. Thus, women became the best defenders of the patriarchal order. As the French anthropologist, Lacoste-Dujardin, noted:

> La mère, en jouant un rôle d'organisatrice, de contremaitre du travail domestique en même temps que de surveillante de la conduite des femmes, contribue à la puissance et au prestige du patrilignage pour le plus grand profit des hommes dominants... [Les mères] déléguées de l'autorité masculine, ... sont faites complices de l'ordre patriarcal dont procède leur autorité. Les mères sont les alliées objectives du pouvoir masculin.
>
> *[Lacoste-Dujardin 1985, p 131]*
>
> (The mother, by acting as organiser, supervising the domestic tasks as well as watching over the women, contributes to the power and prestige of the patrilineal order which benefits the dominant males... [Mothers, acting as] substitutes of the masculine authority, have become accomplices of the patriarchal order which is the source of their authority. Mothers have become the objective allies of masculine power.)

If mothers gave their daughters the necessary training to prepare them for their future role, they also made sure their sons developed the mental attitudes corresponding to their future dominant position in the family and society at large. If a little boy was badly behaved, he was deemed to have a strong character and his mother was proud of him. From an early age, he was made to feel important and superior to women. He might be given the responsibility of chaperoning his sisters when they went out, even if they were older than him. As Lacoste-Dujardin concluded:

> Ainsi des femmes, les mères, construisent elles-mêmes la misogynie des hommes, les rendant incapables d'établir des relations d'égalité avec une femme.
>
> *[Lacoste-Dujardin 1985, p 139]*
>
> (Therefore, women, as mothers, are creating men's misogyny, by making them incapable of establishing relationships with women based on equality.)

Furthermore, mothers created such strong bonds with their sons that emotionally, their sons remained immature, never able to consider their wife as anything else than a procreator.

> ... tant que les femmes demeurent toujours des mères-avant-tout, les hommes, en conséquence, demeurent des fils-avant-tout, et la relation hétérosexuelle la plus satisfaisante, la plus profonde et la plus riche d'affectivité demeure toujours la relation mère-fils.
>
> *[Lacoste-Dujardin 1985, p 230]*
>
> (... as long as women remain first and foremost mothers, men, as a consequence, remain first and foremost sons. The most satisfying, the deepest and emotionally richest heterosexual relationship remains forever the mother-son relationship.)

These were the main characteristics determining the position of women within the traditional Algerian society. This forms the backdrop against which the evolution of women's roles can be understood and which places in context the impediments which hindered their development in certain areas.

2.2 Colonial laws and their impact

2.2.1 Land-ownership legislation and its effects on family structure

From the very beginning, the intention of the French government was to establish a large French community in Algeria operating in a modern economic context based on private property. It was, therefore, essential to create a new legal system. The Algerian economy was largely based on collective land ownership, protected by the principles of indivisibility and inalienability. The French laws which were passed had two purposes: establish private property and 'legally' acquire land which could then be given to European settlers. The objectives of the French government were to:

> ...établir les conditions favorables au développement d'une économie moderne fondée sur l'entreprise privée et la propriété individuelle, l'intégration juridique [au système français] étant tenue pour le préalable indispensable à une transformation de l'économie, [et] favoriser la dépossession des Algériens en pourvoyant les colons de moyens d'appropriation apparemment légaux.
>
> *[Bourdieu & Sayed in Ath-Messaoud & Gillette 1976, p 13]*

> (...establish the right conditions for the development of a modern economy based on private enterprise and individual ownership, the judicial integration [into the French system] being the indispensable pre-requisite for the transformation of the economy [and] to favour the dispossession of the Algerian people by providing the settlers with seemingly legal means of appropriating the land.)

During the first phase of the confiscation of land by the French government (1830 - 1850) a decree, in 1830, declared all *beylic land* (land previously owned by the bey) to be government property. In 1843 the French government also took over all the *habous land*[12] which had previously belonged to religious institutions. These two laws had serious consequences for the farmers who, until then, had common access to these lands for pasture. The introduction of the principle of confiscation of land in 1845 further deprived the peasant community of substantial parts of their land. The government confiscated land from tribes as a punishment for taking part in rebellions against the French authorities or for giving assistance to rebels. Land was also confiscated if a land-owner was away for more than three months without authorisation

12 Habous land were properties which had been donated to a religious institution and which could not be sold by individuals. The revenue from the land was given to the original owner and later on to his/her heirs.

from the French authorities. The legal device of sequestration was also frequently exploited to obtain illegal evictions.

The implementation of these laws had serious consequences for the peasant population. It destabilised the agricultural production: many nomadic tribes had to become sedentary due to the disappearance of common land. They often started growing wheat for subsistence on land which was not fertile enough. Small farmers could no longer support large families and they ended up selling their land and working on settlers' farms for irregular and lower incomes. The net outcome was the destruction of the fundamental component of the social structure: the tribe. This is what members of the 'Ouled Rechaich' tribe said to a French Captain:

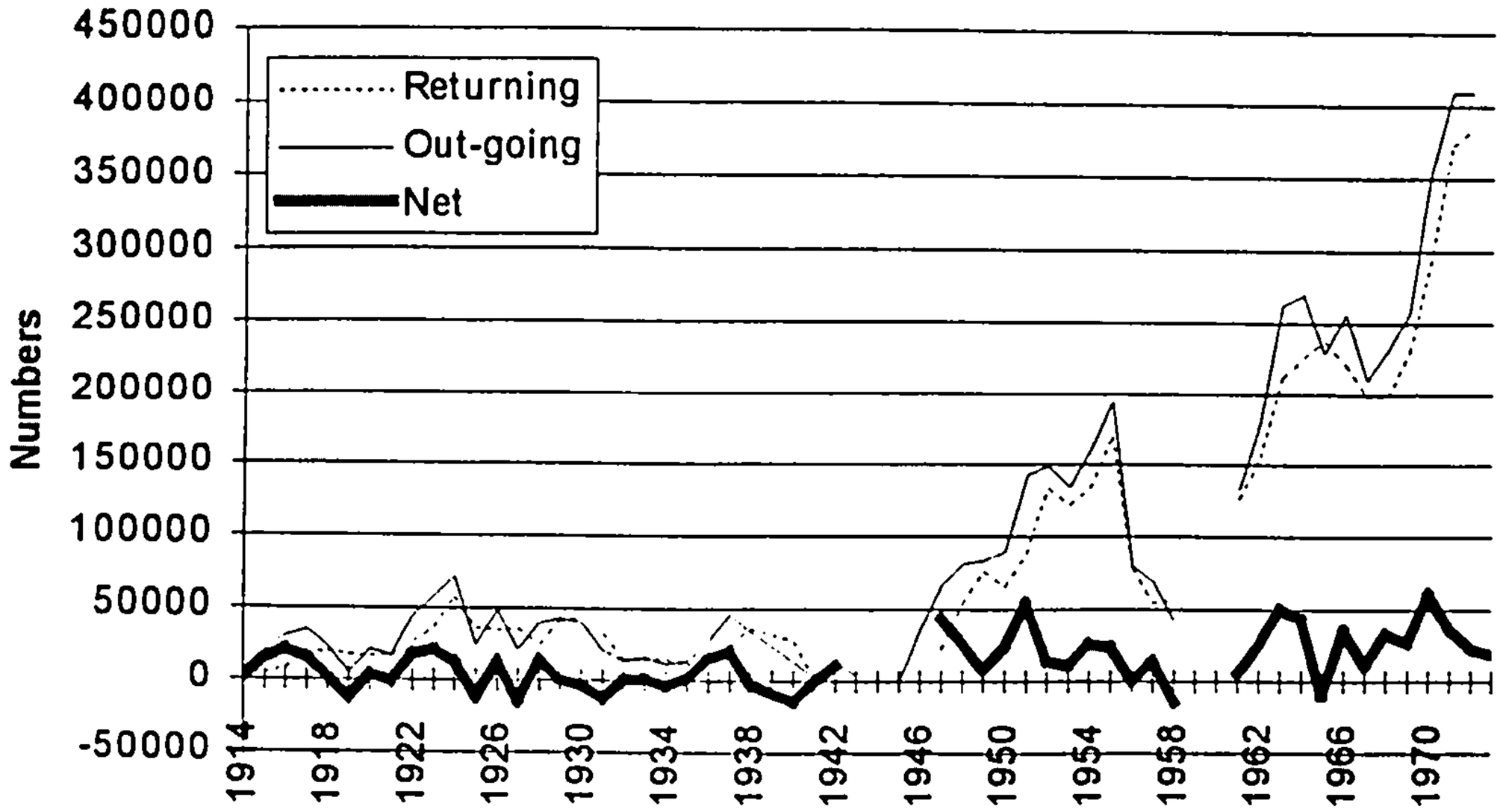
> ...the setting up of private property and the authorisation given to each individual to sell his share of the land is a death sentence for the tribe. Twenty years after these measures have been carried out the Ouled Rechaich will have ceased to exist.
>
> *[Captain Vaissière 1863, p 90 in Bourdieu 1962, p 121]*

A second phase of land confiscation (1851 - 1870) was signalled by a new law, in 1851, which further eroded tribal land. The law established that a tribe could only claim ownership of land if it had been in permanent use. This enabled the French government to confiscate vast forest areas which could then be given to new settlers.

The final phase of the attack on tribal land began with the Warnier law of 1873. From then on, French legislation regulated all land transactions. This meant that farmers had to show the original deeds establishing their rights to the land in order to obtain new French legal documents which were now deemed to be the only valid proof of ownership. This resulted in further illegal evictions of farmers and shameless acquisitions by land speculators. In the Algiers region, out of 168,000 hectares, for which the French government checked the legal documents, 95,000 became government property and 37,000 were given to the settlers *[Ath-Messaoud & Gillette 1976, p 14]*.

The consequences for the Algerian population and their physical environment, were enormous. Land erosion started with the cutting down of trees, vine growing was introduced, the range of agricultural produce was reduced, the live-stock decimated and the whole structure of the society affected. Farmers were forced away from the fertile coastal areas to the mountainous regions, since the best land had been given to the settlers. The size of most of the farms became so small (less than one hectare) that it was not sufficient to support an average family. This, in turn, resulted in under-nourishment. The living conditions were so poor that farmers often had no alternatives but to sell their land and either become farm labourers on European farms, move to the cities or emigrate to France. This last option became increasingly common after World War I.

Figure 1 Flow of migrants 1914 - 1973: Algeria to France



[data from Ath-Messaoud & Gillette 1976 pp 118,119]

In all cases the move brought significant changes to family life. Migration to France resulted in long term changes to the fabric of the Algerian society. Up to World War II, this migration was characterised by the fact that it was short term, undertaken in turn by the young members of each peasant family and was aimed at maintaining the peasant community alive despite the attacks by the colonial powers. The young men who emigrated remained farmers at heart. They lived together, recreating a sense of community, keeping their traditional values and beliefs. The money they managed to send back home was often the only means of survival for their families. It enabled them to pay off debts, re-acquire cattle and land. However, this process was also the start of a profound change in the peasant mentality. Before colonisation and during the early years of emigration, the principle of 'indivisibility' created a strong sense of fraternity and mutual support amongst the peasant community:

> ...une seule terre, un seul toit, un seul budget, une seule marmite.
>
> *[Ath-Messaoud & Gillette 1976, p 65]*
>
> (...one land, one roof, one budget, one pot.)

After World War II, the whole concept was undermined by the introduction of money as a reward for work. Worthwhile work had to be rewarded by money, therefore, the day to day agricultural tasks became a worthless burden because of their low monetary value.

> Les paysans émigrés découvrent, en même temps qu'ils en font la dure expérience, la calculabilité de leur temps de travail, la relation directe entre le travail fourni et la rémunération reçue... Rapportée aux conditions de vie et de travail du monde

> traditionnel, cette disposition calculatrice mine les fondements de la société paysanne traditionnelle. Elle conduit à considérer l'agriculture ... comme une corvée de peu de sens, parce que de peu de rapport.
>
> *[ibid, p 61]*
>
> (The emigrant peasants discover through their own harsh experience the monetary value of their work, the direct correlation between the work done and the wage received... Transposed to the conditions of life and work in the traditional society, this monetary valuation undermines the basis of the traditional peasant society. It leads to the perception of agriculture ... as a chore of little value because of its low return of income.)

This new attitude, in turn, had profound repercussions on the whole community structure. Due to the newly discovered value of money, amongst the peasant population, those who possessed it or earned it, whether young or old, acquired a position of power which was normally reserved to the elders. Because of the disappearing 'esprit de paysan', some emigrants lost interest in their family and property back in Algeria. Wives and mothers were left to manage farms on their own. In some cases, husbands who had emigrated to France, stopped sending money and totally abandoned their wives. These women, sometimes with children, tried to find work in the cities, joining the army of maids for European families or, in desperation, resorting to prostitution. Emigration which originally started out of necessity, to maintain the survival of the peasant community, ended up contributing to its disappearance, in its traditional forms at least. Individualism replaced community life.

The life of the whole community was affected even when dispossessed farmers chose not to emigrate but to work for the settlers. While men were working on European farms, usually far away from their village, women had to take on new responsibilities and duties. This inevitably had a traumatic effect in a society dominated by men, in which girls were brought up expecting men to look after them and provide for them. Because of the general impoverishment of village communities, the extended family which traditionally offered strong support to the single mother, was often incapable of providing any help.

In the case of farmers who moved to the cities, life was not less traumatic: because the men could not find jobs easily, in an urban environment where farming skills were not in demand, women ended up working to support their families. The living conditions of these migrant families were much worse than in their rural communities. They suffered a 'double segregation': as well as being rejected by the Europeans, they formed a social class completely separate from the rest of the indigenous town dwellers and were often relegated to the outskirts of the cities:

> Ici comme ailleurs, les nouveaux-venus, les déracinés, s'entassent dans les quartiers périphériques et ne trouvent guère d'emploi, ...d'où la non-intégration des ruraux et ses conséquences: la double ségrégation, une ségrégation ethnique, représentée par la juxtaposition de quartiers d'Européens et de quartiers d'Algériens et une

> ségrégation sociale, attestée souvent au sein de la même communauté par la non-cohabitation des différentes couches sociales.
>
> *[Sari 1978, p 125]*

> (Here, as elsewhere, the newcomers, the up-rooted, cram into the outskirts of the towns and do not find any employment ...which results in the non-integration of the rural population with its consequent double segregation: the ethnic segregation represented by the juxtaposition of European quarters and Algerian quarters and the social segregation evident in the non-cohabitation amongst members of the same community of different social groupings.)

For women, this isolation had drastic consequences. As Peter Knauss explains in his study on patriarchy in Algeria:

> Algerian women, especially those of the new popular classes... became the dual victims of colonialism and the new patriarchal nuclear family.
>
> *[Knauss 1987, p 24]*

Land reforms had forced them to leave their rural community and lose all the support it provided such as the traditional gatherings at festival times and the support given to young wives during pregnancy, for instance. Furthermore, with the development of an isolated urban nuclear family, women lost all the collective and 'behind-the-scenes' influence they used to have through discussions and negotiations within the extended family. Many women started going out to work to support their families. This was totally new and forced on them by circumstances. The majority of women worked in factories, mostly making carpets. The following figures show a dramatic increase in the number of working women between 1902 and 1905. This corresponds to the end of the main period of land speculation (1873-1900). It shows the direct link between the impoverishment of the small farmers, their move to the cities and the inevitable consequences on women.

Figure 2 No. of women employed in industry 1902 - 1905

	1902	1903	1904	1905
No. of women employed in industry	1,276	4,515	3,444	6,480
No. of women (under 15) employed in industry	244	1,213	1,159	1,093

[Ageron 1968 Vol 2, p 850]

Women also worked as maids for European families. Very few families treated them with respect, calling all maids *fatma* (a distorted version of the name Fatima) instead of learning their first name. These women were constantly made fun of by the settlers because of their traditional customs such as the wearing of a veil. When the maids were very young, these constant criticisms sometimes resulted in them rejecting their own culture and trying to copy the Europeans. As a consequence, they were ostracised by their own family and friends. Colonialism also affected men by depriving them of their traditional roles as bread-winners and providers. In the cities, men either had no work or could not fully support their families with

their meagre salaries. It is not surprising, therefore, that men became more authoritarian towards women within the nuclear families. They might have felt that the home was the only place left where they could re-establish their traditional position and regain a sense of self-esteem. Women had to accept this situation if they did not want to be accused of 'disloyalty' and 'collaboration' with the enemy. The family and its central figure, the woman, became the keeper of the traditions and culture of the nation. If the nation's cultural identity was to survive, then women and family structures had to be kept unchanged. As Minai stated in her book 'Women in Islam':

> Home was the only sanctuary from foreign control. Not surprisingly, therefore, it turned into a conservatory of never-changing old traditions, with the women as curators and teachers.
>
> *[Minai 1981, p 74]*

Women were at the centre of the battle between the imperialist power and the colonised patriarchal society. Whichever side succeeded in winning over the support of women would have won a moral victory. Women were only the pawns in the game, used by both sides to further their own interests.

2.2.2 Family laws

Once the framework of the new land-ownership legislation was in place to allow full development of the European settlements, the French authorities turned to drafting other aspects of the legal system and, in particular, those relating to family laws. The official reason was that a democratic, civilised country like France could not allow abuses of basic human rights in one of its overseas *'départements'* (equivalent to English counties). The real motives were, once again, the destabilisation of the society. The French legal system was instituted to run in parallel with the Muslim law in order to, initially, control it and slowly undermine its authority, with the eventual intention of replacing it with the French system. As Charnay explained in his study of Algerian jurisprudence in the first half of the 20th century:

> ...la vie musulmane n'est pas niée, mais enserrée en des cadres étroits qui permettront de la contrôler.
>
> *[Charnay 1965, p 314]*
>
> (...Muslim life [and traditions] are not totally negated, but channelled within narrow bounds which permit their control.)

In 1841, the introduction of French Appeal Courts constituted a significant change to the traditional Algerian system. For the first time, the decision of the *Cadi* could be questioned and even overruled. Over the years, the role of the *Cadi* was eroded to become a mere French

government appointee who had to please his employer and go along with his decisions in order to keep his well paid job *[Ageron 1968, Vol. 1 p 223].* In 1889, the position of *Cadi* was abolished and replaced by the French *Juge de Paix* (Justice of the peace). According to Charnay, the main objective of the *Juge de Paix* was to try and improve the social status of women, particularly in Kabylia, and safeguard the respect of basic human rights. In this context, the French judge would seek to apply the 'essence of the law' and sometimes 'tailor' it so as not to be in contradiction with the Muslim law. In the case of the *droit de djabr*, the French legislation slowly tried to erode this right. The judge established that only the father or the *Cadi* or *juge de paix* had the right to decide who the girl should marry and not any close male relative. The welfare of the girl being his main concern. A decree of June 27th 1866 declared that the *droit de djabr* could only apply to the first marriage. Another decree of December 10th 1877 established that if there was a disagreement between a father and his daughter regarding the person chosen as future husband, she could ask the French judge to adjudicate *[Milliot 1910, p 87].* Eventually, the *droit de djabr* was abolished.

As regards marriages, it was very difficult to impose a minimum marrying age and control it. The judge, therefore, only insisted that the marriage should not be consummated until the bride had reached puberty. In case of repudiation, the judge usually gave the custody of the children to the mother. Here again, the welfare of the child was the main concern of the judge *[Charnay 1965, p 304].* A woman suing for divorce and winning her case, could, according to the French legislation, be granted damages as well as maintenance.

By 1940 the legal status of Algerian women could be summarised as follows:

- the father still had the right to choose his daughter's husband;
- in Court, one male witness was equivalent to two female witnesses;
- the husband could have up to four wives and could marry a woman from another religion. A woman did not have these rights;
- the husband paid a dowry and the father often provided a trousseau for his daughter.
- the husband could end the marriage by repudiation and the woman could, in specific cases, ask for divorce.
- the husband chose where the couple lived and had the right to control his wife's movements.

[Borrmans 1977, pp 16-30]

The conclusion one can draw is that the situation of women had not dramatically changed despite the attempts, by the French government, to impose its legal system. In reality, the Muslim and the French systems existed side by side. The Algerian population never fully accepted the French laws. They occasionally used them as, for instance, if a mother wanted to

obtain the custody of her children after being repudiated by her husband. The French laws were used or ignored as and when it suited individual needs.

2.2.3 Social welfare legislation

With the increasing numbers of Algerian women working in industry and commerce, the French authorities brought about some legislation to protect their rights. In 1905 two decrees were passed to protect women and children's rights at work. The first one ruled that a child had to be 12 years old to be eligible for employment and should not work more than 10 hours per week until he or she was 18. The second decree established the principle of a weekly rest for workers. In 1909, a government agency was created to check on women's working conditions. However, these regulations were not always respected by the settlers: accidents at work were not reported and compensations not paid, children under the age of 12 were employed and, in reality, workers had very little protection *[Ageron 1968, Vol. 2 p 852]*. In 1946, in an article in the newspaper 'Femmes d'Algérie' [13] a reporter expressed her surprise at finding ten year old girls working in a Tlemcen carpet factory. The owner of the factory explained that the government inspector had given him permission to employ girls under 12 because of the shortage of labour *[Femmes d'Algérie no. 28 April 15th 1946, p 12]*.

It is important to remember that for many Muslim women, going out to work in a factory was socially unacceptable. Consequently, they often chose to work from home. This practice was particularly widespread in the clothing industry. This led to even greater exploitation of the workers since there was no possible control over this type of employment.

In 1941, some social security benefits were introduced in Algeria and the scheme was further developed in 1954. These benefits, however, were restricted to the urban population and only families who had registered their marriage and children with the French authorities were eligible. This was another way of enforcing French laws on the registration of marriages and births. The French administration also chose to give the child benefit money to the mother in an attempt to diminish the authority of the father in the family.

In 1950, the French government created the Centre Algérien de Documentation et d'Action Familiale (CADAF) whose role was to offer support to both Algerian and French under-privileged families. The services available ranged from financial support, to the training of home-helps and the creation of crèches for working mothers. Obviously the influence of such organisations were limited to a few urban families but according to Bormans, they introduced a new concept of family life which was to have long term effects:

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13 Official publication of the association 'Union des Femmes d'Algérie' created in Sept 1944 by Mrs Alice Sportisse, MP for the town of Oran.

> Si c'est une frange minime de la population musulmane, celle en voie d'évolution, qui put bénéficier de cette action familiale, il est à remarquer qu'elle sut développer chez beaucoup une mentalité renouvelée sur la famille, qui ne serait pas sans influence par la suite.
>
> *[Borrmans 1977, p 464]*
>
> (Even if only a very small section of the Muslim population, and one which was already embarked on a process of change, could benefit from these family support groups, it is important to note that the effect was the emergence of a new approach to family matters which would no doubt influence future developments.)

Overall, the French social legislation had very limited effects. The main problem being the difficulty met when trying to enforce the new laws. How could one check whether a child was over 12 when so many births were not registered? However, those who had understood the child benefit system sometimes abused it and declared the birth of the same child in several villages. Once again, people were using the system if and when it was to their advantage.

3 Chronological developments of educational provisions

3.1 Existing provisions in 1830

The French did bring a number of changes to the educational system in Algeria, but it would be wrong to think that there were no schools and no educational programme before colonisation started. A study, conducted in 1847, on the state of education in Algeria prior to the French settlement, reported that a large proportion of the male population, some 40%, could read and write.

> L'instruction primaire...était beaucoup plus répandue en Algérie qu'on le croit généralement. Nos rapports avec les indigènes des trois provinces ont démontré que la moyenne des individus du sexe masculin sachant lire et écrire, était au moins égale à celle que les statistiques départementales ont fait connaître pour nos campagnes.
>
> *[Turin 1971, p 127]*

> (Primary education was much more wide spread than is usually believed. Our dealings with Muslim Algerians of the three provinces have shown that the percentage of males who could read and write was at least equal to the figures provided by the departmental statistics regarding our [French] non-urban areas.)

The education in pre-colonial Algeria was done mostly in schools run by religious institutions. The French colonisers destroyed this system. By confiscating the land which belonged to these institutions (decree of March 23rd 1843), they took away the revenues which enabled them to finance the schools. By 1850, it was impossible to find enough men who could read and write to train as primary school teachers. By 1870, Muslim run education had virtually disappeared.

To illustrate more concretely the situation, it is worth looking at the education figures for the town of Constantine. André Nouschi wrote an article on this subject in the Journal 'Cahiers de Tunisie' in 1955. He stated:

> [avant la colonisation], 90 écoles primaires étaient fréquentées par 1.350 enfants mâles soit par la quasi totalité des enfants mâles scolarisables entre 6 et 10 ans... les 35 mosquées, les 7 médersas où l'enseignement du second degré était prodigué recevaient de 600 à 900 élèves.
>
> ... le rattachement des habous et des donations pieuses au Domaine a ruiné l'enseignement constantinois... L'enseignement secondaire après la conquête n'a plus qu'une soixantaine d'élèves, et l'enseignement primaire, moins de 300 enfants, et moins d'une trentaine de maîtres.
>
> *[Les Cahiers de Tunisie no. 11 third quarter 1955, pp 385, 386]*

> ([before colonisation] 90 primary schools were being attended by 1,350 boys which represented virtually the whole of the male population of school age i.e. between six and ten... the 35 mosques and the 7 *medersas* which provided secondary education received between 600 and 900 pupils.)
>
> (... the annexation by the government of the *habous* and the donations to religious institutions completely ruined the educational provisions in the Constantine region... after the (French) conquest, only 60 children received secondary education, less than 300 received primary education and there were less than 30 teachers left.)

3.2 Developments between 1830 and 1880

In the early days of French settlement, the development of education for the Algerian population was left at the discretion of the Governor General and limited to a few large towns with provisions for primary education for boys only. The 'Arab-French schools', as they were called, provided a basic education in French and Arabic but did not include any religious education.

In 1850, six schools for girls were created in the main cities. Prior to this, only one privately run school for girls had been opened in Algiers in 1845 by a benefactress, Mme Allix. The educational programme for girls was of a practical nature, with an emphasis on embroidery and tapestry, although some French, Arabic and arithmetic were also taught. Because of the resistance from well-to-do families to send their girls to school, it was mostly girls from poor social backgrounds who attended. By 1864, the only schools for girls surviving were those of Algiers and Constantine. At the same time, there were 18 schools for boys.

To encourage parents to send their children to school, each family received two francs per month per child they sent to school and the pupils were given a free meal. The development of education was an attempt by the French government at 'controlling' the increasing number of young vagrants and prostitutes in the large cities. Schools were seen as a means of 'cleaning the streets':

> Les écoles aussi bien françaises qu'arabes sont donc présentées comme une nécessité de haute politique, mais d'une façon plus immédiate et moins avouée, on y voit aussi le moyen de nettoyer la rue.
>
> *[Turin 1971, p 107]*

> (The schools, whether French or Arab are, therefore, necessitated by political objectives but the more immediate and less openly admitted intention is to use the schools as a means of 'cleaning the streets'.)

In 1857, the first Arab-French secondary school was opened in Algiers, aimed at the sons of the Muslim elite. It did not attract a large number of students due to a lack of understanding on the

part of the French authorities of the essential role religion played in a Muslim society. The French did not realise that for Muslims, education and religion were inseparable. Attending a school where the Muslim religion was not taught was, for many Algerians, unacceptable. It was equated to subscribing to Western religious beliefs. Furthermore, since these establishments were boarding schools, parents were even more reluctant to send their children. Other colleges were opened in Oran and Constantine, but they also remained unpopular.

The decree of 1865, transferring the responsibility of the maintenance of the schools and the payment of teachers' salaries to the local authorities in the territories under civilian government, resulted in a lowering of educational provisions as the settlers were never very keen to see funds directed towards the education of the Algerian population. In the military controlled territories, however, the Arab-French schools were better maintained. The French government statistics show the definite overall decline after 1865:

Figure 3 Number of Arab-French schools 1873-1883

Year	No. of Arab-French schools
1873	26
1876	21
1880	16
1882	13
1883	0

[Gouverneur Général 1947 - 1948, p 22 and Cahiers de la Méditerranée June 1972, p 55]

3.3 The decree of February 13th 1883

This decree was based on Jules Ferry's[14] principles of free, compulsory and secular education introduced in 1881. In France, the Third Republic, inspired by Ferry's ideals, had tried to bring some social unity to the country by creating a nation-wide educational system. The idea was that, by establishing French as the national language, as opposed to a multitude of regional languages, such as Basque or Breton, the population would gain a sense of national identity. A centralised educational programme would help develop this identity by making the whole population share the same way of thinking and the same moral values. Similar principles were applied to Algeria: if the young Algerian children received a French education from an early age, they would think like French children, behave like French children and soon consider themselves to be French. Despite the government's intentions, the resistance from the settlers was so great that only a 'watered down' version of Ferry's programme was implemented in Algeria.

14 Became the French Minister for Education in 1879.

The intention was to create three types of schools:

- main primary schools in large towns
- junior schools in isolated villages
- infant schools for both sexes for children aged 4 to 8

In reality, the programme of education concentrated on compulsory primary education for boys only. All lessons were in French but the syllabus was slightly 'adapted' for the Arab children, with more time devoted to practical subjects. The aim was:

> ... de dispenser un enseignement simple,... de compléter cet enseignement théorique par une formation pratique manuelle ou agricole, soigneusement adaptée aux besoins locaux....
>
> *[Gouverneur Général 1947 - 1948, p 26]*
>
> (... to provide a basic education, ... to supplement this theoretical teaching with practical lessons in crafts and agriculture, carefully adapted to the local needs...)

The reason why the compulsory element targeted boys only, while girls were mainly catered for in the infant schools, was because parents were reluctant to send girls to school after the age of 8 when, by local custom, they started being segregated from the boys (see section 2.1). The French government report of 1947 - 1948 explains that the idea behind the mixed infant schools was

> ... de créer simplement des écoles enfantines, dans lesquelles l'institutrice pourrait rendre service aux familles en gardant les toutes petites filles, en leur apprenant à manier l'aiguille tout en leur enseignant quelques mots de français.
>
> *[Gouverneur Général 1947 - 1948, p 25]*
>
> (... to simply create nursery schools, which would provide some relief for families by looking after the very young girls, giving them basic sewing skills while teaching them a few French words.)

It was decided that the main objective would be to develop boys' education.

> La tâche paraissait suffisamment ample si l'on se bornait à répandre et à développer l'instruction chez les garçons.
>
> *[ibid]*
>
> (The task seemed sufficiently vast if one was to concentrate on spreading and developing education for boys.)

To appease the settlers, even the principle of compulsory education for boys was not adhered to. It was decided that the Gouverneur Général would choose which local authorities would establish compulsory education. Due to the special treatment given to Kabylia, this region was selected to try out the new programme (see section 5.3). The table below shows the modest success of the whole programme:

Figure 4 No. of Muslim children educated: 1881 - 1884

Years	No. of Muslim children educated
1881 - 1882	3,172
1882 - 1883	4,095
1883 - 1884	4,821

[Cahiers de la Méditerranée June 1972, p 69]

3.4 The period 1883 to World War I

The new Director of Education in Algiers, Mr Jeanmaire, who remained in post from 1884 to 1908, was very much in favour of developing educational provisions for Muslim children. He prepared an educational plan in 1891. According to his evaluations, the number of Muslim children of school age was 62,000. He, therefore, planned to build 620 schools, at the rate of 60 per year, for the next 10 years. This project necessitated a budget increase of 150,000 F for teachers' salaries and 400,000 F for equipment in the form of government grants. Jeanmaire's plan was adopted and a decree was passed on October 18th 1892. However, the building and maintenance expenses were left, to a large extent, to local authorities which could only receive a grant of up to 60% of the total expenditure. As Desvages concludes in his study of educational provisions in Algeria:

> La France se proposait donc en Algérie une politique scolaire, sans se donner les moyens de cette politique.
>
> *[Desvages in Cahiers de la Méditerranée June 1972, p 57]*

> (France was planning a school policy in Algeria without providing the means of achieving it.)

The resistance to the 1892 decree, from the settlers, was such that by 1895, one could say that Jeanmaire's plan had been abandoned due to a lack of funds. It is also important to note that the Muslim population was still reluctant to send children to French secular schools. Whereas Jeanmaire's plan was to educate 62,000 children of school age by 1902, the actual figure for the academic year 1901-1902 was 25,652 *[Cahiers de la Méditerranée June 1972, p 69]*.

As far as girls' education was concerned, it seems that from 1890 onwards, there was a realisation, by the French government, that the provision for girls was insufficient. Auguste Burdeau, rapporteur of the special budget for Algeria, wrote in his report to the French National Assembly in 1891 that girls' education was

> ... une chose qu'il faudra bien envisager un jour.
>
> *[Milliot 1910, p 290]*
>
> (... something we will have to tackle one day.)

It was felt that since mothers play such an important role in their children's education, it might be counter productive to try to educate the child before educating the mother. Nevertheless, no concrete action was taken to improve the situation but the decree of 1892 established clearer guidelines regarding the programmes for girls:

> ... dans les écoles de filles, il faut que les élèves consacrent la moitié du temps des classes à la pratique des travaux d'aiguille et de ménage.
>
> *[Gouverneur Général 1947 - 1948, p 29]*
>
> (... in the girls' schools, pupils must dedicate half of the time practising sewing skills and acquiring basic notions of home economics.)

This was a definite improvement on 'teaching them a few French words'. Although no new schools were opened, the potential was there but required a specific request from the local authority.

In 1907, there were still only nine girls schools and eight mixed infant schools. The number of girls educated was 2,540 for 29,977 boys. Opinion was changing though, even amongst the local population. The municipal council of Bône[15] wrote a petition demanding the creation of a girls school:

> ... les soussignés, conseillers municipaux et notables de la ville de Bône... émettent le voeu de voir créer, dans le plus bref délai, une école pour les filles indigènes, où sera donné, de préférence, un enseignement professionnel et ménager.
>
> *[Gouverneur Général 1947 - 1948, p 32]*
>
> (... the undersigned municipal councillors and notables of the town of Bône... express the wish to see the establishment, as soon as possible,
> of a school for Muslim girls providing home economics as well as professional training.)

15 The town was renamed Annaba after independence.

The financial support for the development of education for the Algerian Muslim population was meeting greater resistance as time went by. By 1906, only 4.26% of Algerian children were receiving some education in a French establishment *[Ageron 1979, p 161]*. It was, therefore, felt that to meet the needs of the vast number of Algerian children still uneducated, a new approach was required. The Jeanmaire era was over. The new Director of Education in Algiers was Mr Jonnart. He decided, in 1908, that a new type of school would be created: 'les écoles auxiliaires'. The plan was to build 60 of these schools per year during the next 10 years *[Milliot 1910, p 295]*. The intention was to reduce both building and running costs in order to build a large number of schools to accommodate a much greater proportion of children. According to the government, the aim was to

> ... diminuer les frais afin d'étendre la zone d'action.
>
> *[Gouverneur Général 1947 -1948, p 33]*
>
> (... reduce the costs in order to increase the coverage.)

The programmes were reduced to a very basic education. It was deemed necessary to

> ... se résigner à perdre provisoirement en profondeur ce qu'on gagnerait en étendue.
>
> *[ibid]*
>
> (... resign oneself to lose temporarily the depth of education in order to cover a wider geographical area.)

The teaching in the auxiliary schools was done by 'monitors' instead of qualified teachers. Being unqualified, these monitors could be paid less. In practice, this experiment was a failure. A smaller number of schools were built than had been planned and monitors were difficult to recruit. The whole project was abandoned in 1914.

In view of the fact that the settlers had managed to sabotage the latest educational development programme for Algerian children by not providing the funds to build schools or to find adequate staff, it was felt that the implementation of such important projects should not be left to the town's local authorities, but should be funded by the government and administered by the Gouverneur Général. This was enforced by a law on May 1st 1915 *[Ageron 1968, Vol. 2 p 948]*.

3.5 The period 1914 - 1954

On the eve of World War I, the achievements, in terms of the education of Algerian children, were minimal: in 1912, only 4.7% of Algerian children had access to a school. During World War I, there was a severe decline in the educational provisions in Algeria. Many of the qualified teachers had been called to fight in France which left the schools in the hands of inexperienced, often unqualified personnel. As the quality of education declined, so did the attendance levels, as shown in the table below. The following table gives an indication of the number of Muslim children receiving education between 1913 and 1918.

Figure 5 Number of Muslim children in primary state schools 1913-1918

Academic year	Number of Muslim boys	Number of Muslim girls	Total
1913-1914	43,271	3,992	47,607
1914-1915	41,201	4,330	45,531
1915-1916	39,306	4,341	43,647
1916-1917	37,758	3,722	41,480
1917-1918	35,776	3,541	39,317

[Cahiers de la Méditerranée, June 1972, p 69]

The post-war recovery was slow but the number of girls attending school improved considerably. In 1920 there were 3,798 girls in primary education. This figure had risen to 8,150 by 1930. However, as a percentage of the total school population, the figures relating to girls' attendance were still very low (9% in 1920 and 12% in 1930). The programme of education was still basic as far as academic subjects were concerned and the emphasis was on practical subjects, with the possibility of continuing education after the primary level. The government report of 1947 - 1948 is clear on this matter:

> ... le niveau de l'enseignement théorique reste, il est vrai, encore assez bas, mais ce n'est pas à préparer des diplômes que visent les écoles de filles musulmanes, ce sont des écoles ménagères plus que des écoles primaires.
>
> *[Gouverneur Général 1947 - 1948, p 35]*

> (... it is true to say that the level of theoretical teaching still remains quite low, but the objectives of Muslim girls' schools are not to prepare girls for diplomas. These schools are not primary schools, their aims are to provide a practical education in home economics.)

From 1920 onwards, the attitude of the Algerian population towards education began to change. From then on, education was perceived as a right, and it was the government's responsibility to provide adequate facilities. One of the reasons for this change of attitude was the fact that a number of Algerians had gone to France to fight in the war or had emigrated to

find employment. They realised the improved opportunities offered to those who could read and write French. This new attitude to French education soon percolated back to Algeria via letters and returning migrants. Education for girls was also perceived as important by the educated elite as seen from the following extract of an article written in a newspaper of the time:

> ... il faut que la femme indigène soit instruite et éduquée. La première réalisation à obtenir est donc l'instruction des filles indigènes, ces femmes de demain. Presque rien n'a été fait dans ce domaine.
>
> *[La voix des humbles, May 1st-20th 1931, p 14]*

> (... Muslim women must be knowledgeable and educated. The first objective must therefore be the education of young Muslim girls, the women of the future. Virtually nothing has been done in this domain so far.)

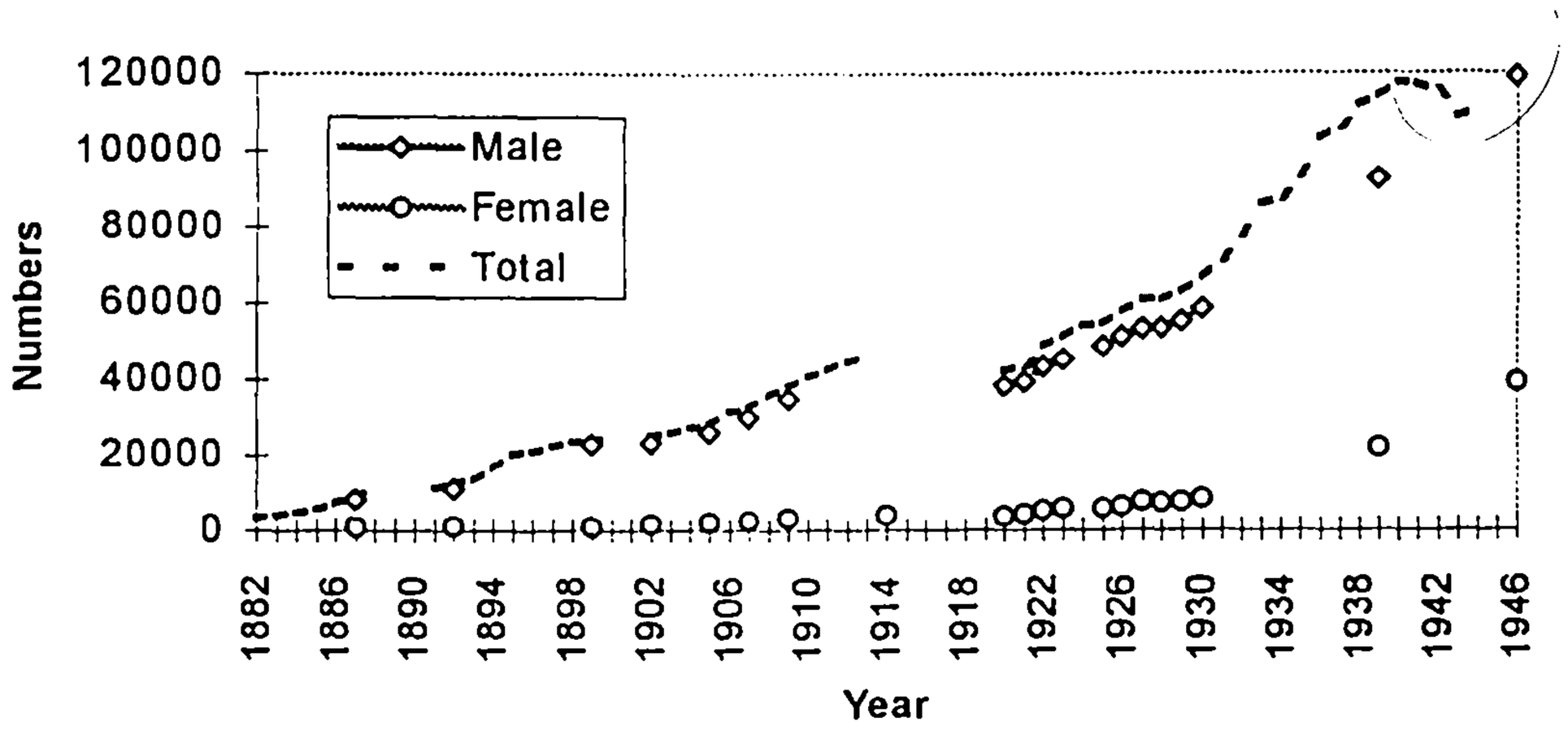
World War II did not have as much of a dramatic effect on educational provisions as did World War I. The replacement of teachers called to the front was better organised and the total number of children attending school did not decrease dramatically. Between 1945 and 1954, several projects attempted to remedy the inadequacy of the educational provisions in Algeria. The problem was particularly acute in rural areas. The 'centres ruraux' were created. They were, in essence, a renamed 'école auxiliaire' intended for rural areas. They failed abysmally and for the same reasons. Nevertheless, between 1944 and 1954, the total number of Muslim children receiving primary education went from 108,000 to 306,000. Despite this increase, in 1954, only 12.75% of Algerian children between the ages of 6 and 14 were receiving primary education in French schools. Added to those who received primary education in Quranic schools, the total figure is only 18% of all children *[Ageron 1979, p 535]*. It seems that, instead of Jules Ferry's republican ideals of a free education for all, the educational system introduced in Algeria increased the social differences and created a huge gap between urban and rural areas. Whereas in cities, Algerian children who had been immersed in the French culture could attend the same schools as European children, and receive the same education, in rural areas, the situation was different. For economic reasons, the education provided by the French in these areas was of a different type and of a lesser quality. The emphasis was on practical skills in agriculture, in particular, as this served the needs of the settlers. The aim, it seemed, was not to educate in order to promote social mobility, but to respond to economic needs.

By 1954, after more than a century of French presence, the picture was bleak: 85.4% of Algerian children did not go to school *[Pervillé 1984, p 22]*. Some 86% of men and 95% of women were illiterate *[Ageron 1979 Vol 2, p 533]*. Education was still a privilege, there were not enough schools and not enough teachers. In 1950, only 18% of Algerian children received primary education. Secondary education was virtually non-existent with only 690 Muslim children in 1927 and 776 in 1930. This figure rose to 5,308 (of which 952 girls) in 1954 out of a total of 35,000 pupils (18.45 %). The low figures in higher education are no surprise. In 1954,

481 Muslim boys and 22 girls were registered at the University of Algiers out of a total of 5,096 students.

Despite some changes of attitudes in urban areas, the importance of giving girls a sound education was not generally recognised among the majority of the Algerian population: firstly, as mentioned earlier, parents were reluctant to send girls to school after the age of eight, since the customs required girls to be segregated from boys from that age. The second factor was the fact that neither the French, nor the Algerian society of the time considered girls' education a priority. Even in France, the role of women was still very traditional. It is worth remembering that French women obtained the right to vote as late as 1944. In the traditional Algerian society, women were not expected to work outside of their homes. Their duty was to bring up children and look after their house. Education was often not perceived as necessary, since, once married, women were traditionally looked after by their husband.

Figure 6 School population of Muslim children by sex: 1882 - 1945



[Cahiers de la Méditerranée, June 1972, p 69]

We can conclude that by 1954, the impact of French education on the Algerian population had been limited. However, it had undeniable effects on those who received it. The traditional hierarchy within the family was shaken when fathers had to get the help of their sons to translate letters or fill in forms. The traditional reverence towards the land and those who lived from it, was questioned and compared unfavourably to the prospects of safe long term employment in the cities. Furthermore, the educated elite was no longer satisfied with the traditional way of life and was demanding a better educational system.

Very few women on the whole had benefited from the French education programmes. For some of them, it had actually been detrimental. It has been argued that educating girls from

the poorest social classes in the cities often resulted in driving them to prostitution. These girls, who were taken to boarding schools (in an attempt to alleviate the burden of large families) received some education but were also immersed in a Western life style. Having become accustomed to a certain standard of living, these girls were incapable of readjusting to their previous life-style. They had acquired certain needs and expectations. Furthermore, they felt alienated from their families. Since society did not give them any support once they left school, nor provide any employment, prostitution often became their only solution for survival *[Saadia-et-Lakhdar 1961, p 109].*

4 Nationalist and Reformist movements

4.1 External influences

The development of education and travel amongst the Algerian elite was inevitably accompanied by a greater awareness of the changes which were taking place in other Muslim countries regarding women's status. Even though reports on the emancipation of women in France and other Western countries reached some educated circles in Algeria, it did not have much effect on the population as a whole. However, changes in other Middle Eastern countries had a greater impact. Events in Turkey, for instance, could not have been ignored in Algeria. The Turkish Women's movement was created in 1908. It really gathered momentum after the war due to the important role played by Turkish women in the liberation of the country. Mustafa Kemal, the new leader, declared on February 3rd 1923:

> [Les femmes] ne doivent plus s'enfermer, ni se dissimuler, ni se voiler car tout le pays en souffrirait. La femme turque a prêté, pendant la guerre, son ardent concours au pays et elle a souffert comme tout le monde. Aujourd'hui elle doit être libre, elle doit s'instruire, fonder des écoles, occuper dans le pays une situation égale à celle de l'homme: elle y a droit.
>
> *[Borrmans 1977, pp 73,74]*
>
> ([Women] must not shut themselves away, hide themselves, or veil themselves, because the whole country would suffer as a consequence. Turkish women have passionately helped their country during the war and they suffered like everybody. Today they must be free and prepared to educate others. They must take a position in society equal to that of men: they are entitled to it.)

As a consequence, the government introduced a series of reforms:

1926: abolition of polygamy and institution of civil marriages. Abolition of the veil.

1934: eligibility and right to vote given to women for parliamentary elections (17 women were elected in the parliament of 1935).

[Borrmans 1977, pp 74-76]

Women's education also became a priority for the government. Schools were built in towns as well as in rural areas. The objective was not merely to teach girls a few basic skills. Secondary and higher education were also made available to them in 1936. The following statistics reflect the achievements of the government's programmes:

Figure 7 Number of girls in Primary Schools in Turkey 1927-1943

Years	Urban areas	Rural areas
1927	63,471	55,041
1932	93,256	100,533
1937	125,761	121,071
1943	141,362	163,044

[Borrmans 1977, p 77]

Figure 8 Number of girls in Secondary Schools and at University in Turkey in 1923 and 1942

Years	Secondary	University
1923-1924	1,513	185
1942-1943	28,451	2,507

[ibid]

The developments in Turkey had an impact on many countries in the Middle East. Several congresses took place which show the widespread interest in the changing role of women in Muslim countries. The Second Muslim General Congress of Women of the Orient, for instance, was held in Teheran in 1932 and the Second Congress of Mediterranean Women took place in Constantine (Algeria) the same year.

Egypt was another country which, because of its early reforms concerning women's status, was looked upon as a model for Algeria. The Egyptian feminist movement emerged in 1923 and the first feminist journal, 'L'Egyptienne', was published in 1925. Women's education was one of the battle grounds of the Egyptian feminists and became a major concern for the government. In 1921, 21% of women in Cairo and Alexandria could read and write (against 42.5% of men). The early 1930s saw the first Egyptian female graduates. By 1933, the feminist movement in Egypt could claim the following achievements:

- abolition of the veil
- minimum marrying age for girls (16)
- access to secondary and higher education
- right to divorce
- certain restrictions imposed on men regarding the right of repudiation.

[Borrmans 1977, p 88]

One can fully appreciate how far behind Algerian women were compared to their Turkish and Egyptian counterparts by analysing the following table published in 1950, as part of an article by Hamza Boubakeur entitled 'La Musulmane Nord Africaine d'aujourd'hui' (North African Muslim women today).

Figure 9 Percentage of educated women in Algiers, Istanbul and Cairo in 1950

	Algiers	Istanbul	Cairo
Educated women as a percentage of the total number of women	7	55	22
Educated women in relation to the number of educated men	12	60	25
Working women as a percentage of the total female population	0.3	35	18
Working women in relation to the total number of working men	0.1	68	15

[Borrmans 1977, p 457]

Despite the important changes occurring in Turkey and Egypt, no feminist movement developed in Algeria. This was due to the fact that there was not a sufficient number of educated women who could play an active part in the promotion of women's issues *[Merad 1967, p 321]*.

4.2 Internal Reformist movements

4.2.1 The movement of the *Ulama*.

Abdul Hamid Ben Badis was the founder of the religious reformist movement of the *Ulama*. He was the son of a wealthy land owner of the Constantine region and studied at the University of Tunis. He could have led the 'easy' life of a rich Muslim in colonial Algeria, enjoying the benefits of a Western life style coupled with a good education. Instead, he started a movement, the 'Association des Ulama Musulmans Algériens' (Association of the Muslim Algerian Ulama) (May 5th 1931), which criticised the modern Muslim way of life and advocated a return to *the ethics of original Islam... a puritanical form of Islam unencumbered by superstitions and magical excrescences [Signs vol 15 no.4 1990, p 763]*. The aims of this association are clearly stated in article 4 of its constitution:

> Cette association a pour but de combattre les fléaux sociaux: alcoolisme, jeux de hasard, paresse, ignorance, ainsi que tout ce qui est, par sa nature, interdit par la religion, réprouvé par la morale et prohibé par les lois et décrets en vigueur.
>
> *[Collot & Henry 1978, p 45]*
>
> (This association's aims are to fight social plagues such as alcoholism, gambling, laziness, lack of education and anything which, by its nature, is forbidden by [Islam], rejected by its morals and prohibited by the current laws and decrees.)

The movement did not, at first, totally reject colonialism as such. Ben Badis wrote in the editorial of the first edition of Al Muntaqid, journal of the Reformist movement:

> Le peuple algérien est un peuple faible et insuffisamment évolué. Il éprouve la nécessité vitale d'être sous l'aile protectrice d'une nation forte et civilisée qui lui permette de progresser dans la voie de la civilisation et du développement.
>
> *[Merad 1967, p 445]*

(The Algerian people are weak and have not reached a sufficient level of development. The country needs to be under the wing of a strong and civilised nation to enable it to move towards civilisation and progress.)

This attitude can be explained by the fact that the membership of the association was mostly constituted by an educated elite who had benefited from the French presence and did not, therefore, consider it to be detrimental to the country. The main criticism they levied against the French government was its interference in cultural and religious matters embodied by the policy of assimilation. To fill the 'cultural vacuum' caused by colonialism, particularly regarding religion, the association opened Quranic schools and created its own newspaper.

The main objectives of the *Ulama* were to spread the use and knowledge of the Arabic language and create a sense of cultural identity through a revival of 'true' Islam. Their guiding principles are clearly summed up in the reformist motto:

> L'Islam est ma religion; l'Arabe est ma langue; l'Algérie est ma patrie.
>
> *[Ageron 1979, p 338]*

(Islam is my religion; Arabic is my language; Algeria is my fatherland.)

The movement had most impact through its Quranic schools. These were primary schools open to both sexes where Arabic and religion were taught for three years. Often girls were admitted in the schools free of charge to encourage parents to send their daughters to school and change social attitudes towards girls' education *[Vandevelde 1980, p 371]*. A large number of Quranic schools were opened between 1932 and 1938, however, the French authorities soon realised that these establishments constituted a threat to their 'assimilation policy'. As we saw in section 3, the French educational system was intended to make Algerian children identify with France and French culture. Children were taught the French language, customs, history and geography in order to develop in them the belief that they were part of the French nation. The Quranic schools, teaching Arabic and religion were reinforcing Algerian culture and traditions. This was in total contradiction with the French education objectives. Therefore, in 1938, a decree was passed closing down all Quranic schools, which had been opened without specific authorisation from the French government. In 1938, about 50,000 Muslim children were educated in 3,148 Quranic schools while at the same time 105,000 Muslim children went to French schools *[Ageron 1979, p 338]*. In 1951, a report on the activities of the Association of the *Ulama* mentioned 125 primary schools attended by 16,286 children of which 6,696 were

girls *[Bormans 1977, p 448].* Despite their limited numbers, the opening of Quranic schools was important as far as girls' education was concerned. For the first time, girls from all social backgrounds had access to Arabic education. However, it must be said that the type of education which was considered to be adequate for girls was very elementary. Lamine Lamoudi, who was to become General Secretary of the Association des *Ulama*, wrote in an article in the newspaper al-Islah:

> Il ne me plairait pas de voir la jeune fille musulmane parmi celles qui 'portent' le baccalauréat et le doctorat. Il me suffit de la voir posséder les connaissances indispensables de sa religion...
>
> *[Merad 1967, p 330]*
>
> (I would not like to see Muslim girls 'showing off' their 'A' level or doctorate. I would be satisfied if they simply had a good understanding of the principles of their religion.)

Girls had to be educated, but not in order to give them equal opportunities. All that was expected of them was to understand Islam and live in accordance with its principles. Although girls' education was limited, it sowed the seeds of nationalism in some girls who, later on, became active participants in the war of independence (See section 10.1.5). Delcroix, in her study of Algerian and Egyptian women, maintained that the Algerian reformist movement was crucial in so far as it established girls' education as an essential element of the country's development *[Delcroix 1986, p 24].*

In line with this conception of the role of women in society, the *Ulama* were against giving women the right to vote. According to the newspaper El Basair:

> Al Ibrahimi [président de l'Association des *Ulama*] refuse l'idée de vote des femmes musulmanes sous prétexte que les hommes n'étaient pas assez mûrs et ne jouissaient pas encore pleinement de ce droit et qu'il n'y avait aucun intérêt à faire voter les femmes.
>
> *[Sai 1984, p 3(refs)]*
>
> (Al Ibrahimi [president, of the Association des *Ulama*], refused the idea of Muslim women being granted the right to vote under the pretext that men were not mature enough and did not fully avail themselves of this right. There was, therefore, no reason to give women the right to vote.)

The Algerian reformists' position concerning women was based on the ideas of Rashid Rida of the Oriental Reformist School and a disciple of Muhammad 'Abdu from Egypt. The Algerian reformists agreed on women's right to education, property ownership and access to certain public functions. However, they advocated segregation of the sexes, cloistering of women and maintaining the veil. Regarding family laws, they accepted the possibility for a woman to choose her husband, but totally rejected the idea of a woman asking for divorce. The question

of equality between men and women in terms of inheritance was also rejected *[Merad 1967, pp 327,328]*. This focuses attention on the motives of the reformists. According to Merad the reformists devoted so much time and energy to the question of the role of women in society in order to ensure that any changes were made in accordance with Islam rather than for the sake of women's personal development.

> Si les réformistes consacrèrent tant d'efforts aux problèmes posés par l'évolution de la femme musulmane dans la société moderne, ce fut moins pour favoriser cette évolution, que pour rappeler inlassablement à ses partisans dans quel sens et dans quelles limites elle devait être entreprise, pour qu'elle pût s'effectuer selon l'Islam et non contre lui.
>
> *[Merad 1967, p 315]*
>
> (If the reformists dedicated so much of their efforts to the problems of the evolution of Muslim women in a modern society, it was not so much to further this evolution, but rather to constantly remind its supporters of the need to establish certain limits and a sense of direction in order to remain within the bounds of the Islamic doctrine.)

On closer reading, it appears that some of the changes advocated by the reformists had wider objectives than the improvement of women's welfare. When, for instance, Ben Badis urged fathers to lower the dowries for their daughters, it was not to remove the negative image attached to the dowry often seen as the 'sale price' of the girl. If the dowry had been replaced by a fixed amount, it would have lost its connotation of being the 'market value' of a girl and would have become a symbolic gesture. However, as Lazreg pointed out, if Ben Badis advocated lower dowries, it was to facilitate marriages between Algerian men and women. According to Ben Badis, young Algerian men were discouraged to marry Algerian girls because of the high dowries they had to pay. Consequently, they turned to French women who did not ask for any payments. The welfare of the nation rather than that of women was the guiding factor in Ben Badis' reform of the dowry *[Signs Vol 15 no.4 Summer 1990, pp 763,764]*. It seems that the same can be said of all the reforms proposed by the *Ulama* regarding women's status. In their opinion, women had a specific and limited role to play, as defined by the Qur'an. Any changes advocated were aimed at enabling women to fulfil this role. No attention was given to women's issues per se and in fact the position of the *Ulama*, vis-à-vis women, was very traditional in essence. As Sai concluded:

> [Les *Ulama* avaient] une attitude méfiante et paternaliste à l'égard du peuple. Sous couvert d'une lutte contre les valeurs du colonisateur, ils se sont repliés sur un conservatisme excessif, surtout à l'égard du problème féminin.
>
> *[Sai 1984, p 6]*
>
> ([The *Ulama* had] a distrustful and paternalistic attitude towards the population. Under the pretext of fighting against the colonisers' values, they returned to an excessive conservatism, particularly regarding women's issues.)

The fact that, the few women who belonged to the Association des *Ulama* were never involved in decision making, supports this argument. A former female member of the Association interviewed by Sai declared:

> J'étais chargée des cotisations et je faisais agent de liaison entre les responsables et les femmes... Les femmes se réunissaient séparément des hommes et quand il y avait quelque chose d'important, un homme venait nous informer. On marchait sous les ordres des hommes.
>
> *[Sai 1984, p 32]*

> (I looked after the fees' collections and acted as a liaison agent between the leaders and the women... Women met separately from men and when there was something important, a man would come to inform us. We were acting under men's orders.)

The majority of women in the association were working as teachers in the *Medersa* but they were only trusted with 'spreading' the ideas laid out by the association, never involved in their elaboration.

Although the Association des *Ulama* looked to improve women's status, particularly regarding education, it was done with a very specific purpose. The intention was to provide them with a minimum education so that they could improve their performance as educators of the younger generations.

4.2.2 The 'Fédération des Elus' and the 'Union Démocratique du Manifeste Algérien' (UDMA)

Dr Bendjelloul created in 1927 an organisation called: 'La Fédération des Elus du Constantinois' (Federation of Elected Representatives of the Constantine Region). This organisation had similar views to those of the Association des *Ulama*. Because of their 'bourgeois' background, the Representatives did not, at first demand an end to colonialism. Their main concern was to ensure that Algerians were given the same rights as the settlers. The main difference between this movement and the *Ulama*'s association was that they were not concerned with religious matters. They did not separate women's issues from their overall demand for equality with the settlers. When they did ask for specific rights for women, such as the right to education, it was in a very limited way and in keeping with the traditional image of Muslim women: wives, mothers and educators of the nation's children. The following is an extract from the programme of the Federation:

> Pour nos filles, l'instruction en langue arabe s'impose la première. Avec le développement intellectuel qu'elle leur procurerait, elle les familiariserait avec les véritables notions islamiques, et leur donnerait le souci de conserver à notre société, ce cachet de dignité sociale et de respect humain qui fut de tout temps notre apanage.

> Cela n'empêcherait pas de compléter leurs connaissances par l'enseignement du français: des écoles primaires devront être crées (sic) à leur usage, mais il faudra laisser aux initiatives privées le soin d'orienter les sujets féminins d'élite vers l'enseignement secondaire et supérieur. Nous ne demanderons l'intervention des pouvoirs officiels que pour les techniques appropriées: ouvroirs, arts ménagers, hygiène, etc.
>
> *[L'entente Franco-musulmane no.1 Aug 29th 1935 in Sai 1984, p 18]*

> (For our girls, an education in Arabic is essential. The intellectual development derived from such a programme would familiarise them with the true Islamic values and would give them the social dignity and human respect which have always been the hallmarks of our society.
> Their programme of study could be further enhanced by the study of the French language: primary schools will have to be created to this effect, but we will leave secondary and higher education in the hands of private initiatives who will steer the top female candidates in the right directions. We will only call on the authorities to provide technical support in areas such as crafts, home economics, hygiene, etc.)

As Sai remarked, the education recommended by the Representatives for the majority of Muslim girls was aimed at preparing them for their future roles as wives, mothers and educators, within a French context *[Sai 1984, p 19]*.

The proposals of the Fédération des Elus were adopted by other political organisations. The demand for free compulsory education for both sexes can be found in the Manifeste du Peuple Algérien presented to the French Authorities by Ferhat Abbas in 1943. Similar objectives are also in the programme of the UDMA for the municipal elections of 1947:

> Scolarisation de tous les enfants d'âge scolaire des deux sexes; cours d'apprentissage pour garçons, ouvroirs pour fillettes.
>
> *[L'Egalité no. 98 Oct 10th 1947, p 3 in Sai 1984, p 8 (refs)]*

> (Education of all school-aged children of both sexes with apprenticeship for boys and craft workshops for girls.)

In the report presented by Ferhat Abbas at the first congress of the UDMA (Sept 27th 1947), one paragraph is devoted to women:

> L'oeuvre sociale demeure également un des principaux objectifs. L'amélioration de la condition de la femme musulmane, son instruction, son émancipation sont les conditions de notre libération nationale... Si nos femmes ne deviennent pas nos associées et nos égales, instruites et éduquées, notre société restera amputée de la moitié d'elle-même et demeurera en arrière des sociétés modernes.
>
> *[La République algérienne no 272 Sept 21st 1951, p 3 in Sai 1984, p 10 (refs)]*

> (The social programme also constitutes one of our main objectives. The improvement in the status of Muslim women, their education, their emancipation, are among the conditions of our national liberation... If our women do not become our associates and equals, knowledgeable and educated, our society will remain deprived of half of its people and will continue to lag behind the developed countries.)

Here again, the demands were not intended to change the status of women for their own personal development. They merely addressed general issues of social welfare within the traditional framework of an Islamic society. Women's emancipation was seen as a prerequisite for the national liberation and economic success of the country. The role of women within the family, for instance, was not questioned. Cherif Hadj Said, elected representative for the town of Constantine declared:

> L'école aura pour mission de ... préparer [la femme] à son rôle naturel et normal d'épouse et de mère. Mais elle lui procurera aussi une instruction suffisante pour lui permettre, le cas échéant de gagner sa vie par son travail...
>
> *[L'Egalité no.35 Aug 16th 1946, p 3]*
>
> The mission of schools will be to prepare [women] for their natural and normal roles as wives and mothers. It will also provide adequate education to enable them, if need be, to earn a living through their work.)

This leaves no doubt as to the degree of emancipation the UDMA was prepared to give women. Outside their traditional role, they were allowed to work, if need be, that is to say if no male member of the family was capable of supporting them. As Sai concluded, the emancipation of women was not seen as a necessity for women, but for men and the Algerian society in general. Women themselves agreed with this idea. The first female member of the association declared:

> Je suis entrée parce que j'ai estimé que mon devoir était là. Je dois en qualité d'algérienne, (sic) participer au combat quotidien que livrent mes frères. Il n'y a pas que les hommes qui doivent lutter pour la libération de notre peuple. Les femmes algériennes se doivent de les aider.
>
> *[Sai 1984, p 19 (refs)]*
>
> (I became a member because I felt that it was my duty. Being an Algerian woman, I have to participate in the daily struggle in which my brothers are engaged. It is not only men who have to fight for the liberation of our people. Algerian women must help them too.)

If women could support men more efficiently, this would enable men to contribute more fully to the development of the nation as a whole *[Sai 1984, p 23]*. As far as political rights were concerned, for many years, neither the Fédération des Elus, nor the UDMA demanded the right for Muslim women to vote. This was in contradiction with their main objective which was to obtain equal political rights for the Algerian population. In fact, when the first woman became a member of the JUDMA[16] in Frenda (*Wilaya* of Tiaret) in 1951, the National Council of the

16 Young people's section of the UDMA.

Association saw this as *posing a serious problem not only for the movement but also for the future of the country [Sai 1984, p 34].* The National Secretary of the JUDMA declared:

> Après l'initiative de Frenda d'accepter une algérienne (sic) en son sein, je me suis penché sur ce problème et j'ai accepté l'adhésion de deux jeunes filles. Je ne vous cache pas que cela m'a donné énormément de soucis...
>
> *[Sai 1984, p 18 (refs)]*
>
> (Following on the initiative of Frenda, where a young Algerian girl became a member, I pondered over this problem and I accepted the membership of two young girls. I will not hide the fact that this caused me a lot of worry...)

The reason given for this reluctance to accept women in the association was the fact that women lacked political knowledge and experience. One could argue that this was also the case for some of the male members. Another explanation suggested by Sai was that, by participating in a political organisation, girls were moving away from their traditional roles. Neither the UDMA, nor the majority of the population were prepared to accept this. A letter from two female members to the newspaper 'La République Algérienne' (the UDMA's publication) supports this view:

> ... tout est fait pour nous empêcher de poursuivre notre lutte en vue de relever notre peuple et essayer par la même de nous relever nous-même... Nous sommes mal vues dans tous les milieux même au sein de notre famille où nous pourrions trouver un réconfort. Au contraire, nous y faisons figure de révoltées, de renégates, et pourtant nos aspirations sont naturelles et nécessaires, un peu pour nous-même, mais surtout pour celles de la génération nouvelle...
>
> *[Sai 1984, pp 18,19 (refs)]*
>
> (... everything is done to prevent us from pursuing our fight to improve the conditions of our people and at the same time, improve ourselves... We are criticised everywhere, even amongst our family where we should be able to find some support. On the contrary, we are seen as rebels, renegades, and yet our aspirations are natural and necessary, for ourselves to some extent, but mostly for the new generations...)

Once girls had become members of the association, they had very traditional roles. The General Secretary of the JUDMA congratulated two female members saying:

> Signalons que nos deux nouvelles adhérantes ... se sont particulièrement signalées par leur excellent travail de rénovation du local et en mettant de l'ordre dans notre bibliothèque.
>
> *[La République Algérienne no.261 March 30th 1951, p 2 in Sai 1984, p 38]*
>
> (Our two new recruits have particularly distinguished themselves by the excellent work they did redecorating the building and tidying the library.)

Whenever female members of the UDMA or the JUDMA are mentioned in La République Algérienne, it is for some cultural or social action such as organising a social evening for the

circumcision of orphans or giving free sewing lessons. Only two female members had important posts in the association: one was member of the committee of the Lyon Section (France) and one was the joint secretary of the Oran Section. By 1952, there were only eight members in total *[Sai 1984, p 39]*. The vote for Muslim women only became part of the political programme of the UDMA in 1955 *[Sai 1984, p 20]*.

4.2.3 The 'Young Algerians'

The other reformist movement, known as 'Les Jeunes Algériens' (Young Algerians), was modelled on the 'Jeunes Turcs' and 'Jeunes Tunisiens', two reformist groups in Turkey and Tunisia. The 'Young Algerians' were mentioned in the press as early as 1909 but the movement really flourished after World War I. Its members were professionals (typically doctors, lawyers and teachers) who had been educated in French schools and were eager to reap the benefits of their education by obtaining social and economic recognition by the French as well as equal political rights. They displayed a deep respect for France and French culture. The slogan of the teachers' journal 'La voix des humbles' (The voice of the humble) during that period was:

> Pour l'évolution des Indigènes par la Culture française - loin des Partis - loin des dogmes.
>
> *[Merad 1967, p 64]*
>
> (For the evolution of the Muslim population through the French culture – detached from Parties – detached from dogmas.)

The Young Algerians' Western education made them look favourably at the emancipation of women, albeit within an Islamic framework. They realised that the evolution of the social structures of a Muslim society depended largely on a redefinition of the role of women:

> Pour tous ceux qui, par leur milieu social, leur niveau cultutel et économique, étaient à même d'apprécier - et d'adopter - les moeurs françaises, l'émancipation de la femme musulmane leur paraissait s'imposer comme une indiscutable nécessité.
>
> *[Merad 1967, p 317]*
>
> (For all those [men] who were capable of appreciating - and adopting - French customs because of their background, level of education and social status, the emancipation of Muslim women was considered to be an unquestionable necessity.)

These young reformists disseminated their ideas via journals such as 'La Voix des Humbles', 'La Voix Indigène' and 'Le Jeune Musulman'. In an article in 'La Voix des Humbles', one can find a list of changes advocated by the young reformists under the heading: 'La Famille Indigène en Algérie' (Indigenous Families in Algeria). Amongst the many changes proposed

were: compulsory education for boys and girls, the right for Kabylian women to divorce and receive inheritance and the setting the minimum age for marriage at 16 *[La Voix des Humbles no.99 May 1st-20th 1931, pp 14,15].*

The intellectuals of the time were aware of the problems Algerian women faced due to the lack of security in marriages and the lack of education for girls. This is how young Algerian girls were depicted in an article entitled 'La situation sociale de la Musulmane algérienne' (The social situation of Muslim Algerian women), in 1947:

> Le voile que la coutume jette sur son visage et son esprit est comme un baillon qui l'étouffe. Dans sa retraite, la Musulmane d'Algérie se meurt d'inaction et d'ignorance.
>
> *[Borrmans 1977 pp 454,455]*
>
> (The veil which, by tradition, covers her face, also covers her mind and stifles her like a gag. In this artificial retreat, the Muslim woman of Algeria is dying through idleness and ignorance.)

In 1953, in a letter to 'Le Jeune Musulman', a woman correspondent wrote:

> La femme revendique une place dans la société algérienne, toute autre que celle qu'occupaient sa mère et sa grand-mère. Nous pourrions sortir de la boue dans laquelle nous sommes si notre peuple voulait faire suivre à sa jeunesse féminine la même route de délivrance qu'à sa jeunesse masculine, c'est-à-dire les mêmes responsabilités et les mêmes droits.
>
> *[Borrmans 1977, p 450]*
>
> (Women claim a position in Algerian society which is totally different from that of their mothers and grand mothers. Our society could emerge from the slump it is in if our people were prepared to place young girls on the same path to freedom as their young boys and give them the same responsibilities and the same rights.)

From 1950 onward, the question of the changing role of women was widely discussed in the press. The journal Salam Ifrikya, for instance, conducted a campaign in 1950 in favour of the emancipation of women. The debate touched on all the main issues: veil, dowry, marriages - in particular mixed marriages, children and the social status of women in society. 'La République Algérienne', the UDMA's publication also tackled the question of women and their position in society. Although there was a definite consensus in favour of the emancipation of women, certain limits and constraints were also present. Women's roles had to evolve within the framework of Islam and, therefore, the status of women in the family was not to be altered. One had to preserve

> ... l'équilibre familial, l'attachement de la femme à son époux et au bien de son foyer.
>
> *[Borrmans 1977, p 456]*

(... the family balance, the attachment of the wife to her husband and to the welfare of her home.)

The veil was not considered to be an important issue since

La Musulmane doit être pudique, renoncer au vain plaisir de plaire pour s'attacher à être avant tout estimée et respectée. [Sa] vraie richesse est dans ... sa vie morale, sa foi en Dieu.

[Borrmans 1977, p 456]

(Muslim women must be modest, renounce the vain pleasure of being attractive and endeavour to inspire respect. [Her] real wealth lies in ... her spiritual life [and] her faith in God.)

The main concern was to educate women in order to make them participate in the economic development of the country. Here lies one of the crucial problems for the emancipation of women in Algeria. The Young Algerians, influenced by their Western education, wanted to create a modern Muslim state with well educated and economically active women. At the same time, in a reaction to the years of imperialist domination, they tried to preserve certain traditional values, particularly concerning the family structure. Any evolution in the role of women had to be different from that in the West:

Toute occidentalisation ... entraînerait la perte de nos femmes...

[ibid]

(Any westernisation... would result in losing our women...)

Just as the French government saw Algerian women as their main target if they wanted to get to the heart of society, the Young Algerians were resisting any changes to the family structures in an attempt to preserve their cultural identity.

Another element was also influencing the educated elite of the time. Since the majority of Young Algerians were men, they were probably unhappy at the prospect of seeing their dominant role in the traditional patriarchal family weakened by educated independent women. Whether deliberate or unconscious, the motives of the Young Algerians lead to a misunderstanding of the problems Algerian women faced. They never tackled the issue from the point of view of women's rights as equal members of the society. They considered the society as a whole and attempted to change it in order to modernise it. Women were just a tool in the modernisation process.

5 The special case of Kabylia

5.1 The 'Kabyle Myth'

From the time of the early settlements in Algeria, the Kabyle people[17] have been perceived by the French as different from the Arabs. Over the years, a myth developed about the Kabyles and the 'affinity' between the Europeans and the Kabyle tribes. While this myth went through periods of strong support as well as periods of rejection, it always exercised an influence on the French authorities. This resulted in the adoption of different policies and laws by the French government in Kabylia. Before elaborating on these and the un-stated agenda behind the pursuit of the 'politique berbère', it is important to clarify the meaning of the phrase the 'Kabyle myth'.

The French saw the Kabyles as a different race from the Arabs. To support this theory, they pointed to the fact that they had their own language (Berber) and were sedentary tribes with a totally different social organisation. Their blue eyes and blond hair gave rise to the claim that they had a Nordic origin. Furthermore, they had been converted to Christianity in the past and, according to the French, 'superficially Islamised'. Consequently, Mgr Lavigerie, archbishop of Algiers, considered their re-conversion to the Christian faith an easy target. He is quoted to have said:

> Notre mission n'est pas de transporter [en Algéric] la population de la Mère-Patrie. Notre mission est de nous assimiler en les ramenant à notre civilisation, qui était celle de leurs pères, ces populations berbères.
>
> *[Ageron 1968 Vol. 1, p 47]*
>
> (Our mission is not to transfer [to Algeria] populations from the mother land. Our mission is to assimilate the Berber populations by embracing them into our culture, which was that of their forefathers)

Some writers of the time such as Baron Aucapitaine even talked of similarities between the French and the Kabyle in their characters and mores. He wrote that the Kabyles

> ... tièdes sectateurs de Mahomet étaient portés vers nous par leurs caractères et leurs moeurs.
>
> *[Ageron 1968 Vol. 1, p 270]*
>
> (... half-hearted followers of Mahomet were drawn to us by their character and their customs.)

17 The Berber tribes lived in the mountainous regions of the North East of the country.

The 'Kabyle Myth' was also a pretext used by some to encourage the rivalry between the Kabyles and the Arabs, a policy which could only benefit the settlers. In 1845, a French doctor in Algeria, Dr. Bodichon wrote:

> La France doit développer cet instinct antipathique entre Arabes et Kabyles et mettre à sa convenance les deux races aux prises l'une contre l'autre.
>
> *[Ageron 1968 Vol. 1, p 269]*
>
> (France must develop this instinctive animosity between Arabs and Kabylians and use, to its convenience, the in-fighting between these two races.)

For all these reasons, a 'politique kabyle' was adopted (even though it never had the support of the majority of the settlers). The hidden aims of the French government, as far as Kabylia was concerned, evolved over the years. Between 1870 and 1890, a policy of assimilation prevailed. The details of the legal, administrative and educational changes brought about by the French authorities will be covered in detail later in this study (see sections 5.2 and 5.3). However, one could say that the atmosphere during that period, was one of conciliation and co-operation with the local population and some respect for its traditions and customs. Between 1898 and 1918, the intention was no longer to assimilate, but to divide the two communities, the Arabs and the Kabyles, in other words a policy of 'divide and rule'. After World War I, the 'politique Kabyle' was abandoned, but it had long-lasting effects on the perception that French people had of the Kabyles. It also planted the seeds of Kabyle nationalism.

5.2 Attempts at introducing French legislation

A number of local laws and traditions were officially maintained and respected by the French authorities in Kabylia. These included the *Djemaa* (an assembly of representatives of the main families in each village acting as judges and arbiters in cases of disagreements between families) and the *Qanouns* (village laws and regulations). In 1871 there was a rebellion in Kabylia against the French authorities. It resulted in unprecedented sequestration of land and a heavy 'war-contribution' was levied on the tribes. After 1871, the *Djemaa* was officially replaced by the French *juge de paix*. However, very few cases were brought in front of the French judge. The *Djemaa* continued to exist. The Kabyles tended to use the French legal system as and when it suited them, for instance if no agreement could be found in a dispute. The ruling of the French judge was not always respected.

Some administrators such as Camille Sabatier (administrator of Fort-National) continued to adopt a very liberal policy, even after 1871, maintaining some of the local customs while slowly bringing in changes in areas considered to be of major importance. One of these areas was the legal status of women.

Women in Kabylia had even fewer legal rights than their Arab counterparts. Their situation was one of subservience, to their father before marriage, to their husband later on. Girls were married without their consent. In case of repudiation, women had to return to their father's home to be given away in marriage a second time by their father or by another male relative such as an uncle or brother, without their consent. In case of repudiation, a sum of money, *lefdi*, had to be paid back to the husband by the girl's father. Kabylian women had no rights of inheritance. They could not have custody of their children if they were repudiated or if their husband died, even if a child was less than three years old. The only right, it seems, Kabylian women had, was that of 'insurrection'. A woman could decide to leave her husband and return to her father's home. She then would become the responsibility of her parents, but could not remarry unless her husband agreed to repudiate her. Some men took advantage of this situation, leaving their wife in this state of 'insurrection' for years and refusing to repudiate her.

Polygamy, although possible, was hardly ever used. The husband preferred to repudiate his wife. Since the dowry he had paid was returned to him, he could use this money to pay for another wife. As in other parts of Algeria, to protect themselves from repudiation, Kabylian women were eager to have children and in particular boys, as early as possible. Sterility and the absence of boys were often causes for repudiation *[Milliot 1910, pp 180-206]*.

These customs and traditions seemed unacceptable to Westerners such as the administrator Sabatier. In 1882, in the village of Aît l'Hassen, Sabatier had an agreement with the Beni-Raten tribe which stipulated that:

> ... les filles ne seraient plus vendues par leurs parents [elles] se vendraient librement.
>
> *[Ageron 1968 Vol. 1, p 287]*
>
> (... girls would no longer be sold by their parents, [they] would make their own decisions freely.)

If Sabatier and many others used the term 'selling of girls' when referring to marriages, it was due to the fact that the tradition required the groom to give a sum of money, the *thâmanth*, to the father of the bride. The father could use this to buy gifts for the girl or keep it for himself. Sabatier also attempted to establish a minimum age for marriage. In 1884, he tried to extend his '*qanouns* rénovés' (modernised traditions) to the entire region of Fort-National and, although he did not succeed in totally abolishing the *thâmanth*, it was agreed that the sum of money would go to the bride instead of her father. Sabatier's motives were not solely dictated by the desire to improve the status of women in the Kabylian tribes. Fervent supporter of the theory of 'assimilation', he saw these reforms as a way of narrowing the gap between the two populations, the settlers and the Kabyles. Over a period of time, he thought that these changes would facilitate total assimilation of the Kabyles through inter-marriages described as 'ethnic fusion'. Despite Sabatier's convictions that 'assimilation' was the answer to all the problems in

Kabylia, his efforts failed, partly because of his misunderstanding of the Kabyles' needs and aspirations and partly because the settlers themselves did not want 'assimilation' to take place.

The French tribunals also tried to bring in several laws and decrees to improve the legal status of women in Kabylia. In 1902, a decree established the right for a widow to be the legal guardian of her own children as long as she did not remarry *[Lefèvre-Bousquet 1939, p 66]*.

The custom of giving *lefdi*, was regulated by the law of May 24th 1931. The husband was forbidden from demanding a sum higher than what he had given at the time of marriage *[ibid]*.

The law of May 2nd 1930 set the minimum marrying age for girls at 15. According to this law, the marriage had to be preceded by a formal engagement and the proof of the girl's age had to be provided. The actual marriage had to be officially registered by a *cadi*. This law was either ignored completely or 'adapted' to suit the interests of the family. It was impossible for the French authorities to enforce this law since the girl's age could not always be officially proven. The close-knit nature of the village community allowed people to hide a girl's marriage from the authorities until she was 15.

The decree of May 19th 1931 gave Kabylian women the right to divorce and to receive inheritance when their husband or father died. According to Lefèvre-Bousquet, the right for women to divorce was well accepted, even though it went against traditional customs. The reason being that a large number of women had been abandoned by their husbands who had emigrated to France after World War I. Consequently, their wives were left without any income, and since they were still married, they could not remarry. If the French decree on divorce was accepted by the Kabylian population, it was due to the fact that it offered a solution to a new situation created by colonisation itself. The right to inheritance, although intended to help the widows of the Kabylian men who had died during World War I, was not well received. According to the local customs, all property was passed from male to male and, therefore, remained within the extended family whose responsibility was to look after unmarried women and widows. Of course, from the woman's point of view, this meant that she could never be independent and had to rely on other people's generosity. The new law, by allowing women to receive inheritance from their father or husband, would result in the division of land which would threaten the survival of the extended family. If, following the new decree, a woman had asked for her share of inheritance, she would have been totally ostracised by her family and the village community and might not have received any inheritance in the end. It was, therefore, easier and safer to follow the traditions and ignore the new decree. Despite this resistance to the new legislation, Lefèvre-Bousquet noted that some changes were slowly taking place in this domain: fathers and husbands often used the *habous system* to ensure that their daughter or wife had a guaranteed income after their death. The *habous system* enabled them to nominate the person who would receive the usufruct from the property.

Just as Arab women played an important role within the family, Kabylian women had a considerable amount of power despite their apparent lack of rights:

> La société berbère du nord du Maghreb présente justement ce phénomène contradictoire en apparence, d'un minimum de droits reconnus à la femme avec une influence telle qu'elle doit être considérée comme un véritable pouvoir.
>
> *[Milliot 1910, p 260]*
>
> (The northern Berber society of the Maghreb indeed presents this apparently contradictory phenomenon: a minimum of recognised rights for women, and yet such influence that it must be equated with real power.)

Milliot went on to define this influence as mystical or religious; a combination of respect and fear which resulted in a direct control over the life of the community. In some villages, women had such power that no decision could be taken without their consent.

5.3 Educational developments

Because of the 'kabyle myth' and the assumptions about the affinities between the Kabylian population and the West, this region saw the establishment of French schools early on. In 1873, Mgr Lavigerie opened a Jesuit school in Djemaa Saharidj and amongst the Beni Yenni tribe, while the Beni Iraten tribe was selected for a French school in 1874. Jules Ferry whose advisor, Masqueray, had done some research on Kabylian tribes, was very keen to see his new educational programme developed in Kabylia. The first primary French school was opened in 1873 in Tamazirth. It was felt that the Kabyles would be more receptive to such a programme. A government report stated:

> La grande Kabylie parut la zone la mieux préparée à la réussite de l'expérience, et 6 écoles y furent immédiatement construites, entre Novembre 83 et Juillet 84, dans le cercle de Fort-National.
>
> *[Gouverneur Général 1947 - 1948, p 24]*
>
> (The region of Grande Kabylie seemed to be the best suited for the success of this experiment. Between November 1883 and July 1884, six schools were immediately built in the district of Fort-National.)

However, there were other reasons for concentrating on Kabylia and singling out certain tribes. The Beni Yenni tribe, for instance, had played a significant part in the 1871 rebellion against French authorities. By building a school in the heart of the insurrection, the French government was imposing its rule and culture on the population. Another factor which would have influenced the government was the level of prosperity of the tribes. The Beni Iraten consisted

mostly of families who owned land while the Beni Yenni had a well established economy based on metal craft work. However, the settlers were unhappy to see vast sums of money dedicated to the education of the local population and despite the law of 1885, which made education compulsory, only eight villages designated in the commune of Fort-National ever had compulsory education. Even so, it is interesting to note that the view that Kabylia was the region most suited to receive French education continued to prevail after 1883. By 1887 Kabylian pupils represented 40% of the total number of school children and out of the 75 schools built, 36 were in Kabylia. In a region which was struggling to support its growing population, education provided a welcomed opportunity for the sons of peasants who often chose to become teachers. The percentage of farmers' sons who chose another profession than farming between 1891 and 1895 was 29%; this figure rose to 37.8% between 1904 and 1909 *[Ageron 1979, p 166]*. This shows the effects of the French education programme in Kabylia.

Another consequence of the higher level of education in Kabylia was that a large proportion of the dispossessed farmers chose to emigrate to France, single men at first, followed by whole families after World War II. According to a study, two-thirds of the emigrants at that time came from the centre and the mountainous region in the east of the country *[Sari 1978, p 131]*. In 1914, the report of a commission looking at Algerian workers in France found that they were all Kabylian from Dra-el-Mizan, Fort National, Michelet and Guergour *[Ageron 1979 Vol2, p 855]*.

The development of education in Kabylia did not, at first, have a dramatic effect on girls' lives since, as in other parts of Algeria, the proportion of girls receiving any formal education was very low. However, once it had become a more established practice, parents started realising that girls could earn some money using the skills such as embroidery and tapestry which they had acquired at school.

One can conclude that by 1954, the French influence had probably been greater in Kabylia than in other parts of Algeria as a consequence of the belief in the 'Kabyle Myth'. Education had had a greater impact on the population and enabled more men to emigrate to France. According to G.H. Bousquet, who published a study on Kabylian traditions and French legislation in 1950, Kabylian women were becoming more aware of the new rights given to them by the French legislation. Increasingly, they were prepared to use the French legal system. However, Bousquet himself suggested that further reforms were needed. Amongst them were the right to maintenance while a woman was in a state of 'insurrection' (see section 5.2), the right to full inheritance and a reform of the divorce laws *[Bousquet 1950, pp 127-133]*.

6 Conclusions

On the eve of the revolution and after more than hundred years of colonisation, the majority of Algerian women had not experienced drastic changes in their lives. Colonisation, however, had started an irreversible process of modernisation. Sporadic and superficial at first, it would, over the years, percolate through and affect the whole society.

The land ownership legislation introduced by the French authorities had an extensive impact on the Algerian population. It resulted in large movements of population from the countryside to the cities and later to France. To a large extent, these migrations were caused by the displacement of small farmers by the settlers, creating an urban underclass and disrupting social organisation. The extended family and its support system were destroyed, the sense of community life among villagers was also disturbed. A new ethic of payment for work was introduced, based on the market value of each task. In urban centres, new attitudes had to be adopted in order to survive. Very often, women had to go out to work and become the sole bread-winner in the household. They were encountering totally new situations, having to abandon their traditional lifestyle, being exposed to Western life and its social values, having to face racism and discrimination. The traditional roles within couples were also affected. If the husband had gone away to France to find a job, the woman had to take on the whole responsibility for the family. If the husband was unemployed, he frequently became more authoritarian within his family to compensate for his loss of status. Urban migration and emigration to France were other consequences of the modernising process. For most women, the forced adjustment to new circumstances resulted in a worsening of their living conditions.

The French social welfare and family laws merely affected a very small number of women. Even if the majority of women chose to ignore them, some had, nevertheless, become aware of different attitudes and beliefs. The existence of a parallel legal system made them question certain aspects of their traditions, particularly in Kabylia. In that sense, the French government had achieved its objectives, which were to destabilise the society at its roots by undermining the traditional family. In attempting to change the role of women, the French authorities were, knowingly, altering the whole structure of the society. By 1954, even though the ultimate aim of total assimilation had not been achieved, the process of destabilising the existing system had gone a long way.

Education, which should have been one of the main vehicles of progress, only touched a very small proportion of the female population. The figure of 95% of illiterate Algerian women in 1954 speaks for itself *[Ageron 1979 Vol 2, p 533]*. However, the concept of free compulsory education for all had been introduced and was recognised as an essential prerequisite for progress. The development of education was to remain one of the continuing objectives of the

governments after independence. The effects of the modernising process introduced by colonisation were experienced to a greater degree by those who had received a high level of education, mostly the male bourgeoisie. These young Algerians, constituting the backbone of the various Reformist movements, had travelled and discovered new life-styles. They were aware of the changes taking place in other Muslim countries such as in Turkey and Egypt. They were no longer satisfied with the old traditional society. They wanted Algeria to move into the 20th century. Women had to be part of this modernising process and as far as they were concerned, education was the key to this evolution, but within the limits of an Islamic society. Educated men no longer wanted to marry illiterate girls. However, they still considered women to be mothers first and foremost, custodians of the cultural identity of the nation. The clash between tradition and modernity was emerging with women at the heart of the conflict. Women had to receive a certain degree of education in order to be part of a modern society, but their role within society was not to be altered. Their education would enable them to better fulfil their duty as mothers of the nation's children. Educating women was considered to be important for the future of the country though not for women themselves.

The introduction of the modernising process through education was to have another consequence. Young educated Algerian men were the first social group to reach what Lerner terms the 'transitional' state of social development *[Lerner 1964, p 72]*. They wanted for themselves what they had witnessed happening in France and other European countries, in other words, a Western lifestyle. But as David Riesman notes in his introduction to Lerner's book, *with wants come new opinions; with new opinions, new political awareness [Lerner 1964, p 4]*. The inability of the colonial powers to respond to the transitionals' economic and political aspirations was to result in a growing sense of frustration and anti-colonial feelings which lead to the development of the nationalist movement and, eventually, to the war of independence.

During the entire colonial period the issue of women's rights was not directly addressed. It is clear, however, that women were seen by the French government as being at the heart of the whole social structure. If the colonial powers were keen to introduce new family legislation in Kabylia, it was with the view of destabilising a part of Algeria which was thought to be an easy target for 'assimilation'. As the administrator of Fort-National, Camille Sabatier, declared:

> C'est par les femmes qu'on peut s'emparer de l'âme d'un peuple.
>
> *[Ageron 1968, p 288]*
>
> (It is through the women that you capture the soul of a nation.)

Except for a few well-meaning teachers and doctors genuinely concerned with the welfare of Algerian women, the majority of French people who held any power or influence did not appear to use them to improve women's lives per-se. Other political and ideological motives determined their actions and women's issues, selectively targeted, were being used merely as

tools to achieve those aims. It is interesting to note the parallel between the young Reformists and the French government's views on Algerian women. Both considered women to be the custodians of traditions and, therefore, a major battleground for the future development of the country.

PART 2
The War of Independence (1954 - 1962)

7 Overview 1954 - 1962

The Algerian war of independence is well documented, although certain aspects remain secret. French and Algerian historians and war veterans have given their respective versions of events and new books are still being published on the subject. However, the majority of these studies have been written by men and give a male perspective of the war. They usually contain some references to the well known war heroines but generally present women as victims. In her chapter on Algerian women fighters, Bouatta made the following comment:

> The female *moudjahidates*[18] have produced no discourses and no formalization about their experience of the war. If it is true that the task of writing and the task of theorization require some distancing, some standing back, they also require an education and a training that participants in the war do not always possess. It remains that it is the men who have given evidence; the women have not.
>
> *[in Moghadam 1994, p 18]*

The only comprehensive study of Algerian women's role in the war was written by Djamila Amrane,[19] herself a participant in the war and a historian. Two other female war veterans, Zohra Drif and Jacqueline Guerroudj wrote about their experiences in prison[20]. And yet, as we will see, women's role in the war was crucial. Once the war was over, women who had participated on an individual basis and not as an organised group, went back to their family life, expecting the new government, comprised mostly of men, to fulfil the many but vague promises made during the war about women's rights. But the anti-colonial war had been fought with the aim of restoring the Algerian identity. Women subscribed to this aim without fully realising what it meant for them. Because of the need to regain the cultural identity of the nation and because women were seen as the guardians of traditions, the portrayal of their role in the war was subsequently reduced to being merely 'mothers of the martyrs' and defenders of the cultural heritage against the attacks of the colonisers. This explains, to some extent, the silence of the *Moudjahidate*. This mythical image of the women fighters created by men was only half of the story. However, women were never encouraged nor had the means to tell the full story. As Hamouda concluded from her interviews of women fighters in the Aurès region:

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18 Women military combatants in the maquis.

19 Les femmes Algériennes dans la guerre 1991.

20 The two books are respectively: La mort de mes frères, 1960 and Des douars et des prisons, 1992.

> Ce qui relève de leur réflexion sur l'Algérie indépendante est que l'Etat a une forte dette à leur égard. Elles n'acceptent pas l'anonymat historique dans lequel elles se sont retrouvées.
>
> *[Maghreb Review vol. 12 June 5th 1987, p 141]*
>
> (What comes out of their reflection on independent Algeria is that the state has a huge debt towards them. They do not accept the historical anonymity which surrounded them [after the war].)

This post-war 'anonymity' fits in with the underlying concept that the war leaders had of the revolution. *The leadership regarded cultural identity, integrity, and cohesion as strongly dependent upon the proper behaviour and comportment of women, in part as a reaction to colonialist or neo-colonialist impositions. Veiling, modesty, and family attachment were encouraged for women [Moghadam 1992, pp 71, 72].* Moghadam called this model of revolution the 'woman-in-the-family' model and contrasted it to the 'women's emancipation' model of revolution where *national progress and societal transformation were viewed by the leadership as inextricably bound up with equality and the emancipation of women [ibid].* According to this taxonomy, the French revolution of 1789 and the Iranian revolution of 1979 belong to the first category, whereas the Russian revolution of 1917, the Kemalist reforms in Turkey during the 1920s, the 1967 revolution in South Yemen and the 1978 Saur Revolution of Afghanistan belong to the second category. In the course of this study, we will show the similarities between the Algerian and Iranian revolutions insofar as the impact they had on the position of women. We will also point out some of the parallels which can be drawn between the Algerian and the Palestinian women fighters' experiences.

Before studying the role women played during the war, we will first consider the economic and legislative changes which occurred during this period and the impact they had on women's lives.

8 Legislative and economic reforms

8.1 Socio-economic situation on the eve of the War

When the issue of women's involvement in the war of independence is considered, two names are immediately mentioned: Djamila Bouhired and Djamila Boupacha, the two heroines who came to prominence when the news of their torture by French soldiers was broadcast by their lawyers. A few other names such as Nafissa Hamoud and Zohra Drif are occasionally remembered. One could conclude that, women's participation was limited to a small number of 'passonarias', prepared to break through social barriers and risk their lives in a single minded pursuit to end colonialism. Certainly, the position of women in the traditional social structure did not prepare them to play a major role in the war. On the eve of the revolution, as we have seen, the majority of women led what could be described as a 'cloistered life': hardly ever going out unaccompanied and accepting unquestioningly ancestral traditions. Many of them were married off, by their fathers, at a very early age. According to the 1954 census: 2,713 girls between 12 and 14 were married, of these, 334 were widows and 101 had already divorced. 75.6% of girls between 20 and 24 were married *[Daoud 1993, p 139].* The majority of women belonged to the poorest social classes. There were in 1954 4,880,000 Muslim women of whom more than 3,000,000 belonged to the 'most miserable' social groups *[Brac de la Perrière 1987, p 26].* A very small proportion of women had a salaried occupation. According to the French govemment figures, on December 31st 1954, only 45,000 Algerian women had paid jobs. More than half of these women (54%) worked as maids for French families or cleaners in large companies and roughly a third of them (39%) worked in agriculture or in the pottery or carpet weaving industries *[Benatia 1980 in Rebzani 1997, p 41].*

As far as literacy was concerned, the vast majority of the Muslim population was illiterate in 1954: 87% of men and 95.5% of women. The French educational programmes had had even less of an impact on Muslim girls. In 1954,

- 76,610 Muslim girls received primary education (218,000 Muslim boys)
- 952 Muslim girls were in secondary education (5,308 Muslim boys)
- 22 Muslim girls had reached university (480 Muslim boys).

[Gordon 1972, p 45]

In the *Medersas* the figures for 1955 were somewhat more evenly balanced: there were 40,000 pupils of whom 40% were girls. However, the period of education for these girls was fairly short since parents usually removed them from school at puberty.

Except for those women who lived in cities, contacts with French settlers were minimal – often purely based on economic needs. Muslim women did not gain vast benefits from their contacts

with the settlers. However, the erosion of their own cultural heritage, a consequence of colonisation, had particularly damaging effects on their welfare. Women lost the family support embedded in the traditional Algerian culture and with it, the stability and protection it provided. As Bourdieu notes:

> ... [les structures economiques et sociales se désintègrent:] destruction de l'unité économique de la famille, affaiblissement des solidarités anciennes et des contraintes collectives, ... essor de l'individu et de l'individualisme économique, qui font éclater les cadres communautaires...
>
> *[Bourdieu 1958, p 119]*

> (...[economic and social structures are disintegrating:] destruction of the family economic unit, weakening of old solidarities and collective constraints,... emergence of the individual and economic individualism which break up the community structures...)

In this context, one would not have expected Algerian women to have played a major role in the war of independence. Yet, as we will see, their involvement was a vital determinant in the outcome of the war. Whether old or young, educated or illiterate, living in large towns or in remote villages, women responded to the demands of the war, frequently at great risks to themselves. For many, their involvement was a revolution in itself. They had to break social barriers when mixing with men, discover and fit into an unknown world when venturing into European sectors of the cities, change their physical appearance by wearing Western clothes and going out unveiled, assume responsibilities and take enormous risks when carrying weapons and bombs. If French colonisation had only touched a small part of Algerian women's lives, the war of independence affected them all in one way or another.

8.2 Debates on family laws

8.2.1 Changes introduced by the French authorities (1957, 1959)

During the war period, two important changes were made to family laws affecting the Muslim population. The first was the law of July 11th 1957. It required the registration of marriages with the French authorities (Etat Civil). Unless a marriage had been officially registered, it was not recognised as legal. To encourage the population to abide by the new law, the government made the official registration of marriage a condition for claiming state benefits. A period of six months was given to retrospectively register marriages which had taken place before the law came into effect. The new law also brought the legal age of majority for ownership of property to 21 for both sexes, however, this was not imposed in Kabylia where the legal age of majority remained set at 18. It also declared that the mother was the legal guardian of her children if her husband died without specifying in his will who should be the guardian. Finally, a woman could ask for divorce in a court of law if her husband had gone missing and left her without any

means of subsistence *[Bormans 1977, p 467]*. These were significant changes. The French government's intentions seem to have been twofold. At a time when Algeria was fighting for its independence, it was essential to accelerate the replacement of Muslim laws by the French administrative and legal systems, thus reiterating the fact that Algeria was an integral part of France. The second objective for the French authorities was to continue bringing in changes to women's legal status in order to convince them that only the French could improve their living conditions. This was not a new policy, as we saw in Part 1. However, during the war, the French government was constantly trying to find new ways of winning over the female population. They were so convinced that modifying family laws in favour of women would have a determining effect that, between 1957 and 1959, they conducted a survey on the evolution of the Muslim family. A questionnaire was sent to French civil and military officials attempting to evaluate the incidence of polygamy, repudiation, use of the '*droit de djabr*' (matrimonial constraint), as well as the evolution of the mentality of Muslim men and women in each of the three Algerian *départements*. In total, 432 surveys were conducted. The results were analysed by captain LP Fauque who published his report in 1959 *[Délégation Générale du Gouvernement en Algérie-Direction des personnels et des affaires administratives 1959, pp 1-23]*. His conclusions were that for the majority of women, especially those who were uneducated, very little had changed. Most of the Muslim traditions regarding marriages still prevailed: the father exercised his right to choose his daughter's husband; between 35% and 55% of marriages were still conducted without any legal registration; 50% of divorces took place outside the courts and, even if the divorce was pronounced by a judge, in the majority of cases, women had to return to their father's home since the husband did not pay any maintenance. Polygamy affected 6% of marriages (in Kabylia, the percentage of polygamous marriages was only 1%); 70% of divorces were caused by the husband repudiating his wife and 50% of repudiations were not declared to the courts. Overall, if some evolution had occurred in certain areas, it was limited and not always for the expected reasons. The survey showed, for instance, that when women exercised their right to vote, it was not due to a newly acquired political awareness and a desire to express their opinion, it was merely for them another officially accepted reason to go out of their home. Similarly, work for women was not considered to be a way of gaining independence from their husband, but merely a means of supplementing the household income. As far as men were concerned, any improvement in their material situation was welcomed as long as it did not affect their matrimonial prerogatives. This was true even for those who had spent some time in France.

Captain Fauque's report only confirmed the failure of 129 years of colonial rule to transform the Algerian culture. Nevertheless, the French government went ahead with their legal reforms by promulgating a second new decree on September 17th 1959. This decree was applicable to most regions of Algeria, including Kabylia. It is interesting to note that Kabylia, which was a

stronghold of the FLN[21], was no longer given special treatment. Until then, the French government had always tried to show some consideration for Kabylia's traditions and customs. Now that the war was raging and Kabylian populations were not supporting France, the 'kabyl myth' (see section 5.1) was forgotten. However, as Imache and Nour pointed out in their study of Algerian women, the decree of 1959 was not applicable to the southern M'zab region. There, the father could still marry his daughter against her will. The French authorities were more interested in keeping the peace in the Southern territories (which had not really been touched by the war) rather than improving women's rights *[Imache & Nour 1994, p 91]*. The 1959 decree brought changes to two main areas of family law: marriage and divorce. Regarding marriage, the consent and presence of both the man and the woman were required. The *'droit de djabr'*[22] was officially outlawed. The Muslim custom of promise of marriage had no legal standing. A minimum age for marriage of 18 for boys and 15 for girls was introduced. The section of the decree dealing with divorce established that either husband or wife could file for divorce in a court of law. The reasons recognised for granting a divorce were:

- mutual consent
- husband failing to support his family
- adultery
- condemnation of one of the spouses by a court of law for a serious offence
- ill-treatment and grave injury

Proper maintenance was to be granted to the wife and custody of the children was to be decided by the courts *[Borrmans 1977, pp 484-489]*.

These new regulations constituted a major move away from traditional Muslim laws: a father could no longer impose his choice of husband to his daughter, a minimum marrying age was set and the traditional promise of marriage was no longer binding. Granting women the right to ask for divorce, under certain circumstances, was also a substantial change. Furthermore, since a divorce had to be pronounced by a French court of law, unilateral repudiation by the husband, de facto, had no legal standing, unless the husband or wife had made a formal request to the French courts. Had this decree and the 1957 law been implemented, significant changes might have occurred in the life of Algerian women. However, the war situation prevented the application of the new legislation. The movements of Muslim populations due to either the creation of resettlement camps or the scattering of families in the maquis made it impossible for the French authorities to keep a tight control over the registration of births, deaths and marriages. The 1959 decree might have been full of promise for Algerian women, but it came too late to have any real impact. One can even wonder if it could have brought significant changes to the lives of Algerian women considering the limited effects previous

21 Front de Libération Nationale, the Nationalist Party which started the war of independence.

22 Right of the father to choose his daughter's husband.

legislation had had. By 1959, the war of independence had given the Algerian population, including women, a thirst for freedom which could not be quenched by a few reforms.

8.2.2 Response from the FLN

The FLN strongly objected to the new legislation as it was seen as a further attempt at imposing colonial rule over the Muslim population. In fact, to show their defiance, the FLN created justice commissions to provide an alternative to the French justice system. A set of guidelines was produced aimed at both Muslims in Algeria and those living in France. This document is particularly interesting as it highlights the attitude of the Party, at the time of the war, regarding family laws. Although it is punctuated with references to the Qur'an, it shows important departures from common practices. The new requirements for marriage, for instance, were that:

> ... un marriage doit être une union basée sur l'affection décidée en commun et complet accord entre les deux fiancés et avec leur consentement réciproque... Toute union contre le gré du jeune homme ou de la jeune fille est rigoureusement interdite.
>
> *[Borrmans 1977, p 499]*

> (... marriage should be based on affection with total agreement between the two fiancées and with both their consent... Any union against the will of the young man or young woman is absolutely forbidden.)

This statement is in total contradiction with the practice of the *'droit de djabr'* since it implies the right for the girl to refuse her father's choice of husband.

Another section of the document deals with the dowry for which a maximum sum of 5,000 francs was set. It also stated that any gifts or presents expected by the bride's family must take into account the groom's financial situation. The rights and duties of husband and wife were described in fairly general terms but suggested mutual respect from both partners rather than obedience from the wife. Violence against women was clearly rejected:

> Tout individu qui se rendra coupable de coups et violences, ou mauvais traitements, sur la personne de sa femme sera sévèrement sanctionné.
>
> *[Borrmans 1977, p500]*

> (Any individual guilty of violence or bad treatment towards his wife will be severely sanctioned.)

The breaking of a promise of marriage required the groom to pay at least half of the dowry if not the full amount. Divorce still seemed to remain the prerogative of the husband. There was

no mention of any kind of maintenance paid to the wife, although none of the dowry should be retained by the husband. The document stated that:

> Le mari doit renvoyer sa femme avec bienfaisance et ne rien retenir de sa dot.
>
> *[Borrmans 1977, p501]*
>
> (The husband must show kindness towards his wife when he sends her back and must not hold back any of the dowry.)

The custody of the children was given to the husband except for very young babies who could stay with their mother for two years if the father agreed to it. During this time, maintenance of mother and child was the responsibility of the father.

As we can see, this interpretation of the Qur'an regarding family laws seems to be somewhat more favourable towards women, particularly regarding the choice of husband, the mutual respect between partners and the rejection of violence. Even this limited move towards the recognition of equality between men and women in family law was to be overturned after independence.

8.3 The 'Plan de Constantine'

During a visit to the town of Constantine, on October 30th 1958, general De Gaulle announced a development plan for Algeria known as the 'Plan de Constantine'. A series of measures were announced to tackle the economic underdevelopment of many parts of Algeria. Among them were the redistribution of land to Algerian dispossessed farmers, a house building programme, the creation of new jobs in industry, an increase in the number of Muslims employed as civil servants and the realignment of salary levels in Algeria with those in France. The Plan de Constantine also contained measures aimed at developing educational provisions for Muslim children. An eight year accelerated programme of education was set up. One of its aims was to eradicate illiteracy. It was also expected that by 1966, the gap between boys' and girls' education would have disappeared *[Ministère de l'Education Nationale Ordonnance August 20th 1958, p 9]*. To this end, the plan proposed the creation every year and for a period of eight years of 1,800 posts for teachers and instructors and 2,025 classes with accommodation for staff. Furthermore, the existing 'centres ruraux' (see section 3.5) were going to be replaced by a large number of 'centres sociaux éducatifs' (700 by 1966). These centres were intended to provide basic education for adults and children. Their educational standards were quite low. The teaching staff were 'instructors' recruited with a Brevet (GCSE) instead of a Baccalauréat (A level) and the syllabus put more emphasis on practical skills, such as woodwork and cookery, rather than reading, writing and arithmetic which were only taught up to primary school level. The development of the 'centres sociaux éducatifs' did not go according to plan. By 1961, instead of 120 new centres, only 54 had been built *[Ministère de l'Education Nationale*

1961, p 39]. Consequently, and despite the lowering of educational standards, the number of Muslim children receiving primary education only reached 600,000 in 1959 and 1,010,000 in 1962 (representing half of the children of school age). Only 36,000 Muslim children continued into secondary education *[Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord 1962, pp 546,547].* By 1962, the gap between boys' and girls' education still existed to the extent that there were still twice as many boys as girls in primary schools and literacy rates had not really improved. In fact, despite the rhetoric of the Plan de Constantine the French government's attitude regarding girls' education and their role in society had not really changed. The following statement gives a clear indication of their true intentions:

> ... the extent of underemployment among men is such that it does not allow us to give women systematic access to jobs in industry. There are, however, specifically feminine positions in commerce and administrative services such as social work and health that are suitable for Muslim girls. In addition, schools for home economics will be set up, especially in rural areas where grade schools (sic) will give a greater emphasis to the domestic aspect of social life...
>
> *[Plan de Constantine, Délégation Générale du Gouvernement en Algérie June 1960, p 77, in Lazreg 1994, p 134]*

Education for girls still meant home economics classes and careers for them were limited to socially acceptable domains such as social work, education and health.

Nevertheless, during the war period, it was crucial for the French government to continue their propaganda as a 'caring administration', concerned with the welfare of the population and in particular of women. In order to win the psychological war with the FLN, the French created special units known as 'Equipes Médico-Sociales Itinérantes' (EMSI). These units were placed under the control of the army and were officially supposed to look after the medical needs of rural populations. However, the government's true objectives were quite different. This is what a directive written for the EMSI's personnel had to say about their mission towards Muslim women:

> L'EMSI est un moyen de pacification ...
> L'EMSI a donc pour mission: de prendre contact avec le milieu féminin afin de le connaître, l'informer, l'éduquer, l'organiser, le guider; dans le but de le préparer en un premier temps à adopter, en un deuxième temps à vivre réellement, la solution la plus française du problème algérien.
>
> L'aspect médico-social de l'EMSI doit être considéré comme le moyen de parvenir à la fin, c'est-à-dire à l'éducation de base du milieu féminin. Le principal écueil à éviter est de tolérer que l'EMSI se laisse absorber par sa tâche médico-sociale sans déboucher sur son rôle véritable.
>
> *[Notice d'action sur les milieux féminins en Algérie[23] March 27th 1960, p 1]*

[23] Archive reference 4 SAS 39

> (The EMSI is a means of pacification ...
> The EMSI's mission is, therefore, through an understanding of the feminine milieu, to inform, educate, organise and guide, establish contacts with women in order to prepare them firstly to adopt and eventually to truly experience the French solution to the Algerian problem.
> The socio-medical aspect of the EMSI must be considered as a means to achieve an end which is the basic education of women. The main pitfall to avoid is to tolerate that the EMSI becomes absorbed by its socio-medical tasks without attaining its real objectives.)

What follows is a detailed description of the strategy to adopt in order to infiltrate the feminine milieu: personal regular contacts, selection of individuals to be trained as future instructors, creation of women circles, etc. A paragraph entitled 'Women's influence' shows that the French authorities were well aware, by then, of the role and power of women within the family as well as of their involvement in the war:

> Dans la plupart des cas l'épouse et la mère sont respectées et obéies, les vieilles femmes régentent les maisons, en un mot la femme a une réelle influence dans le cercle familial.
> Au même titre que les hommes elles participent à la rébellion, la subissent ou combattent. Leur nombre comme leur influence dans les scrutins nous font un devoir de leur ouvrir rapidement des horizons encore insoupçonnés d'elles.

[ibid, p 7]

> (In most cases, wives and mothers are respected and obeyed, old women rule over households, in fact women have a real influence within the family.
> ... Just as men do, women participate in the rebellion, they are subjected to it or take part in the fighting. Their number and the influence they have in elections make it our duty to immediately open for them new horizons of which they are as yet unaware.)

As in the early days of colonisation, the government thought that by getting the support of women it would have a much greater influence over the society as a whole. The true objectives were not women's welfare but, the control and preservation of Algeria as a French colony.

9 Women's political involvement

9.1 Women and the agenda of the FLN

9.1.1 Historical background

The Front de Liberation Nationale (FLN), was the nationalist party which led the insurrection of November 1st 1954, marking the start of the war of independence. However, the nationalist movement had begun in the mid-twenties, with the Etoile Nord Africaine (ENA) created in 1926 by Messali Hadj. In 1937 the ENA became the Parti du Peuple Algérien (PPA) and in 1946 it was replaced by the Mouvement pour le Triomphe des Libertés Démocratiques (MTLD). The MTLD had a clandestine paramilitary group, l'Organisation Spéciale (OS), which was dismantled by the French police in 1950. A few years later, its members formed the core of the Front de Libération Nationale. It was the internal leadership crisis within the MTLD which caused the emergence of the FLN, a revolutionary group which advocated immediate armed insurrection. The military wing of the FLN was the Armée de Libération Nationale (ALN).

The MTLD's position on the issue of women was set out in the Party's official publication, L'Algérie Libre (Free Algeria), on August 18th 1949:

> En Algérie, le problème de la femme, d'un intérêt vital, demeure indissolublement lié au problème politique. Qu'on le veuille ou non, la femme algérienne ne pourra jamais évoluer tant que l'Algérie pliera sous le joug du colonialisme français.
>
> *[Amrane 1991, pp 32,33]*
>
> (In Algeria, the problem of women, in itself vitally important, remains intrinsically linked to the political situation. Whether we like it or not, the situation of Algerian women will never evolve as long as Algeria is bent under the yoke of French colonialism.)

Although the MTLD recognised the fact that the question of women's position in Algerian society needed to be addressed, its first priority was national independence. The nation had to eradicate colonialism before it could consider the welfare of any one section of society. Furthermore, the MTLD considered that the current situation for women was a direct consequence of colonialism. In an article entitled 'The Algerian woman under the colonial yoke', published in L'Algérie Libre on November 19th 1949, we can find the following statement:

> ... l'état actuel de la femme algérienne et du peuple algérien tout entier est le résultat d'une oppression plus que séculaire.
>
> *[Sai 1984, p 13 (refs)]*

(...the present status of Algerian women and of the Algerian people as a whole is the result of centuries of oppression.)

According to the MTLD, women under colonial rule, had not been able to give their children the best possible education:

Dès sa naissance, l'enfant est abandonné à lui-même parce que sa mère ne possède pas les notions d'hygiène et de puériculture nécessaires, ni les moyens matériels, trop souvent, pour aider au développement normal du bébé.

[Sai 1984, p 13 (refs)]

(From birth, the child is left to his own devices because, very often, his mother neither has the necessary basic knowledge in hygiene and child care, nor the means to ensure the normal development of the baby.)

On the contrary, women had become a burden for men. In another article on September 1st 1950 the situation of women is further analysed:

Notre femme tenue en marge de la vie sociale ne réalise rien des problèmes de l'heure. N'assumant pas de responsabilités, elle ne réalise pas la valeur de la lutte... La femme assumant certaines responsabilités sociales, responsabilités adaptées à sa nature, dégagerait l'homme d'une partie de sa tâche et lui permettrait de mieux concentrer ses efforts. Elle reprendrait par la même, confiance en elle-même et ne serait plus une charge pour l'homme au même titre qu'un enfant irresponsable qu'on est obligé de garder pour qu'il ne fasse pas d'imprudences...

[Sai 1984, p 14 (refs)]

(Our women kept out of the life of the country are totally unaware of the current problems. Having no responsibilities, they do not realise the value of struggle... Were they to assume certain responsibilities, adapted to their nature, they would free men from some of their duties and would enable them to concentrate their efforts. They would, at the same time, regain some self confidence and would no longer be a burden on men, who would not have to watch over them like one does over an irresponsible child to prevent misbehaviour.)

All the blame for the 'backward state' of Algerian women was laid at the feet of the colonial powers. The only solution to the problems of women and the country as a whole was independence.

In 1953 the MTLD in the resolution of its second national congress (April 4th - 6th) mentioned the question of women's status. However, it appeared in eighth position in a list of nine strategic objectives to realise.[24] In December of the same year, the MTLD directly addressed women in an appeal from its central committee:

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24 .. les objectifs stratégiques à réaliser:
1 la lutte contre la répression;
2 le renforcement de l'union;
3 le travail à l'extérieur;
4 les cadres nationaux;
5 la jeunesse;

> Et vous, femmes de notre Algérie, mères, sœurs, épouses! Nous connaissons votre situation difficile, mais malgré tout, certaines ont su, par leurs encouragements, faire naître une foi ou l'entretenir. Mais d'autres, négligeant l'importance capitale de leur présence dans la lutte, se laissent trop absorber par leur dure besogne quotidienne. Songez que vous représentez la moitié de la population du pays! Songez que c'est à vous qu'incombe la noble tâche de donner la vie et de forger les nouvelles générations. C'est de vous que dépend l'avenir de l'Algérie.
>
> *[Collot & Henry 1978, p 328]*

> (Calling on you, women of our Algeria, mothers, sisters, wives! We are aware of your difficult situation, but despite this, some of you by your encouragement have succeeded in creating a faith or developing an existing one. Whereas others, neglecting the importance of their presence in the struggle, have let themselves be swamped by their daily chores. Remember that you represent half of the population of this country. Remember that the noble task of giving birth and bringing up new generations has been bestowed on you. The future of Algeria depends on you.)

The position of the MTLD was clear: women's main and foremost role was to procreate and educate children. It was from this standpoint that their participation in the war was envisaged. Their duty to the nation was to 'forge new generations' and imbue in them the belief in an Algerian national identity. Even though the MTLD recognised the plight of Algerian women, it did not see it fit to try and alter their status in society. Furthermore, those women who had merely let themselves be absorbed by their roles as mothers or wives and had not contributed to the 'creation of an Algerian identity', were criticised and reminded that they had not fulfilled their duty to the nation. As far as the MTLD was concerned, the participation of women in the war had to emerge from within the traditional social framework without altering it in any way.

9.1.2 The FLN's rhetoric on women's role in the war

On November 1st 1954, the FLN organised a series of bomb attacks and acts of arson on police and military buildings in different parts of the country. These incidents marked the beginning of the war of independence. In a statement the FLN declared its aims as being:

> ... la restauration de l'Etat algérien, souverain, démocratique et social, dans le cadre des principes islamiques.
>
> *[Daoud 1993, p 139]*

> (... the restoration of the Algerian state, sovereign and democratic within the framework of the Islamic principles.)

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6 la culture nationale;

7 la mémoire;

8 le problème de la femme;

9 l'organisation de l'émigration algérienne en France *[Collot & Henry 1978, p 315]*.

After this initial outburst of hostilities, the FLN seemed to lose its momentum. The losses during the first year were heavy, particularly amongst the leaders of the different military sectors known as *wilaya*[25]. Furthermore, the support from the masses was not forthcoming. However, an unexpected endorsement of the FLN's programme was soon to boost its image. On January 15th 1955, during its general assembly, the Association des *Ulamas* d'Algérie published a manifesto in which it denounced colonialism and called for the recognition of an Algerian independent state. The text of the manifesto concluded:

> ... il n'est possible de résoudre d'une façon définitive et pacifique l'affaire algérienne autrement qu'en reconnaissant solennellement et sans retour:
> - la libre existence de la nation algérienne, ainsi que sa personnalité spécifique;
> - son Gouvernement national;
> - son assemblée législative souveraine;
>
> *[Connaissance de l'Algérie no. 7 Feb 1st 1956, p 1]*

> (...the Algerian situation will not be resolved permanently and peacefully without the solemn and irreversible recognition of:
> - the independent existence of the Algerian nation with its specific identity;
> - its national government;
> - its sovereign legislative assembly;)

Sheikh Tebessi, the general secretary of the association, declared in a press conference that France should negotiate with the FLN *[Alleg et al vol 2 1981, p 188]*. As a result of the growing support from prominent members of the Muslim community, the FLN's image improved amongst the Algerian population and more people started participating in the national struggle. By 1956, the Party had regained some initiative and credibility after successful attacks on French civilians targets. This demonstrated to both, the Muslim and the French communities that the FLN was here to stay.

On August 20th 1956, an FLN congress was held in the valley of the Soummam to establish a new platform for the movement. The text which emerged after the congress actually described the 'supporting role' women could play in the revolution. This was presented in the third section of the document under the heading 'Moyens d'action et de propagande' (Action and propaganda methods) and the paragraph on women came last and separate from those on all other sections of the population (peasants, factory workers, young people, intellectuals and

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25 The whole of Algeria was divided into six military sectors known as *wilaya (region)*, subdivided into zones. –Wilaya I covered the mountainous area of the Aurès, in the East, with Batna as the main town.
-Wilaya II spread over the area around the towns of Constantine and Bône (now Annaba).
-Wilaya III covered Kabylia with Tizi-Ouzou as the main town.
-Wilaya IV contained the capital Algiers and the mountains of the Ouarsenis.
-Wilaya V covered the whole of the West of the country with Oran as the main town.
-Wilaya VI covered the southern territories and the Sahara *[Paillat 1961, p 84]*.
For a few months (Feb 1957-Sept 1957), during the'Battle of Algiers', the capital had its own organisation (Zone autonome d'Alger) headed by Yacef Saadi.

professionals, business people and artisans). Women were obviously seen as a separate entity. The paragraph on women's role declared:

> Il est donc possible d'organiser dans ce domaine, avec des méthodes propres aux moeurs du pays, un redoutable et efficace moyen de combat:
> a) Soutien moral des combattants et des résistants.
> b) Renseignements, liaisons, ravitaillement, refuge.
> c) Aide aux familles et enfants de maquisards, de prisonniers ou d'internés.
>
> *[Amrane 1991, p 252]*

> (It is therefore possible to organise in this area, with methods respectful of the traditions of the country, a formidable and efficient fighting power [providing]:
> a) Moral support for the fighters,
> b) Information, liaison, food and shelter,
> c) Support for relatives and children of fighters, prisoners and interned.)

One can conclude that for the FLN, no large scale political or military involvement was considered appropriate for women. And yet, by August 1956, as we will see in section 10.2, some women had already played a major role in the guerrilla war of the maquis and in the cities. Amrane notes that, at the beginning of the war, the FLN was reluctant to admit women's true involvement. It was not expecting it and could not cope with it. The recognition of women's actions could have been interpreted as an admission and acceptance of the fact that social barriers had been broken. The prospect of 'liberated' women shown to be the equals of men was something men, even among the revolutionary FLN, had difficulty accepting and certainly could not present as role models for the nation. They much preferred to glorify the image of the female fighter refusing to marry a man who was not a revolutionary. This way, the pre-eminent position of the male fighters' role was preserved since women were shown to be in awe of men's bravery.

9.1.3 The FLN's call on women

Politicians cannot always control what happens on the ground, and the FLN was no exception. Their lack of awareness of the eagerness of young people of both sexes to take part in the war and their inability to control the demands of the war meant that the situation evolved quite differently from what they had envisaged or what they were prepared to admit publicly.

The Union Générale des Etudiants Musulmans Algériens, UGEMA, (University of Algiers' section of the Muslim student union) decided to call a general strike on May 15th 1956 in support of the FLN. The message broadcast by the UGEMA was unequivocal and had the approval of the Central Committee of the FLN. The broadcast read as follows:

> Nous observons tous la grève immédiate des cours et des examens et pour une durée illimitée.
> Il faut déserter les bancs de l'Université pour le maquis.
> Il faut rejoindre en masse l'Armée de Libération Nationale et son organisation politique, le FLN.
>
> *[Amrane 1991, p 248]*

> (We are all immediately starting a boycott of classes and exams for an unlimited period.
> We must leave the University to join the maquis.
> We must all join the National Liberation Army and its political organisation, the FLN.)

The call on 'all' students was certainly interpreted by female students as a call on students of both sexes. Many female students joined the maquis at that point. Furthermore, it is apparent from the interviews Amrane conducted that the FLN, despite its official policy, directly approached women nurses to join the maquis. This was necessitated by the desperate need for medical support in the field. Out of 29 women fighters interviewed by Amrane, 17 had been directly approached. Nurses and student nurses from the schools of Sétif and Algiers were particularly targeted *[Amrane 1991, p 239]*.

The 'Battle of Algiers' was another development in the war which forced the FLN to call on women fighters. Between January and September 1957, when the French army was given full power in Algiers, women had to take the place of men civilian urban fighters because they could still move freely in the town whereas men were constantly stopped and searched. Years later, a Tunisian newspaper paid tribute to these women:

> ... over 30,000 soldiers were deployed in [Algiers] a city of only 300,000 Algerian inhabitants. The men were virtually immobilised and women took over. During this period, two thirds of the bombs were planted by women like Baya Hocine and Zohra Drif who lived under cover in the Casbah.
>
> *[Tunisia News no. 41 Aug 14th 1993, p 8]*

The contradictions between the early rhetoric of the Party and the reality of the participation of women in the war is a clear indication that the FLN had not planned for women's involvement. In the FLN's concept of the war, the whole nation had to be involved, but 'with methods respectful of the traditions of the country'. In practice, this was impossible. A war cannot be fought within the constraints of traditional social structures. The war of independence broke social taboos and created new sets of values and acceptable behaviour. Women could no longer be kept within the 'private sphere', they had to be able to move freely if they were to play a useful role in the struggle. They had to be in contact with men, dress differently, take on responsibilities hitherto reserved for men. Family life was totally disrupted and traditional family structures and values were slowly being eroded. The demands of the war imposed different attitudes and the patriarch (within the household or the political organisation) could no

longer expect unquestioned reverence. All these changes were the inevitable consequences of the new situation the country faced. The momentum of the war uncontrollably permeated all aspects of life in the whole country. The FLN had to come to terms with this even if it went against some of the fundamental traditions of the society. Amrane concluded:

> Les hommes politiques... ont subi [le militantisme des femmes], l'ont utilisé, admiré et ils ont souvent essayé, en vain, de le canaliser dans des limites 'raisonnables', respectueuses des traditions.
>
> *[Amrane 1991, p 25]*

> (The political leaders... were submitted to, used and admired [women's active participation in the war]. They often tried, in vain, to channel it within 'reasonable' limits, respectful of the traditions.)

9.2 Women's involvement in other political parties and associations

9.2.1 L'Association des Femmes Musulmanes Algériennes (AFMA)

The role of women in the traditional Algerian society coupled with the lack of education for girls explain partly the very poor participation rates of women in formal politics. However, a few educated women did create their own organisations. Two names have to be mentioned: Nefissa Hamoud and Mamia Chentouf. The latter became politically involved during her university days. She was a member of the 'Section Universitaire Mixte des Amis du Manifeste et de la Liberté'. This association, open to both sexes, was formed with the agreement of the PPA (see section 9.1.1) to develop political awareness amongst students. After the tragic events of May 8th 1945 (see section 10.1.1) Chentouf formed the first clandestine feminine cell of the PPA. By the end of 1946, the number of feminine cells in Algiers had grown to five with four or five members in each *[Amrane 1991, p 36]*. The feminine cells of the PPA formed the backbone of the 'Association des Femmes Musulmanes Algériennes' (AFMA) created on June 24th 1947 by Chentouf and Hamoud. Chentouf was the president of the association and Hamoud the general secretary. The association lasted until 1954. Its purpose was to develop women's political awareness. As Sai notes, the AFMA was a political organisation for women and not explicitly a 'feminist' one:

> En créant une organisation féminine, le MTLD, n'entendait pas lui assigner d'autres tâches que celles de mobiliser et de sensibiliser les femmes à la lutte, de les entraîner en fonction et en faveur des objectifs du Parti... Ses militantes sont chargées de répercuter les décisions du parti, de diffuser les mots d'ordre lorsqu'il y a des campagnes.
>
> *[Sai 1984, p 40]*

> (By creating a women's organisation, the MTLD's sole intention was to mobilise women by increasing their awareness of the ongoing struggle, and by familiarising them with the party's objectives.... The members of the AFMA [were] asked to pass on the party's decisions and slogans when there [was] a specific campaign.)

The association never concerned itself with specific feminist issues. Although it declared its main objectives to be 'the raising of the condition of women and the protection of children' *[Sai 1984, p 21(refs)]*, it did not make any recommendations to the MTLD regarding women's rights. The 'raising of the condition of women' was interpreted as political education provided in order to gain women's support in the fight against colonialism. The association never gained any autonomy. Its influence was also limited by the fact that it only had representatives in a few large urban centres: Algiers, Oran and Tlemcen *[Sai 1984, p 42]*. Apart from its propaganda mission, the association also developed a social programme with activities such as organising fêtes for deprived children, giving basic medical and hygiene training and performing plays. The membership of the association never exceeded 100 *[Amrane 1991, p 37]*. Because of the lack of organisation and the limited number of regional groups, a few women chose to join the MTLD itself. Their roles were similar to those of the members of the AFMA: *propaganda, organisation of demonstrations, collective or individual actions in favour of prisoners, collection of funds [Sai 1984, p 45]*. The women's meetings were held in separate rooms from the men's with loud-speakers to broadcast the speeches and slogans *[ibid, p 44]*. This is a clear indication that women were not in any way associated with the Party's discussions or involved in decision making. As Sai notes, they were, at best, *intermediaries between the Party and women [ibid]*.

9.2.2 Le Parti Communiste Algérien (PCA)

A few women were also politically involved through the 'Parti Communiste Algérien' (PCA). However, the cause of Algerian women was not a priority for the PCA for two main reasons: firstly, the PCA was closely linked to the Parti Communiste Français (PCF). The French Party's views on Algeria were, to say the least, ambivalent. It concentrated its efforts on class struggle and the eradication of the capitalist state, rather than the fight against colonialism. The PCF considered that Algeria was benefiting from its links with France, particularly in terms of infrastructure, education and economic development. The futures of France and Algeria were seen as interconnected. Consequently, Algerian and French Party members needed to have one objective only, the destruction of capitalism. Once this goal was achieved, better living conditions would follow for all.

The second factor which prevented the PCA from fighting effectively for Algerian women's rights was its predominantly European membership. When in 1925 the Party claimed 'equal pay for equal work', they were representing the interests of their European members who

mostly worked in factories while low paid Algerian women were either employed as maids in European households or as seasonal workers in the agricultural sector *[Sai 1984, p 12]*. However, the PCA did call for solidarity between the two ethnic groups:

> ... alliance du prolétariat avec les peuples coloniaux pour abattre le capitalisme assassin.
>
> *[Sai 1984, p 12]*
>
> (... alliance of the proletariat with the colonised nations to destroy murderous capitalism.)

If the Party was aware of the terrible conditions of Algerian women, it blamed colonialism and the lack of structures such as crèches and adequate medical facilities. The programme of the communist candidates in the local elections of October 1934 demanded:

> ... un congé obligatoire de deux mois avant et deux mois après la maternité, des traitements et soins gratuits pour la mère travailleuse, ... la création de maternités et le développement des oeuvres d'assistance à la mère et à l'enfant...
>
> *[Sai 1984, p 13]*
>
> (...two months compulsory maternity leave before and after the birth of the child, free medical care for working mothers, ... the creation of maternity hospitals and the development of organisations to support mother and child.)

The role of mother was glorified by the Party but no attempt was made to claim the right for women to work outside of their home, for instance. The Party was also eager to state that it did not blame religion for Algerian women's law status in society. In an article published in the communist newspaper 'La Lutte Sociale' on September 12th 1924 we find the following statement:

> La femme de chez nous ne doit pas son malheureux sort à la foi religieuse qui lui est plutôt favorable, mais à l'état d'ignorance, dans lequel végète hélas! une bonne partie de la population algérienne, ignorance plus profonde chez les femmes.
>
> *[Sai 1984, p 7 (refs)]*
>
> (Our women do not owe their unfortunate state to their religious faith which is rather favourable to them, but to the state of ignorance in which a large proportion of the Algerian population unfortunately vegetates, ignorance which is deeper amongst women.)

The Party was well aware that if it were to recommend drastic measures regarding Algerian women's roles in society, it would lose a large proportion of its Muslim male supporters. In an

article entitled 'Will Algerian Muslim women gain emancipation?', published in 1937, we can read:

> On a parlé d'émancipation. Il faut s'entendre et ne point heurter des sentiments familiaux, religieux, éminemment respectables. Il n'est pas question d'amener la musulmane algérienne à participer dès demain à notre vie occidentale... La forme d'émancipation de la femme musulmane sera l'oeuvre des arabes eux-mêmes au nom du plus réaliste des prophètes...
>
> *[Sai 1984, p 7 (refs)]*

> (People have talked about emancipation. We must understand and not go against family or religious feelings which are highly respectable. There is no question of bringing Algerian Muslim women to a Western life style immediately... The way Muslim women will become emancipated is for the Arabs themselves to decide in the name of the most realistic of all prophets.)

Whereas in France, the communist cells were mixed, in Algeria, due to the social constraints, women had to meet separately from men and belong to feminine cells. It seems that the few educated women who chose to be politically involved belonged to the Nationalist movement (AFMA) rather than the Communist Party. The majority of women who joined the PCA were uneducated. Their meetings had to be attended by a female European representative who would explain the Party's directives while an educated Algerian member would translate them for the rest of the group *[Amrane 1991, p 39]*.

The PCA, like the MTLD, although aware of the situation of Algerian women, did not attempt to address the question. While women were expected to embrace the communist ideals their own personal situation was never a topic for discussion.

9.2.3 L'Union des Femmes Algériennes (UFA)

This association was created in 1944 by French women living in Algeria. Its main purpose was to fight fascism. It was supported by the PCA and was affiliated to the 'Fédération Démocratique Internationale des Femmes'. Its journal 'Femmes d'Algérie', published between 1944 and 1951, gives a clear idea of the association's role. Its aims were defined as follows:

> Aider à l'écrasement définitif du fascisme et de l'hitlérisme, travailler à la reconstruction d'une France et d'une Algérie nouvelle, préparer un avenir de bien être et de liberté pour toutes les populations de notre pays.
>
> *[Femmes d'Algérie no. 1 Sept 1944, p 1]*

> (Contribute to the complete eradication of fascism and 'Hitlerism', work towards the reconstruction of a new France and a new Algeria, prepare the future welfare and freedom of all the populations of our country.)

The association concentrated its efforts on social activities such as visits to injured soldiers in hospitals, collection and distribution of food and clothes to poor families and fund-raising. The UFA sent delegates to the International Women's Conference (Nov 26th - Dec 2nd 1945) where the situation of Muslim women in Algeria was discussed. Speaking at the conference, Mrs Sportisse (General secretary of the UFA and MP for Oran) denounced the actions of the big land owners and the terrible consequences for Muslim farming communities *[Femmes d'Algérie no. 22 1945, p 7]*.

In 1946, members of the UFA participated in a meeting of the Committee of the Fédération Démocratique Internationale des Femmes. Mrs Merens, secretary of the Algerian branch, talked of the discriminatory practices of some European employers towards Muslim women. She declared:

> ... le salaire [des femmes] varie bien souvent selon qu'elles sont européennes ou musulmanes.
>
> *[Femmes d'Algérie no. 25 Feb 25th 1946, p 5]*
>
> (... [women's] salaries often vary depending on whether they are European or Muslim.)

Mrs Merens also made a passionate plea for the improvement of the living conditions of all children in Algeria, whether European or Muslim and the development of educational provisions for Muslim children *[ibid]*.

In the early days, at least, the association seemed genuinely intent on working towards the improvement of the living conditions of Muslim women and children in Algeria. Although Muslim women were encouraged to take part in the activities of the association, only a minority of educated women were actually involved. The membership of the association varied between 10,000 and 15,000 *[Daoud 1993, p 137]*. The main problem for the association arose from the fact that it was open to European as well as Algerian women, two groups with widely different backgrounds and expectations. When the association was fighting for Algerian women (demonstrating for the recognition of their right to vote in 1947) it did not get the support of its European members. Similarly, Algerian women did not show any interest for campaigns not specifically aimed at improving their life.

Amrane noted that an insignificant number of the women who took an active part in the war of independence were recorded as having had previous political involvement with either the Nationalists or the Communists. On the files of the FLN / ALN[26] only 6 out of 10,949 women

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26 Armée de Libération Nationale, the military faction of the FLN.

had previous political activity recorded (2 for the PCA, 4 for the MTLD) *[Amrane 1991, p 43].* Clearly, none of the political Parties had been able to or were interested in attracting women to their ranks. It seems that their concerns were to fight colonialism, fascism or capitalism for which no serious attempt was made to involve women. The lack of educated women was probably a major hindrance, but the Parties never really tried to tackle women's issues and as a result, did not motivate them into political involvement. For the FLN, the reason given was that there was a much more pressing issue which had to be dealt with: the ending of colonialism. For the Communist Party, turning a blind eye to the situation of Algerian women was a political decision forced upon them to obtain acceptance within the prevailing male-dominated social structures. Had it attempted to apply the communist ethos to the situation of women in Algeria, requiring equal status for women, it would have failed in finding support amongst men. Clearly, in both cases, women were used for the furtherance of other political motives. As far as the UFA was concerned, its attempts at uniting all women in Algeria were doomed due to the irreconcilable conflict of interests between the colonised and the colonisers.

10 Women's participation in the War

10.1 Reasons for women's involvement

10.1.1 The massacres of May 8th 1945

On May 8th 1945, all over France and Algeria large scale ceremonies were taking place to celebrate the end of World War II and the victory over fascism. For Algerian people, that day had a double significance: firstly it commemorated the death of the many Algerians who died alongside French soldiers fighting the Nazi regime. Secondly, Algerians believed that the principles of democracy which had been fought for during the war would be extended to Algeria. They hoped that the end of World War II would mark a turning point in the history of their country and would be the beginning of a new era where freedom and equality for all would prevail. These feelings were described in an article in El Moudjahid:

> Le sacrifice des Algériens morts dans la lutte contre le fascisme doit apporter à l'Algérie plus de liberté et plus de démocratie: tel est l'esprit qui anime la population ce jour-là.
>
> *[El Moudjahid no. 23 May 5th 1958, p 10]*
>
> (The sacrifice of Algerians who died in the fight against fascism must bring more freedom and democracy to Algeria: such were the feelings driving the population on that day.)

However, the events which marked May 8th 1945 in Algeria destroyed any hopes of peaceful change. In particular the massacres in Sétif (a small town near Constantine in the north east of the country) were a turning point for many Algerians. The commemoration of the end of World War II was celebrated in many towns in Algeria. The PPA[27], the PCA[28] and the Algerian Trade Unions had planned to march peacefully to the war memorials, headed by, amongst other banners, the Algerian flag. In the town of Sétif, Tuesday being a market day, many peasants had come down from their villages and assembled in the mosque. The organisers of the march asked all participants to leave any item that could be construed as a weapon in the mosque. The Algerian flag bearer was a young scout Saal Bouzid. The French government in Algeria were determined to quash any attempts at amalgamating the liberation of France with a future independence for Algeria. French policemen had received strict orders from the Prefect of Constantine, Mr Lestrade Carbonnel, to shoot anyone carrying an Algerian flag *[Alleg et al vol 1 1981, p 253]*. The police executed the orders and Soual Bouzid was shot dead. In the ensuing

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27 Parti du Peuple Algérien, Algerian Nationalist Party (see section 9.1.1)

28 Parti Communiste Algérien

confusion, a number of Algerians and Europeans were killed. The next day, all around Sétif, the PPA called on its supporters to arm themselves and rebel. In the uprising that followed, a total of 103 Europeans were killed and 110 injured. This provoked the French authorities into a series of exemplary reprisals. The repression that followed was totally disproportionate with the events of May 8th and 9th. The French government wanted to frighten Algerians into submission. They thought that they would teach the population a lesson which would deter anybody from joining the Nationalists in the future. The first official death toll published was of 1,150 Algerians killed. A few days later, the revised figure of 15,000 was given. The American Consulate in Algiers estimated the deaths between 40,000 and 45,000 *[Alleg et al vol 1 1981, p 267]*.

For many Algerians, the events in Sétif were a catalyst. They showed the determination of the French government to keep Algeria as a French colony. They brought home the realisation that Algeria would never be granted its independence. Algeria would have to fight for it. This is how El Moudjahid summed up the repercussions of the events of May 8th 1945 for the Algerian population:

> ... ce jour-là, le peuple algérien a perdu ses illusions et compris qu'il ne sera libre et respecté que lorsqu'il sera fort... La Révolution commençait.
>
> *[El Moudjahid no. 23 May 5th 1958, p 10]*

(... on that day, the Algerian people lost their illusions and understood that if they wanted freedom and respect they would have to show their power and strength... The Revolution had started.)

Commander Azzedine, an ALN fighter quoted, in one of his books about the war times, his niece's feelings on that day when the French police carried out a search in her house:

> Ce que les Français détruisent alors, ce n'est pas seulement la tranquille ordonnance des choses, c'est tout mon univers enfantin. Maintenant, tout est clair pour moi: j'ai compris que nous ne sommes pas tous de la même race. Il y a en Algérie une race de privilégiés, celle de l'occupant. Et les autres. Les autres, c'est-à-dire nous, les indigènes.[29]
>
> *[Azzedine 1977, p 204]*

(What the French are destroying, is not just the peacefully ordered material possessions, it is my whole childhood world. Suddenly, everything becomes clear for me: I understand that we do not all belong to the same race. There is in Algeria a race of privileged few, that of the occupiers. And there are the others. We are the others, the natives.)

[29] The word 'indigène', used by the French to refer to the Muslim population, had and still has in French a derogatory and racist connotation.

On May 8th, the Algerian dreams had been shattered. The joy of the victory over fascism in World War II and the hopes it had engendered for a free and egalitarian Algerian society were brutally destroyed. The consequences, however, were not the submission of the Algerian people, but the emergence of a determination to fight colonialism to the end, whatever the costs.

10.1.2 The first executions of Algerian prisoners

By 1956, the climate of war was setting all over Algeria. Although the capital was not yet the main theatre of violence, in towns such as Constantine and Oran, the population was faced with daily attacks and random killings. The violence came from both sides: the ALN and the French army. The ALN was intensifying its campaign and receiving more and more spontaneous support in the urban centres with regular strikes and the closing of shops during funerals of fighters or Algerian civilians killed by the French army. In response to these acts of defiance towards the French authorities, the policy of 'collective responsibility' was established, opening the door to indiscriminate arrests and killings by the French army. Faced with an ever increasing atmosphere of violence, the more right wing elements amongst the French population began asking for tougher action from the French government. On several occasions during the month of April 1956, two organisations, 'Comité de Coordination pour la Défense de l'Algérie Française' and 'Présence Française Algérie', demanded the execution of all prisoners who had been sentenced to death and of anybody found carrying weapons or caught during military operations *[Alleg vol 2 1981, p 171]*. On June 19th, the French government gave in to the pressure and guillotined two Algerians who had been sentenced to death, Zabana Hamida [30] and Ferradj Abdelkader [31]. The executions took place in the Barberousse prison in Algiers and constituted a turning point in the war. That same evening, the FLN distributed leaflets warning that Zabana and Ferradj would be revenged. Later on two French soldiers, prisoners of the ALN, were executed and a series of individual armed attacks followed in Algiers during which 47 French people were injured or killed. As a reprisal, in July, a group of right wing settlers placed a bomb in a small block of flats at no. 3 rue de Thèbes in the Casbah[32] where 50 Algerian civilians (including women and children) were killed *[Kessel & Pirelli 1962, p 48]*. The executions of the first two Algerian prisoners were for many ordinary people the spark that triggered an explosion of anger and frustration which led them to take an active part in the war. Zohra Drif, who was to become one of the most famous war heroines, was amongst them. She was a law student in Algiers and decided to become actively involved in the FLN at that point *[Drif 1960, p 9]*.

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30 He was the leader of an ALN group and was arrested on November 8th 1954 during an ambush near St Denis-de Sigg. He was sentenced to death for his participation in several attacks on the French army and the killing of a forest warden *[Kessel & Pirelli 1962, p 47]*.

31 He had participated in an attack on a farm in November 1954 *[ibid]*.

32 An area of Algiers entirely populated by Algerians and known to be under FLN control.

10.1.3 The general strike of 1957

Another significant event which resulted in the participation of a large number of Algerian women in the war was the general strike organised by the FLN from January 28th to February 4th 1957. This strike was to demonstrate to the French government the support the FLN had amongst the urban population. It was also a publicity stunt to focus attention on the FLN at the United Nations conference which was due to take place at that time in New York and where the question of Algeria was going to be debated. Yacef Saadi, one of the FLN leaders in Algiers who participated in the strike described its purpose as:

> Plébisciter le FLN comme représentant authentique et exclusif du peuple algérien.
>
> *[Saadi 1962, p 30]*
>
> (establishing the FLN as the authentic and exclusive representative of the Algerian people.)

Before the start of the strike, women activists went from house to house explaining to women what the strike was about and asking them to stock up food supplies. When, after three days, the French soldiers tried to break the strike by descending on the Casbah, ransacking shops and houses, some women, frightened of the reprisals from the French army, started disobeying the FLN's orders. Once again, the women activists went to each house explaining the importance of maintaining the strike and the need for solidarity. However, the eight day strike was too ambitious and the French soldiers succeeded in breaking it through sheer intimidation. Nevertheless, it did establish the FLN as a powerful and widely supported organisation *[Amrane 1991, p 144]*. Even though the original objective of an eight day general strike was not realised, the action was seen as a success by the FLN, due to the international coverage it received particularly in exposing the brutal ways the French soldiers used to break the strike. In his conclusion on the effects of the strike, Saadi stated that:

> Le FLN avait démontré, non seulement son audience indiscutée auprès du peuple algérien, mais sa capacité d'encadrer, de diriger un mouvement de masse à l'échelle nationale.
>
> *[Saadi 1962, p 51]*
>
> (The FLN had not only demonstrated its undisputed support amongst the Algerian people, but also its ability to organise and direct a mass movement on a national scale.)

10.1.4 Incursion of the war into everyday life

For some women, it was the incursion of the war into their personal life which triggered their active participation. Djamila Bouhired explained in an interview conducted in 1971 the

circumstances which made her join the ALN. Djamila was about 15 years old at the time. Until then she had been educated in a French school and had never questioned the teaching she received. She said in the interview:

> France was my country, the Gauls were my ancestors, just as they were the ancestors of the French.
>
> *[Fernea & Bezirgan 1977, p254]*

She did not know that her friend, Aminah, had been working for the ALN, carrying bombs. When Aminah was caught by the French, she took poison and died rather than be tortured and risk endangering the life of her comrades *[ibid p 256]*. This tragedy, said Djamila, changed her life.

The FLN controlled newspaper, El Moudjahid, gave an insight into the reasons which made a group of *Moudjahidate* join the maquis in an article published in 1959 as part of 'Le journal d'une maquisarde' (The diary of a female maquis fighter). The article described a meeting which took place in *wilaya* IV in October 1957 where a group of female fighters met for the first time. The young girls talked about their background and the reasons which made them join the maquis. For one of them, Naima (20 years old), it was to follow her husband, for Cherifa (18 years old), it was after the death of her brother killed by French soldiers in 1955, Fatiha, at 16, was already carrying weapons from one sector of Algiers to another. Her situation became too dangerous and after hiding for three months in Algiers, she left for the maquis. Zohra, from a young age, was helping her uncle by carrying clothes and weapons for the FLN. It seems that for the majority of these girls involvement with the FLN was a natural progression, an inevitable consequence of the war *[El Moudjahid no. 46 July 20th 1959, p 12]*.

Dreadful images, painful incidents, added to the long misery and hardship of their lives, gave women a sudden urge to take action. As if they were no longer able to keep the war out of their world, after years of a secluded existence, they decided to act. For many, this was a brave and irrevocable decision which changed their lives. In the diary of a maquisarde for example, one young orphan, Fatma, recalled how she witnessed daily political discussions between her two brothers. When she expressed her interest and desire to participate in the war, she was told by her brothers that she was too young and one of them even added that it was 'not a business for women'. She felt that they were mistaken, the fight for Algeria's independence should concern everyone: men, women and children. She joined the maquis disregarding her brothers' opinions. For an Algerian girl to go against the wishes of her brothers was not a small matter. In the traditional social structure, in the absence of the father, the brothers were the guardians and had full authority over unmarried girls. This was, therefore, a very serious case of rebellion against the established order. In normal circumstances it would have resulted in the total rejection of the girl by her entire family and would have been seen as a cause of shame for all

her relatives. Instead, Fatma was quite prepared to publicly talk about the incident and the newspaper presented it as an act of bravery. This example further emphasises the effects the war had on individuals as well as on the Algerian society as a whole (see section 12.1).

10.1.5 Education

By 1954 education, whether provided by the *Medersas* or by the French government had only reached a very small proportion of the female population (see section 3.5). However, it played a major role in inciting those who received it to participate in the war.

In 1951 in the 125 *Medersas*, there were 16,286 full time pupils of whom 6,696 were girls. *[El Basair, Journal de l'Association des Ulamas, October 14th 1951 in Amrane 1991, p 29].* Those who benefited from the education of a *Medersa* were undoubtedly influenced by the teaching they received and many of them ended up fighting in the maquis. This is what an ex *Moudjahida*, Mrs Saida Benslimane, remembered of her school days:

> On nous apprenait l'arabe en cachette, on nous parlait de la révolution en Tunisie, et on nous disait qu'elle n'allait pas tarder à éclater en Algérie. Nous apprenions à dessiner notre drapeau et des chants patriotiques...
>
> *[El Djazairia no. 73 1979, p 14]*

> (We were taught Arabic secretly, we were told about the revolution in Tunisia and that it was about to start in Algeria. We learnt how to draw pictures of our flag and sang patriotic songs...)

However, since the French government was clearly aware of the nationalist feelings instilled in the children who attended these schools, several *Medersas* were closed. In 1959, only 43 remained open, the others had been closed and their staff arrested *[Amrane 1991, p 30].* The French government also tried to silence the nationalist views expressed by the *Ulama*. On April 6th 1956, their weekly paper, El Baçair, was outlawed *[Alleg vol 2 1981, p 188].*

While the *Medersas'* influence on girls can be easily understood, the influence of French education is more complex. The French government thought that, by educating women, by opening their eyes to the Western world and the opportunities it offered them, it would win them over. It was thought that educated girls would opt for the culture which, as the authorities saw it, enabled them to fulfil their potentials. This is how Glendora-Gates, in her comparison of women's roles in the Algerian and Iranian revolutions, described the French government's plan:

> It seems clear that the idea was to have women in steadily increasing numbers accept an image of themselves which could only function in a French-oriented society. In this way the women could support both France's position in Algeria and French efforts to contain Algerian culture.
>
> *[Glendora-Gates 1987, pp 88,89]*

However, results were quite different from expectations. Because of the discrimination against Algerians in both the educational and economic sectors, educated girls realised that they would always be treated as second class citizens in the colonial context. Boupacha's account of her decision to join the FLN is a clear illustration of this feeling: she was a probationer at the Beni Messous hospital and when she was due to receive her certificate, despite her excellent records, she was denied it simply because she was a Muslim:

> I had learnt that all Moslems among the girls due to qualify were to be debarred from taking their certificate. ... I went and saw the Matron. I asked her why Moslems were not to be admitted. When I left her, I was in tears.
>
> *[Beauvoir & Halimi 1962, p 53]*

The French government, far from winning over Algerian women through education, made them more aware of the injustice of the colonial system. Girls soon recognised the fact that however educated and qualified they might be, they would never be French and treated as equals. Furthermore, they realised that the state of poverty most Algerians lived in was a direct consequence of colonialism. Many young educated girls joined the ALN for these reasons. They knew that no section of the Algerian society would be free until the country itself was free from colonialism. In this respect, their views coincided with those of the FLN.

10.1.6 Response to circumstances

In addition to the particular events which drove some women into the war effort, a large majority found that their participation was a 'natural response' to the necessities of the war. When supplies were needed for the ALN fighters, women provided them, to the best of their abilities. Even if they did not have enough food for their own family, they would share whatever they had. Apart from the practical help they offered, their moral support was invaluable to the men. In El Moudjahid's 'Journal d'une maquisarde' (Diary of a woman fighter), the courage and support of ordinary villagers, and particularly of women, is constantly mentioned:

> Je me souviens que ce qui me frappa à mon arrivée au maquis, ce fut l'ordre et la discipline qui y régnaient. Ce fut le moral extraordinaire de nos populations. Les femmes en particulier sont admirables. Ce sont elles qui restent dans les douars seules avec les enfants et les vieillards... Puis à la fin des combats... ce sont elles qui nous accueillent avec le sourire, et pourtant nous savons que certaines viennent de subir les pires sévices: les tortures, les viols.
>
> *[El Moudjahid no. 44 June 22nd 1959, p 12]*

(I remember that what struck me on my arrival in the maquis was the order and discipline which prevailed and the extraordinary morale of our populations. Women in particular are admirable. They are the ones who are left in the villages, alone with the children and old people... When an engagement with French troops is over, ... they are the ones who welcome us smiling and yet we know that some of them have been submitted to the worst acts of brutality: torture and rape.)

10.2 Nature of women's war-time contributions

10.2.1 Statistics of participation

According to the Ministère des *Moudjahidine* (Ministry of the War Veterans), a total of 10,949 women fighters took part in the war 9,194 as civilians and 1,755 as military fighters *[Actualité de l'émigration no. 97 July 1987, in Saadi 1991, p 153]*. However, these figures only represent a small proportion of the number of women who actually played an active role in the war. If some did not register as war veterans, it was simply because they considered their contribution to have been nothing else than normal under the circumstances. Others wanted to forget the war and the suffering they had endured. Some, however, were refused the title of war veterans (see section 14.3.2).

10.2.2 The *Moudjahidate* (Women military combatants in the maquis)

Life in the maquis was very hard, particularly for young girls from the cities. The groups of fighters were constantly on the move. They often walked through the night on very rough terrain, in the cold and the rain, with little or no food. This is what two young *Moudjahidate* remember of their strenuous life in the mountains:

Le journal de Amina:
18 mars: ... départ à 9 heures du soir. 19 mars: arrivée dans un gîte, à 6 heures du matin. 60 km à pied et à cheval. 20 mars: traversée de la montagne de 9 heures (du soir) à 2 heures (du matin).

Souvenirs de Baya:
Lorsque nous avons traversé les Aurès, nous sommes restées trois ou quatre jours sans rien manger d'autre qu'une racine sauvage, des artichauts sauvages.

[Amrane 1991, pp 65, 69]

(Amina's diary:
March 18th: ....departure 9 pm. March 19th: ....arrival in a guest house at 6 am, 60 km on foot and horseback. March 20th: across the mountain from 9 pm till 2 am.

Baya's memories:
When we crossed the Aurès mountains, we spent three to four days eating nothing but wild roots and wild artichokes.)

The roles of women in the maquis were varied. As we saw earlier (section 9.1.3) nurses were indispensable. The conditions in the so called 'maquis hospitals' were unimaginable: no anaesthetics, few medicines and very basic equipment. The nurses had to improvise and forget their hospital training. Apart from helping injured fighters, nurses also tried to help villagers by teaching them basic hygiene principles, particularly regarding the care of young babies. In her statement to the military tribunal in Algiers (April 25th 1957), Fadila Mesli, a young nurse talked about the various tasks she performed in the maquis:

> J'ai soigné les patriotes blessés et les populations des montagnes enfouies dans la misère et la faim et les victimes des ratissages, des bombardements et des incendies... J'ai fait l'école aux enfants qui n'avaient jamais vu une classe.
>
> *[Kessel & Pirelli 1962, p 132]*
>
> (I looked after the fighters and the population of the mountains buried in squalor and hunger, victims of raids, bombings and fires.... I taught children who had never seen a classroom.)

Propaganda and education were also part of the women fighters' mission. El Moudjahid relates how *Moudjahidate* played an important role in the political education of villagers, quoting an article[33] by an American journalist (Joseph Kraft) who spent some time with the FLN fighters in *Wilaya* V. Kraft explained that the FLN political section leader had come to address the women in a village. He introduced his secretary, a 17 year old Muslim girl, and left her to talk to the women. She proceeded to tell her captive audience how courage and solidarity today would mean a better world for women tomorrow. The following is a short extract from her speech:

> On ne doit pas avoir peur Mais nous devons leur arracher notre liberté pour être respectés dans le monde... Nous devons soutenir nos frères. Il faut faire tout ce que nous pouvons pour lutter pour notre pays. C'est le seul moyen d'élever le niveau de nos femmes. Si nous faisons notre devoir aujourd'hui, demain nous serons libres.
>
> *[El Moudjahid no. 19 Feb 28th 1958, p 12]*
>
> (We must not be frightened. We must free ourselves from the French if we want to be respected in the world... We must support our brothers. We must do everything we can to fight for our country. It is the only way to improve the status of our women. If we do our duty today, we will be free tomorrow.)

The young girl's speech was followed by a general discussion on more practical matters. The women present asked questions about how to use condensed milk for babies and how to obtain the best crop from olive trees. Another example of the development of women's political awareness is given in an interview with Colonel Ali Kafi (responsible for *Wilaya* II):

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33 Published in the Saturday Evening Post in 1958 (the exact date of publication is not given by El Moudjahid).

> Ainsi la participation des femmes à la lutte prend une forme de plus en plus concrète, politique. En dehors de leurs tâches quotidiennes (gîte, nourriture, soins pour les combattants), les femmes se réunissent entre elles. Elles ont créé des 'Comités de femmes' qui discutent des questions politiques. Ces Comités sont animés par nos assistantes sociales et nos infirmières, jeunes lycéennes grévistes qui se sont formées au maquis.
>
> *[El Moudjahid no. 40 April 24th 1959, p 7]*

> (Women's participation in the struggle is becoming more and more concrete, political. Their daily tasks accomplished (providing shelter, food and medical assistance for the fighters), women get together. They have created 'women's committees' to discuss political questions. These committees are led by our women social workers and nurses who acquired their skills when, as young students, they joined the maquis after the students' strike.)

Sometimes, women were sent on special missions to collect information before an ALN group of fighters moved into a village. These women were known as 'contrôleuses'. They had to mix with the population to find out details such as the level of FLN support and attitudes towards the French. Like secret agents, they had to melt into the local population, wearing the traditional local dress, behaving like the inhabitants of that particular area so as not to be noticed.

In the maquis, the *Moudjahidate* were usually young girls. Respectful of the tradition of separation of the sexes, particularly important for unmarried girls, the FLN, at first, only allowed divorcees, widows and women married to fighters to join the combatants. It was 'morally acceptable' for these women to live amongst men. As the war went on, more and more fighters were needed and young unmarried girls were recruited. However, the moral conduct of men and women fighters was rigorously monitored by the FLN. Any misconduct was severely reprimanded. The maquis leaders also performed marriages for the fighters. This was a total departure from Muslim traditions since the families and especially the father of the girl could not be consulted. It was felt that the FLN leaders were responsible for the fighters and, therefore, could take exceptional measures forced by circumstances in order to uphold moral standards.

10.2.3 The *Fidayate* (Civilian women urban fighters)

In the towns, the ALN's bombings would have been impossible without the support of the *fidayate*. These acts of defiance perpetrated in the predominantly French quarters of large cities enabled the FLN to create the image of a powerful movement in the eyes of the French but also on the world scene. During the first years of the war, the French never suspected that Algerian women could be involved in the war. The news of the arrest of the first women fighters (two young school girls and a student nurse in the maquis north-east of Médéa) on July 17th 1956 came as a total surprise to the French authorities.[34] In fact, Algerian women's

[34] The three girls were Myriam Ben Miloud, Safia Basi and Fadela Mesli.

apparent submissive and self-effacing demeanour was a perfect cover for the FLN. This misconception on the part of the French authorities regarding Algerian women was fully exploited by the FLN during the 'Battle of Algiers' (from January to September 1957). This was a crucial point in the war. The French army had decided to get to the heart of the FLN organisation by breaking down the cells operating in Algiers. They surrounded the area known as the 'Casbah'[35] with barbed wires, forcing its inhabitants to go through check points every time they wanted to move in and out of the area. However, because the French did not suspect women to have any role in the FLN, they let them walk through without being searched. The only way for the FLN to continue their attacks was by asking women to carry weapons and bombs. Furthermore, it was a lot easier for women to hide weapons under their traditional long loose robes. Saadi, one of the FLN leaders in Algiers recalled how he called on women to help him dispatch messages and important documents to other FLN cells while the French soldiers were patrolling the Casbah:

> Je chargeai alors Djamila et Zohra de transmettre, ... des messages destinés à Ramel et à d'autres responsables.
> Je confie ma serviette à Djamila, qui la met sous son pantalon bouffant, attachée par un foulard sous son voile.
>
> *[Saadi 1962, pp 64, 66]*
>
> (I then asked Djamila and Zohra to transmit, ... messages for Ramel and other leaders.
> I give my briefcase to Djamila who puts it under her loose trousers and ties it with a scarf under her veil.)

Although the traditional dress was very useful to conceal weapons while women walked around Muslim areas, when they were carrying bombs and weapons into European quarters, they would often have to dress in Western clothes and wear make-up so that they could blend in with the Europeans.[36] This was particularly the case in 1956 during the FLN bombing campaign of urban civilian targets. On September 30th 1956, three bombs were due to explode in the heart of the European quarters in Algiers. Two of the targets were very popular cafés, the 'Milk Bar' and the 'Cafétéria' on rue Michelet. They were Zohra Drif and Samia Lakhadari's targets, while Djamila Bouhired was to place her bomb in the hall of the Air France terminal. The third bomb did not explode but the other two killed three civilians and seriously injured fifty *[Horne 1977, p 185]*. In January 1957, in response to the handing over of power by the French government to the paratroopers, the FLN decided on a new bombing campaign. On January 26th the 'Otomatic' student bar and the 'Coq Hardi' café were selected as targets. The bombs, placed by *fidayate* killed five civilians and wounded 60. Two weeks later, another two bombs placed in crowded stadiums by young women fighters killed 10 civilians and injured 45 *[Horne 1977, p 192]*. These young girls (72% of the *fidayate* were less than 25 years old) made a

35 An area of Algiers totally controlled by the FLN.

36 The issue of the use of women's clothing and in particular the veil as a war 'device' will be developed in section 11.2.1

crucial contribution to the war. Between January 8th and August 15th 1957, 35 bombs exploded in Algeria. Out of the 22 whose perpetrators could be traced, 14 were deposited by women acting alone or with a man *[Amrane 1991, p 106]*. Because of their highly dangerous activities, many *fidayate* were arrested (50.8%) and imprisoned (37% received prison sentences of three years or more) *[Horne 1977, p 91]*. Many died or were badly injured while carrying defective bombs which exploded before the set time. These types of actions not only demonstrated the courage and determination of Algerian women, but they also served to show that the French propaganda campaigns aimed at Algerian women had totally failed.

10.2.4 The *Moussebilate* (Civilian women activists)

Moussebilate represented 82% of all women activists. They supported the FLN in many different ways both in towns and villages. One of their main role was to provide food for the fighters. When ALN groups came down from the mountains, village women had to prepare food for them. Sometimes the FLN would supply the raw ingredients but often the villagers had to pool their meagre resources to share with the fighters. Commander Azzedine praised the ingenuity of these women who managed to create nourishing dishes from very basic ingredients *[Azzedine 1977, p 187]*.

Providing safe accommodation for the fighters, was also expected of women. In the maquis, they sometimes hid men in 'casemate' which were holes in the ground covered with branches. Women knew where the holes were and opened them up after the French patrols had gone. In towns also, women had to hide FLN fighters. Chérifa Boukachalia performed this very role in the town of Bône[37] when she was arrested on May 25th 1960 along with the FLN leader she was hiding (Said Oumeddour) *[Kessel & Pirelli 1962, p 562]*.

Because women could travel more easily than men since the French, at least in the first years of the war, did not suspect them, they often acted as liaison agents, carrying documents, money and medicines. The journeys could be within the same town or to other towns or villages, many kilometres away. Women activists also helped with the collection of funds for the FLN, the distribution of aid to families who had lost their bread-winner in the war and the purchase of goods required by the fighters. By 1959, the French authorities were well aware of the increasing role women were playing. In an army document on methods for winning over rural populations we find the following statement:

> Action ... des moniteurs de jeunesse, en particulier sur les femmes dont l'influence se révèle de plus en plus importante.
>
> *[Instructions pour la pacification en Algérie no. 02794/3000 March 1960, p 99]*

37 The town was renamed Annaba after independence.

(The action ... of youth group leaders must focus on women whose influence appears to be increasingly important.)

10.2.5 Support from ordinary women

Another example of women's activism was their decision to attend the funerals of ALN fighters. Traditionally, men buried the dead and it was only the next day that women would pay their homage at the cemetery. During the war, though, large numbers of women, (relatives, friends and neighbours) decided to join the men in the funeral processions to the cemetery. These public demonstrations by ordinary women of all ages were another act of defiance. Not only were they showing their anger at the killings and their support for the FLN, but they were also proving the French wrong, once again, in their assumptions about Algerian women leading a cloistered life, cut off from the real world. Sometimes these marches became quite violent. The worst disturbances occurred in December 1960. Spontaneous civilian demonstrations, attended by both men and women, developed all over Algeria in response to a visit by General De Gaulle. The demonstrations started on December 10th in Algiers and spread to other cities on the 11th, 12th and 14th. Hadda, who witnessed the events in Algiers, recalled what happened in an interview conducted in 1972 by the UNFA's[38] magazine, El Djazairia. A peaceful demonstration had gathered on the Monoprix square (later renamed December 11th square) when shots were fired. This is what Hadda saw:

Des jeunes, des hommes, des femmes tombaient, j'ai vu une jeune fille courir sur un parcours de plus de 200 mètres, drapeau en main, criant "Djazairia horra", elle était blessée et perdait son sang, mais elle ne ressentait pas la douleur jusqu'à ce qu'elle tombe inanimée ... Ce sont des heures que je n'oublierai jamais tant elles ont été importantes pour moi.

[El Djazairia nos. 27 & 28 Nov / Dec 1972, p 9]

(Young people, men and women were falling. I saw a young girl run a distance of more than 200 metres, flag in hand, shouting "Djazairia horra", she was injured and bleeding, but she did not feel the pain until she fell dead ... I will never forget these hours, they have been so important for me.)

These civilian demonstrations were reported world-wide and resulted in the adoption by the United Nations of a resolution for self-determination in Algeria (December 20th 1960).

When describing women's support for ALN fighters during the war, one has to remember their relentless struggle with the French authorities regarding prisoners' rights, particularly visiting rights. Visiting a relative in prison was not an easy task for these women, many of whom were

38 Union Nationale des Femmes Algériennes, governmental national women's organisation.

illiterate. They first had to brave the unhelpful and uncaring police station staff to find where their relative had been transferred to. This meant queuing for hours and sometimes days. Frequently they had to go from one police station to another before they obtained the information. To give prisoners small parcels of food or clothes, meant tremendous hardship for these poor families since food and clothes had to be newly bought and presented in their original wrapping for security reasons. Very often the prisons were far away and women had to travel on foot and by bus for hours, only to find that the visits had been cursorily cancelled on that day by the prison authorities. For many, these obstacles served not to deter them but only to harden their resolve. Angered and frustrated by the total disrespect for prisoners' rights, they started demonstrating. Djamila Briki recalled in an interview the first demonstration of this kind organised by women in Algiers in 1959. Visits to prisoners had been cancelled because they had defied the prison rule forbidding them from calling for prayers. Briki took part in the demonstration and said:

> ... nous avons décidé de faire quelque chose. C'étaient toutes des femmes comme moi, voilées, illétrées ou ayant été en classe un tout petit peu. Il n'y avait pas une intellectuelle parmi nous. Nous avions prévenu les avocats et nous nous sommes toutes regroupées, femmes, mères des condamnés à mort et aussi des autres détenus. Nous avons manifesté devant la prison et nous sommes parties toutes ensemble jusqu'au Gouvernement général pour réclamer le droit de visite. Et nous avons obtenu que la punition, qui était de trois mois, soit levée.
>
> *[Amrane 1991, p 212]*

> (... we decided to do something. These were all women like me, illiterate or with hardly any education. There was not a single intellectual amongst us. We had informed the lawyers and we got together, wives and mothers of prisoners sentenced to death and others. We demonstrated outside the prison and then we went all together to the Government Headquarters to demand that the visiting rights be restored. And we succeeded, the three months ban was lifted.)

As we have seen, Algerian women's participation in the war of independence was crucial. The government's statistics give a totally inadequate estimation of their true involvement. The reality of women's daily individual contribution to the war effort remains untold and unwritten.

11 Women as victims of the war

The sufferings Algerian women endured as fighters as well as civilian victims are no different to those of all women in war situations. The fact that the French army used torture on women is public knowledge and is, unfortunately, not uncommon in wars all over the world. There are, however, certain aspects of the Algerian war of independence which are specific and, therefore, merit to be studied in detail. We will explore first of all how women, despite or may be because of their fighting qualities were never properly rewarded by the FLN. Secondly, we will examine the fact that women were at the same time used by both the French and the FLN to further their own agenda.

11.1 Ambivalence of the FLN towards women's participation

11.1.1 Official praise and unofficial status

The position of the FLN regarding the participation of women in the war has always been ambiguous. As we saw in section 9.1.2, the FLN expected women to play a supportive role in the war, which would have been in keeping with their traditional role in society. But the necessities of the war forced the FLN to accept and even call on women to undertake certain missions which had become impossible for male fighters. Although FLN leaders had come to terms with the need to incorporate women into the army, soldiers in the maquis did not always welcome their involvement. This was the case for a young educated woman from the town of Batna, south of Constantine, who joined the Aurès maquis in December 1956. The fighters, all men, treated her like a servant and refused to let her read any of the documents sent by the FLN commanders. She felt so unwanted and humiliated that she decided to let the French capture her after three months. This is what she said about her experience:

> J'étais écoeurée de cette vie de folle parmi les fous, et j'ai compris que le FLN ne correspond à rien de valable.
>
> *[Pervillé 1984, p 154]*

> (I was totally disheartened by this crazy life among crazy people, I thought that the FLN did not represent anything worthwhile.)

It has to be said that this was not the experience of all women fighters and some have reported a good comradeship amongst all fighters. However, one has to remember that the FLN never gave women any positions of responsibility within the organisation. No woman was to be found at the decision making level. Furthermore, despite their competence, women fighters were

never given the corresponding military grades. The old male domination was still prevailing in the maquis. Amrane described how a woman doctor had been working in the maquis for a few months when a male doctor arrived and was immediately given the title of 'chief doctor' for the *wilaya [Amrane 1991, p 254].* If the FLN had officially promoted women to the same levels as men during the war, they would have taken a big step towards recognising women as equal partners. None of the FLN leaders were ready for this or even possibly wanted it. El Moudjahid's articles on women's participation during the war are quite revealing. Although the FLN controlled newspaper regularly praised women for their participation in the war, the image given was usually that of young girls in the maquis, educating villagers about health, nutrition and childcare, which corresponded to women's traditional role. The young woman whose life in the maquis was described in the series of articles entitled 'Journal d'une maquisarde' (Diary of a female fighter) explained that she was told by Colonel Amirouche what her role should be:

> Nous, jeunes filles, nous devions nous vouer à la population civile, et répondre à tous ses besoins: à la soigner et à l'instruire... il nous expliqua donc que c'érait à cette tâche que des femmes étaient le mieux faites: une oeuvre de dévouement...(sic)
>
> *[El Moudjahid no. 47 Aug 3rd 1959, p 12]*
>
> (Our role as young girls was to devote ourselves to the civilian population, and to respond to all their needs, through medical care and education... he explained, that women were best at discharging these duties: devoting themselves to others...)

This article was accompanied by a picture of a young woman giving a drink to a little boy.

El Moudjahid's other regular comment about women's involvement in the war was that their participation had liberated them and given them all their rights:

> ... l'algérienne (sic)... n'attend pas d'être "émancipée". Elle est déjà libre parce qu'elle participe à la libération de son pays...
>
> *[El Moudjahid no. 42 May 25th 1959, p 8]*
>
> (... Algerian women are not waiting to be "emancipated". They are already free through their participation in the liberation of their country...)

This was a convenient way of avoiding the question of women's rights. By spreading the idea that the war had liberated women, there was no need, after independence, to think about or discuss women's rights. These examples only reinforce the idea that the FLN was not expecting women to participate in the war, and although they had to welcome their vital contribution, they were reluctant to treat women fighters on an equal footing with men.

11.1.2 Controversy about women in the maquis

The war of independence remains, for both protagonists, the French and the Algerian nations, a very sensitive subject. France has not yet come to terms with this page of its history and the government is still reluctant to release its archival material on this period. In the same way, the years of turmoil Algeria has just been through have reopened many of the war wounds, thus preventing an open and level-handed debate on the war of independence. Many questions, therefore, remain unanswered to this day.

One of the numerous undocumented episodes of the war of independence is the decision taken by the FLN leaders in 1957 to move female fighters from the maquis to Tunisia. This was particularly inexplicable, since the war was raging and female nurses, working in the maquis, were playing an essential role. Several explanations have been put forward. For Amrane, this was merely in order to give the young women a chance to rest after two exhausting years in the maquis. She disagrees with Mohamed Harbi (one of the participants in the war and author of several books on the subject) who interprets the decision of the FLN as signifying a disapproval of the increasingly prominent role women were playing on par with men, and indicating a desire to see women return to activities more in keeping with the traditional feminine image and social customs *[Amrane 1991, p 250]*.

Commander Azzedine's explanation regarding the decision to move women, and particularly nurses, out of the maquis was that the FLN wanted women nurses to continue their training in order to become the new elite of independent Algeria:

> Les responsables de la *wilaya* IV décidèrent un jour de confier à des hommes du maquis le travail des infirmières et d'envoyer celles-ci se recycler à l'extérieur, pour qu'elles forment les futurs cadres paramédicaux de l'Algérie indépendante.
>
> *[Azzedine 1977, p 158]*
>
> (The leaders in charge of *wilaya* IV decided one day to replace the women nurses with men in the maquis and to send women out of the country to retrain in order to become the future medical elite of independent Algeria.)

Yet another possible explanation was provided by a young female fighter, Houria. When interviewed about her war experiences, she declared that the leader of the group of fighters she belonged to had strongly advised her to get married or else she might be sent to Tunisia *[Moghadam 1994, p 26]*. My own attempts at trying to uncover the truth from Tunisian archives were met with a wall of silence. Once again, the delicate situation in Algeria made Tunisian officials somewhat suspicious of the motives of my inquiries. It is to be hoped that archival material will one day be made public to shed some light on this question.

11.2 Women as pawns between the FLN and the French

11.2.1 The battles of the veil

From 1957 onward, the French government renewed its psychological campaign targeting women. This campaign was centred on Algiers. Mme Massu (wife of the French general), with the help of other prominent French women renewed their efforts in organising a whole range of social activities for Algerian women such as talks on hygiene and child care, education for orphans and the distribution of food. The French government was still trying to convince Algerian women that their only hope of emancipation was in a country governed by, or closely associated with France. The symbol of Algerian women's oppression, as far as the French were concerned, was the veil. On May 13th 1958, in Algiers, during a large gathering of French and Algerian people intended to show the population's support for General De Gaulle who was visiting Algeria, a staged public 'unveiling' of Muslim women took place. Whether the Algerian people who joined the demonstration and the women who took off their veils did so freely or whether the whole event was orchestrated by the French army remains a matter for speculation. Nevertheless, photographs of Algerian women publicly unveiling were widely shown in the Western press. According to El Moudjahid, this had the opposite effect on Algerian women: instead of showing their support for France, in the days that followed, more and more women started wearing the veil as a symbol of their cultural identity and a defiant statement of their rejection of the French propaganda:

> ... à Alger et dans toutes les villes d'Algérie, on voit plus de femmes voilées que jamais. Bien plus, des employées, des travailleuses, des étudiantes qui jamais auparavant n'avaient porté le voile se sont remises à le porter en signe de tranquille affirmation de leur patriotisme.
>
> *[El Moudjahid no. 27 July 22nd 1958, p 4]*
>
> (... in Algiers and in all towns in Algeria, there are more veiled women than ever before. Furthermore, office employees, women workers, students who had never before worn a veil have started wearing it as a sign of quiet affirmation of their patriotism.)

The question of the veil has played and continues to play a major role in Algerian politics. As we saw, in the events of May 1958, both the French authorities and the FLN were using it as a symbol of allegiance to their cause. But it is impossible to judge how much choice women really had in the way they dressed and what significance, if any, they gave to their wearing of a veil. Was it out of habit, for religious beliefs, because they felt more confident wearing it, or was it simply out of economic necessity, the traditional dress being the only one they knew and possessed? Whatever the reasons, politicians from both sides were quick to claim victory. Throughout the war, as we saw in section 10.2.3, the veil was used by the FLN as a weapon

against the French. It totally deceived the French army. When a woman was wearing a veil the French saw her as an insignificant creature, totally dominated by her husband, therefore representing no threat to them. The French soon discovered that veiled women often hid weapons and bombs under their traditional dress. Similarly, when a French soldier saw an Algerian woman dressed in Western clothes, he immediately assumed that she had renounced her cultural identity and felt smugly pleased that France had 'won her over'. Little did he know that she was probably carrying a bomb in her handbag. Frantz Fanon, in his book 'A Dying Colonialism' analysed this very clearly:

> Carrying revolvers, grenades, hundreds of false identity cards or bombs, the unveiled Algerian woman moves like a fish in the Western waters. The soldiers, the French patrols, smile to her as she passes, compliments (sic) on her looks are heard here and there, but no one suspects that her suitcases contain the automatic pistol which will presently mow down four or five members of one of the patrols.
>
> *[Fanon 1970, p 43]*

During the war, the veil became a revolutionary tool for the FLN, who capitalised on the fact that the French considered it to be an emblem of women's confinement. At the same time, the FLN gave it their own meaning, making it into a symbol of women's attachment to their cultural traditions. This could explain, to some degree, the importance the veil continued to play after independence. Because of the relentless attempts by the French to 'unveil' Algerian women, those who, after the war, chose not to wear a veil were deemed to have sold their souls to the West. As we will see in section 16.6.3 the issue of the veil is still debated and is very much at the heart of the controversy between traditionalists and modernists.

11.2.2 The plight of 'fatma'

The term 'fatma' was used by French settlers in Algeria to refer to all Muslim housemaids. This is another example of the de-personalising effect of colonialism. Instead of learning each girl's name, the fairly common and easy to pronounce name 'Fatma' was adopted by the majority of French people who had a maid. The women and young girls, who resorted to working as maids were usually forced by circumstances. In 1954, the majority of women working as maids had had to find work because they had been repudiated and had to support themselves and their children. For others, it was the fact that their husband had gone to fight in the maquis or was unable to support the family. The last and much smaller category consisted of widows and women or young girls whose family could no longer support them *[Brac de la Perrière 1987, p 56]*. Their position in society was very difficult: even if they were treated reasonably well by the French family for whom they worked, they still remained servants, working for the colonisers. They were also rejected by their own social group, especially by men who felt deeply humiliated by the fact that their wife had to work because they could not support their family. Some men saw the work of the maids as a further capitulation to the colonisers. Giving 'their' women to the French was equivalent to admitting total defeat. As the war progressed,

the maids' situation became more and more precarious. In the early years of the war, the threats were coming from the FLN. In 1956 and 1957, reports of intimidation and murder of Muslim maids by FLN supporters appeared in the press *[Brac de la Perrière 1987, p 148]*. But once the OAS[39] started their attacks on Muslim civilians in 1961-1962, maids became a prime target for them. In April 1962, the OAS produced a tract ordering French families to dismiss their Muslim maids. According to newspaper reports, on May 7th and 10th 1962, a total of twelve Muslim maids who were still working for French families were killed by the OAS in Algiers. For Commander Azzedine, FLN leader in Algiers, this was the last straw after a series of vicious attacks on civilians by the OAS, at a time when the FLN had signed a cease fire agreement with the French government. This is how he described the events:

> Le dernier seuil de l'épouvante est franchi le 10: toutes les femmes de ménage, les "fatmas" se rendant chez leurs patronnes, sont abattues à coups de revolver dans le centre d'Alger.
>
> *[Commander Azzedine 1977, p 337]*
>
> (The last threshold of horror is crossed on the 10th: all the maids, the "fatmas", on their way to work are shot dead in the centre of Algiers.)

Since the maids did not feel part of either community, the French or the Muslim, most of them refused to get personally involved in the war. Very few actual attacks perpetrated by Muslim maids on their employers were reported in the press. However, some did support the FLN in a less spectacular manner. Kheira, who was employed by a French family in the west of the country, explained how she played her part in the struggle:

> Toute la journée je glanais dans la réserve où je pouvais trouver du sucre, du lait en boîte, de la farine, du chocolat, du café soluble, des conserves de thon et de sardine, et réunissais tout cela pour les frères qui venaient trois soirs par quinzaine récupérer le sac...
>
> *[El Djazairia no. 57 1977, p 11]*
>
> (All day long, I would glean from the store whatever I could find, sugar, tined milk, flour, chocolate, instant coffee, tins of tuna and sardines, and I would put it together in a bag for the brothers who used to come three times a fortnight to pick it up.)

Nevertheless, the maids' ambiguous position made the FLN leaders rather reluctant to trust them for any missions during the war years. This situation changed drastically once the OAS came on the scene and started their daily random killings. The effect was a total segregation of the two communities in Algiers, the French and the Muslim's. No one dared venture into the other side's territory. Only maids who had to keep on working to feed their family continued to cross from one area to the other. As we saw earlier, many of them were killed by the OAS. It was at this point, that the FLN started approaching them for help. Since travelling through the town had become so dangerous, they asked maids, working as informers for the FLN, to ask

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39 Organisation Armée Secrète, French para-military terrorist organisation in Algeria.

their employers to drive them in and out of the French areas. This way, the FLN was getting vital information without having to venture into French quarters *[Commander Azzedine in Brac de la Perrière 1987, p 171].* This is a clear example of the way Algerian women were victims of the war, dispensable elements used by both FLN and OAS, in pursuit of their own agenda. The end of the war did not see a rehabilitation of the maids. All that changed for them was the nationality of their employers. They were now working for wealthy Algerians.

11.2.3 Women as targets of French soldiers

Since a large number of Algerian men had joined the FLN, women, children and old people were often the only ones left in villages. Life for these women was extremely difficult throughout Algeria, but even more so in Kabylia. This mountainous region of the Aurès, unaccessible and densely forested, provided the ALN[40] with an ideal terrain for conducting their operations. Fighters, who had a good knowledge of the area, could position themselves so as to watch the movements of the French troops. They could hide among the trees and get food and medicine supplies at night from villagers. Furthermore, the Kabylian population, with its history of rebellions against the French authorities, was willing to support the ALN fighters. The French army soon realised that their efforts to annihilate the ALN were being hampered by the combination of the two factors described above: the extremely difficult physical conditions and the support the Kabylian population was giving the liberation army. They tried to frighten the population into submission by directing their violence at women and children. Bennoune, in his study of the impact of colonialism on an Algerian peasant community (the village of El Akbia north west of the town of Constantine) reports that from as early as 1954, the villagers were involved in bomb attacks and ambushes against the French army. As a result, in 1956, the French took 600 women and children prisoners from the village and demanded that men who had joined the ALN surrendered in exchange for their release. Since men did not surrender, the village was burnt down and declared a 'zone interdite' (a forbidden zone)[41]. During the months of incarceration in the French detention camp, many women and children died of starvation *[Bennoune 1976, p 190].*

All over Kabylia, the repression which resulted from the refusal by the local population to co-operate with the French army reached unimaginable levels of cruelty and gratuitous violence. Apart from confiscating or destroying the livestock and food available in villages, the French

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40 Armée de Libération Nationale, the military wing of the FLN.

41 The systematic burning of villages, fields and forests became a government policy. The intention was to isolate the ALN from the local population. Since the army could not control the villages scattered around the mountains, the French government decided to create what was known as 'zones interdites' from which the population had been evacuated and the houses and surrounding fields burnt, making the area totally inhospitable for the ALN. The expelled villagers had to settle on the edges of the 'forbidden zone'. This policy which, at first, only applied to the Aurès region, spread to the whole country between 1955 and 1957.

soldiers humiliated the peasants by deliberately concentrating their attacks on women. El Moudjahid published an article on the repression from mid April to mid July 1959 in Kabylian villages. Out of 75 separate incidents, 42 specifically targeted women *[El Moudjahid no. 47 Aug 3rd 1959, pp 6,7]*. One could argue that men having left the villages for the maquis, the French soldiers found mostly women and children. However, when one reads that in the villages of Amgdoul, Soulima and Boukrane women were tortured and raped in front of their relatives and children, it becomes evident that the soldiers' intentions were to humiliate women and, in so doing, to show a total disrespect for Algerian values by violating one of the fundamental pillars of the social structure: women's honour. Rape is an extremely traumatic experience for any woman, but in view of the profound significance of women's virginity and chastity in the Muslim culture, rapes by French soldiers had even deeper psychological and sociological consequences. To understand how women lived this trauma, one only has to refer to Djamila Boupacha's experience, described in Beauvoir and Halimi's book. During Djamila's detention, she was deflowered by French soldiers with a bottle. Although she had suffered innumerable acts of violence, it took a long time before she could talk to anybody about the sexual violence. Even when she did tell her lawyer, she asked her not to tell her parents:

> My parents don't know. I mean, they *know*, but they don't know everything. Not about the bottle. I haven't said anything about that to them. For people like us it's such a dreadful thing... I no longer know whether I'm a virgin in any sense,...
>
> *[Beauvoir & Halimi 1962, p 31]*

Atrocities of all kinds happen in war times, but the rape of women had a particular significance, it was an attack on one of the most sacred elements of the Algerian culture: women's honour. In that sense, women were victims on two counts: firstly, as rape victims, secondly as 'instruments' in the French warfare.

12 Consequences of women's involvement

12.1 Effects on family structure

The war of independence which affected the whole nation in one way or another had enormous consequences on the Algerian family structure. These changes particularly affected the relationships between girls and their father or brother(s) and within couples. In the traditional society, a girl was under the authority of her father and, in his absence, her brother(s) (see section 2.1). This situation was dramatically changed by the war. Girls often left home to live in the maquis without consulting either their father or brother(s). Once the girl had left, there was no way anyone could 'guard and defend her honour'. She became independent and had to be trusted. Even when she continued living at home, her actions for the FLN had to be kept secret from her family for security reasons. This behaviour would have previously been unheard of. But the war demands took precedence over everything. How could a father resent his daughter fighting for her country? As a result, a much more trusting and mature relationship developed between fathers and daughters. Saadi[42] himself commented on these changes and was obviously astounded at the new patterns of behaviour. He wrote:

> Zineb est une jeune fille de quatorze ans qui appartient à une famille maraboutique. Avant ce jour, elle ne pouvait sortir seule dans la rue sans être accompagnée par un membre de la famille. Mais depuis que ses parents ont accepté de nous héberger, il s'est produit une véritable révolution dans les esprits de cette vénérable famille, ...le père de Zineb, Si El Hadj accepte à présent avec joie et en toute confiance de laisser ses filles se mêler à nous, vivre et partager les mêmes dangers que les combattants de l'ALN. Qui aurait pu imaginer cela deux années seulement auparavant?
>
> *[Saadi 1962, pp 22, 23]*
>
> (Zineb is a 14 year old young girl belonging to a maraboutic family. Until now, she was not allowed to go out in the street without being accompanied by a member of her family. But since her parents have accepted to give us shelter, a revolution has taken place in the minds of this venerable family ...Zineb's father, Si El Hadj, now accepts with pleasure and complete trust to see his daughters mingle with us, live under the same roof and share the same dangers as ALN fighters. Who could have imagined this only two years ago?)

Fanon who analysed the changes which took place within the Algerian family during the war wrote in his book 'A dying colonialism':

> To ask of a woman who was daily risking her life whether she was 'serious' became grotesque and absurd. The militant girl in adopting new patterns of conduct, could not be judged by traditional standards.
>
> *[Fanon 1970, p 91]*

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42 Yacef Saadi was an FLN leader, responsible for the centre of Algiers.

The relationship within couples also changed. Circumstances forced men to see women in a new light, especially if both husband and wife were FLN members. The bond within each couple was of a different nature, the two partners respecting each other and recognising the other person as an equal. Because of the need to keep their activities secret, husbands and wives, sometimes, had to lead independent secret lives. This gave women a degree of responsibility and autonomy which they had never experienced before. In fact, the war altered the whole social hierarchy within the family. A young man, fighting for the ALN, could give orders to older men or even to his own older brother. The son could take decisions which affected the whole family whereas in the past, only the father could do so. The war had created new sets of values:

> Les nouvelles valeurs de la grande famille des maquisards s'imposaient graduellement à la famille tout court, qui subit en quelque sorte un "éclatement" consenti.
>
> *[Revue Combattante de la Lutte Armée no. 1 in Allami 1988, p140]*
>
> (The new values of the big family of fighters were gradually replacing those of the traditional family which, in a way, was allowing its own break-up.)

Women thought that society could never return to its pre-war state. A young girl who had fought in the war declared in 1960 in an interview with El Moudjahid:

> Les habitudes changent aussi, les cas de jeunes filles qui se marient selon leur choix se multiplient et les gens l'admettent beaucoup plus facilement qu'autrefois. Je crois que les hommes comprennent qu'ils ont intérêt à donner des responsabilités à leurs femmes et qu'ils leur laisseront une part d'initiative même quand la paix sera revenue.
>
> *[El Moudjahid no. 72 Nov 1st 1960, p 12]*
>
> (Traditions are changing too, the cases of young girls choosing their husband are increasing and people are accepting it much more easily than before. I think that men understand that it is in their interest to give responsibilities to their wives and they will let them take some initiatives even when the war is over.)

But, once the 'family of fighters' disappeared, so did its newly acquired values. As we will see in the study of the post-war period, it will take 22 years for a new Family Code to be implemented. The reason for this delay was not because the government considered it a minor issue, but rather due to the acrimonious debates which halted every attempt at changing family laws and with them, the position of women within society. Women thought that the changes which had occurred during the war would last after independence. In fact, the new attitudes were only an instinctive response to circumstances.

12.2 Women's perceptions of their future roles

There is no doubt that women's lives were changed by the war. They came out of the confined walls of the women's world, the private sphere, and experienced life side by side with men in the public sphere. Some had to start going out to work in order to support their family, a role up till then mostly reserved to men. Whatever their circumstances, all women had to be resourceful to survive. A few decided to join the maquis while some participated in the urban struggle. Whatever their contribution, women had forced their way into the men's world and their presence had to be acknowledged. As Fanon wrote:

> The men's words were no longer law. The women were no longer silent.
>
> *[Fanon 1970, p 91]*

No one could have predicted how Algerian women would react to the pressures of the war. They lived up to the challenges and discovered their hidden potentials. This altered their own perception of their role in society. Women suddenly realised their capabilities and gained in confidence and self-esteem. Not only had they succeeded in supporting their families, often without men, but they had been praised for their actions by the FLN, in other words by men. They obviously saw their future, after independence, as totally different from their life during colonial times. A young woman fighter was interviewed by El Moudjahid in 1960 about her views on the role of women. When asked whether she had considered the duties and rights of women when she first joined the struggle, she replied:

> Nous pensions acquérir ces droits en faisant nos preuves. Nous pensions qu'ils nous seraient naturellement reconnus par la suite.
>
> *[El Moudjahid no. 72 Nov 1st 1960, p 9]*
>
> (We thought we would acquire these rights by proving our capabilities. We thought that, later on, these rights would be automatically granted to us.)

When asked to identify the main problems facing women in 1960, she said it was:

> Faire prendre conscience à toutes les femmes du rôle qu'elles ont à jouer dans la société...celles qui en seront capables devront éduquer les autres femmes.
>
> *[El Moudjahid no. 72 Nov 1st 1960, p 9]*
>
> (To make all women aware of the role they have to play in society.... those who have the competence will have to educate the others.)

Regarding women's role in society, she declared:

> Nous savions que toutes les femmes algériennes allaient devoir participer à la reconstruction du pays. Nous pensions que, par le seul fait de leur rôle dans la

> société, les femmes ont des droits, et que ces droits leur seraient d'autant plus largement reconnus qu'elles avaient participé à la lutte commune.
>
> *[El Moudjahid no. 72 Nov 1st 1960, p 9]*
>
> (We knew that all Algerian women would have to participate in the reconstruction of the country. We thought that because of their role in society, women [had] certain rights and these rights would be recognised all the more because of their participation in the common fight.)

She then went on to say how, in her opinion, the changes brought to women's lives by the war were irrevocable. This view was echoed by other women. During his visit to the maquis in 1958, a foreign correspondent for the Saturday Evening Post, asked women how they saw the future. This is what one of them said:

> Demain, avec l'indépendance, nous serons capables de nous instruire nous-mêmes, il y aura des femmes policiers et facteurs... Avant, nous étions des bêtes de somme. Nous ne reviendrons jamais à cet état.
>
> *[El Moudjahid no. 19 Feb 28th 1958, p 12]*
>
> (Tomorrow, with independence, we will be capable of educating ourselves, there will be police women, women working as postmen... Before, we were beasts of burden. We will never go back to that state.)

As is always the case with a major upheaval such as a war, Algerian women had had to respond to new and challenging circumstances. Consequently, they felt that, at the end of the conflict, their roles in society would inevitably change. However, their expectations were solely based on the recognition owed to them because of their participation in the war of independence. It was seen as a reward, not as a fundamental right. At the International Congress of Women in Copenhagen on March 8th 1960, the representatives of Algeria (Chentouf and Hamoud, women fighters during the war) declared:

> C'est parce qu'elles participent à la lutte libératrice que les femmes ont acquis une place éminente dans la société.
>
> *[El Moudjahid no. 65 May 31st 1960, p 11]*
>
> (It is through their participation in the liberation struggle that women have gained an eminent place in society.)

12.3 The new government rhetoric

During the war, whenever the FLN talked about the future, it always seemed to picture a society based on the principle of equal opportunities for all and the participation of all social groups in the economic development of the country. This is how the future was pictured in the newspaper El Moudjahid, the official FLN publication:

> Il est loisible de constater au niveau de la conscience spontanée des Algériens, la naissance d'une conception de l'Etat, impliquant la participation au pouvoir de toutes les couches sociales, des hommes comme des femmes.
>
> *[El Moudjahid no. 35 Jan 15th 1959, p 4]*
>
> (The emergence of an inclusive concept of the state, encouraging the active participation of all social groups, men as well as women, is noticeable in the Algerian national consciousness.)

In 1961 one of El Moudjahid's editorial entitled 'Preparing for the future' praised women for their participation in the war and declared that in the new Algerian Democratic Republic:

> Tous les Algériens, tous les citoyens seront assurés d'exercer toutes les libertés individuelles et publiques de conscience, de pensée et d'expression... La discrimination basée sur la race, la religion ou le sexe sera bannie.
>
> *[El Moudjahid no. 85 Oct 1st 1961, p 8]*
>
> (All Algerians, all citizens will be granted individual and public freedom of conscience, thought and expression... Any discrimination based on race, religion or sex will be banished.)

El Moudjahid went as far as declaring in an article on May 25th 1959 that Algerian women had freed themselves through their participation in the war:

> Elle [la femme algérienne] est déjà libre parce qu'elle participe à la libération de son pays dont elle est aujourd'hui l'âme.
>
> *[El Moudjahid no. 42 May 25th 1959, p 8]*
>
> (She [the Algerian woman] is already free because she is involved in the liberation of the country of which she is the soul.)

It seems that, at the end of the war, the FLN's views on the emancipation of women, as presented in El Moudjahid, echoed women's own aspirations: both saw emancipation as a reward for participating in the war. Indeed, the programme of the FLN adopted by the new Algerian Government in Tripoli in June 1962,[43] stated clearly its position regarding women:

> ... la femme algérienne émancipée par la lutte révolutionnaire pourra alors assumer pleinement la responsabilité qui lui revient.
>
> *[Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord 1962, p 694]*
>
> (... the Algerian woman emancipated by the revolutionary struggle will be fully able to assume her responsibilities.)

In the paragraph regarding the new economic programme, we can find the following list of objectives:

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43 known as the Tripoli Programme.

> ... [suivre] une politique sociale au profit des masses pour élever le niveau de vie des travailleurs, liquider l'anaphabétisme, améliorer l'habitat et la situation sanitaire, libérer la femme.
>
> *[Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord 1962, p 697]*
>
> (... [to embark on] a social policy in favour of the masses in order to raise the standard of living of the workers, eradicate illiteracy, improve housing and health and liberate women.)

The section of the programme concerned with the realisation of the social aspirations of the masses devoted its last paragraph to the liberation of women:

> La participation de la femme algérienne à la lutte de libération a créé des conditions favorables pour briser le joug séculaire qui pesait sur elle et l'associer d'une manière pleine et entière à la gestion des affaires publiques et au développement du pays. Le Parti doit supprimer tous les freins à l'évolution de la femme et à son épanouissement et appuyer l'action des organisations féminines. Il existe dans notre société une mentalité négative quant au rôle de la femme. Sous des formes diverses tout contribue à répandre l'idée de son infériorité. Les femmes elles-mêmes sont imprégnées de cette mentalité séculaire.
>
> Le Parti ne peut aller de l'avant sans soutenir une lutte permanente contre les préjugés sociaux et les croyances rétrogrades.
>
> Dans ce domaine le Parti ne peut se limiter à de simples affirmations, mais doit rendre irréversible une évolution inscrite dans les faits en donnant aux femmes des responsabilités en son sein.
>
> *[Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord 1962, pp 702,703]*
>
> (The participation of Algerian women in the liberation struggle has created favourable conditions to break the ancestral yoke which weighed them down and associate them fully in the running of public affairs and the development of the country. The Party must bring down all the barriers preventing the evolution of women, must allow them to blossom and support the action of women's organisations. There is in our society a negative mentality concerning the role of women. In different ways, everything contributes to spreading the idea of their inferiority. Women themselves are imbued by this ancestral mentality.
> The Party cannot make progress without constantly fighting social prejudices and retrograde beliefs.
> In this domain, the Party must go further than mere public statements it must make irreversible the changes which have already become a reality, by giving women responsibilities in its own ranks.)

There appears to be no doubt as to the future of women in the new independent society. However, from various statements made by members of the government, in the months following the announcement of the Tripoli programme, it became evident that changes in the status of women and the necessary reforms to attain these objectives had been put on hold. In his address to the National Assembly on September 28th 1962, President Ben Bella explained the main aims of his programme. He talked of the agrarian reform and the industrialisation of the economy, he also mentioned the educational sector and announced the government's intention to develop a 'male youth policy' and a 'female youth policy'. No details of the actual plans were given and there was no mention of any social reforms regarding women. Similarly,

when the minister for Youth, Sports and Tourism, Mr Bouteflika, gave an interview to El Moudjahid in 1962, he did not address any of the questions relating to the emancipation or education of young girls. Having naturally praised young women for their role in the war, he declared that:

> Dans ce domaine, l'action à mener en milieu féminin est essentielle en raison du rôle de la femme dans la société familiale et de l'importance de l'élément féminin dans la population.
>
> *[El Moudjahid no. 102 Nov 17th 1962, p 5]*
>
> (It is essential to take measures regarding women in view of their role in the family and the large proportion of women in the population.)

Once again, it seemed that women were not seen as individuals with their own rights but as potentially useful members of the society due to their role as mothers and in view of the relatively small number of men who had survived the war. In fact, in another article on one of the government initiatives, the Accelerated Teacher Training Programme, we find differing educational strategies for boys and girls. Whereas boys would be given the opportunity to continue studying in professional training centres after the age of 17, girls (who would be educated from the age of eight if there was a shortage of schools) would have lessons in sewing, home economics and cookery *[El Moudjahid no.107 Dec 22nd 1962, p 2]*. One cannot but notice the similarities with educational programmes for girls in colonial times.

Another revealing article appeared in the same newspaper in December 1962. It presented the views of the Party regarding the proposed National Congress of the women's organisation, UFA,[44] to be held in Algiers in January 1963. It recognised the fact that women had to participate in the economic development of the country since they represented nearly 70% of the adult population. It stressed that everybody, especially men, had to accept this new situation and encourage wives, daughters and sisters to participate in the rebirth of the country. However, it was clearly explained that just as during the war the FLN (and not the UFA) had directed the activities of women fighters, in peace time, only the Party could give them the necessary political education and organise them into a movement. The new women's organisation had to be part of the FLN. The article went on to say:

> Le rôle des militants, des hommes, est fondamental dans le lancement d'une telle organisation. Eux seuls, dans le contexte actuel ont la possibilité de faire évoluer les femmes.
>
> *[El Moudjahid no. 108 Dec 29th 1962, p 2]*
>
> (The role of male party members is fundamental in launching such an organisation. In the present context, only they can make the position of women evolve.)

44 Union des Femmes Algériennes, which later became the UNFA (Union Nationale des Femmes Algériennes).

The message was clear. Women's participation in the economic and political spheres was unavoidable since so many men had died during the war. However, the activities of the UFA had to be controlled by the FLN, in other words by male leaders. This way, the Party would be able to channel and control the development of women's emancipation.

Gradually, as the war was coming to an end and independence was becoming a certainty, conservative voices started to emerge. Nobody denied women's courageous participation in the war, but now society had to return to some normality. When referring to women's role, the word 'duty' started to appear more often than the word 'rights' and the role of 'mother' (especially the mothers of the war martyrs) was constantly stressed. The following text is a clear example of this shift of emphasis. It was published in El Djeich, the internal publication of the ALN[45] in February 1962. It is supposed to be the testimony of a 43 year old woman fighter, Khadidja. In her opinion, the single most important contribution women made to the war was in their role as mothers:

> Nous, femmes algériennes, avons d'abord la très grande fierté d'avoir donné le jour à tous nos combattants et nos martyrs...
>
> *[El Djeich Feb 1962 in Faiza no. 27 July / Aug 1962, p24]*
>
> (As Algerian women, first of all, we are extremely proud to have given birth to all our fighters and martyrs...)

The revolution, according to Khadidja, paid back women for their efforts by opening their eyes to the world and bringing them out of their miserable existence. Now that the war was over, women had to concentrate on their duties:

> L'émancipation de la femme doit, par conséquent, aller de pair avec l'accomplissement scrupuleux de ses devoirs. C'est seulement dans la mesure où le comportement social de la femme algérienne sera conforme à cet impératif, et aussi dans la mesure où elle s'appliquera à épuiser tout le champ de ses possibilités naturelles, qu'elle méritera les droits qu'elle aura acquis et qu'elle sera en mesure d'en formuler d'autres.
>
> *[El Djeich Feb 1962 in Faiza no. 27 July / Aug 1962, p27]*
>
> (Consequently, women's emancipation must go hand in hand with the scrupulous fulfilment of their duties. Algerian women's social behaviour must be in keeping with these duties and they must first endeavour to develop their natural potentials to the full. Only then will they deserve to enjoy the rights they acquired through the revolution and will they be in a position to express further demands.)

As we can see, the emphasis was on the return to a more traditional role for women, that of mothers. Emancipation was no longer owed to women in view of their war contribution, it was a reward to be earned.

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45 Armée de Libération Nationale (military wing of the FLN).

13 Conclusions

Women's motivations to enter the war were rarely for personal gain. In most cases women merely reacted to events and a few of the educated elite actually chose to get involved. Whatever the circumstances, their commitment was total. As Mrs Almnowar, a combatant in the war, explained:

> During the revolution it did not matter who did what; we were all the servants of the revolution which was going to liberate us and restore our identity.
>
> *[Shaaban 1988, p 186]*

The uniting factor for the whole country was the defeat of colonialism and the restoration of the country's cultural identity. Everything else came second, including women's rights. At the Fourth Congress of the Democratic International Federation of Women (FDIF) held in Vienna from June 1st - 5th 1958, the Algerian women's delegate declared:

> Au nom de cette femme qui, malgré les pires souffrances, lutte héroiquement, je demande que dans les résolutions finales du Congrés, il soit tenu compte que pour la femme algérienne il ne s'agit pas pour le moment de discuter du droit au travail ou de l'amélioration du niveau de vie, mais de la fin de cette guerre horrible qui est imposée par le colonialisme français...
>
> *[El Moudjahid no. 26 July 4th 1958, p 11]*
>
> (In the name of Algerian women who, despite extreme sufferings, are fighting heroically, I ask that the Congress, in its final resolution, take account of the fact that, for the time being, Algerian women's concerns are not the right to work or the improvement of their standard of living, but the end of this terrible war imposed by French colonialism...)

Women's participation in the war was a reaction against colonialism and the 'de-culturalisation' it had attempted to impose. Assouline, in her book 'Musulmanes: une chance pour l'Islam'[46] pointed out the contradiction inherent in the reasoning behind Algerian women's involvement in the war. Their aims were:

> ... retrouver enfin le droit aux traditions... La majorité [des femmes] allait ... se crisper sur ce dont la France voulait les déposséder: des valeurs...
> ...seul l'Islam, et la perspective de se battre pour sa sauvegarde, leur conférait à l'époque une identité.
>
> *[Assouline 1992, pp 81,82]*
>
> (... to finally regain the right to traditions. The majority of women were going ... to focus on what France had tried to deprive them of i.e. values...
> ... only Islam and the prospect of fighting for its survival, was giving them, at the time, an identity.)

46 Muslim women: a chance for Islam.

However, by opting for a return to traditions, women were also choosing to return to an Islamic society in which they had a highly prescribed role to play. This inherent contradiction in the war ideology explains, to some extent, the ambivalent position the FLN took after independence. At the time of the war, women's support was essential. The FLN had no alternative but to accept women amongst its ranks. It is revealing, however, that no woman was ever given the military grades corresponding to her role. As we have seen, the FLN, via its official publication El Moudjahid, was always keen to praise women fighters. Algeria's war was presented as the struggle to establish an independent democratic state, respectful of human rights, though it also served as useful propaganda aimed at attracting more support from the Western powers and from the United Nations, in particular.

Once independence had been obtained, the contradiction between the return to traditions and the emancipation of women became more apparent. Furthermore, whilst the war had forced new social patterns on the whole society, it had not changed male attitudes towards women and Algeria was still, at heart, a patriarchal society. Since the purpose of the war was to re-establish the nation's traditions and culture, there could not be a complete and immediate emancipation of women. This would, after all, have gone against the traditions for which the war had been fought.

Thus, the position of Algerian women at the time of the war of independence was tragic: caught between the denial of their cultural identity and a social system which, for centuries, had devalued their status, they opted for the liberation of their country, believing that their own liberation would follow automatically. Clearly, this did not happen. In the words of a young Algerian woman, whose mother was a fighter during the war:

> ...the Algerian men used the Algerian women in the revolution. They used (them) as they used their weapons.
>
> *[Shaaban 1988, pp 186,187]*

The way women were treated during and after the war of independence is not particular to Algeria. Many parallels can be drawn between Algerian, Iranian and Palestinian women's involvement in their countries' respective conflicts (in Iran against the Shah's regime and in Palestine against Israeli occupation). One striking similarity is the common purpose driving women's participation. Both, the Algerian and Palestinian struggles were aimed at the liberation of the country from occupying forces. Whilst the Iranian revolution was intended to free the country from the Shah's regime, this was also seen as a 'liberation from 'Western imperialist influences' which had been adopted and supported by the existing ruling classes. Just as Algerian women put the liberation of their country above all other goals, in Palestine, *during [the] earlier period it was the national issue - the threat to Palestinian lands and livelihood, and to the very identity of Palestinians - that took precedence. This threat was*

immediate and tangible, and it had to be resisted at all costs. An awareness of a specific 'feminist' consciousness in the Western sense was clearly absent [Mayer 1994, p 37]. In the same way, women in Iran *were participating primarily as Iranians who opposed the Pahlavi government and not as women per se [Nashat 1983, p 109].* The fact that women, in all three countries embraced the national struggle wholeheartedly is not really surprising. Any threat to the national identity of a country is usually a uniting factor for all social groups. Even in Iran where the country was not occupied by foreign powers, the Shah's regime was considered to be a threat to the culture and identity of the nation. Consequently, women responded to the needs of the revolution. It is interesting to note how the male leaders both in Iran and Algeria called on women to take an active part in the struggle but expected them to return to their traditional role afterwards. Algerian female students and nurses were directly recruited by the FLN and housemaids working for French families in Algiers were asked to work as FLN informers in the last few months of the war. In the Iranian revolution, the presence of women at the front of the demonstrations was a tactic devised by Khomeini himself. He realised that the Shah's forces would be very reluctant to open fire on women and, if they did, it would only serve to show the lack of respect the regime had for women. In her comparison of the role of women in the two revolutions, Glendora-Gates concluded that *whereas the Algerian resistance saw women as necessary to their cause and included them for that reason, the Iranian religious leaders saw them as, not only expendable, but more expendable than men [Glendora-Gates PhD 1987, p 317].* Whatever the motives of the male leaders, women chose to participate in what they considered to be a worthwhile cause. The lack of specific programmes detailing women's role in society after the revolutions led Algerian and Iranian women to give their own interpretations to the vague statements made by the leaders at the time of the revolution. In Algeria, the idea was to recognise women's rights within the Arabo-Islamic traditions, whilst Khomeini promised the return of *'the human dignity of women given by Islam' [Nobari p 234 in Nashat 1983, p118].* However, the contradictions between the revolutionary male leaders' actual aim which was a return to the traditions prevailing before the 'Western cultural invasion' and the hopes of the women participants were irreconcilable in both Algeria and Iran. Women, guardians of the national culture and identity, had to return to their primary role as mothers of future generations. *To change the status of women was to destroy the traditions women guarded [Glendora-Gates PhD 1987, p 351].* Palestinian women living on the West Bank also felt that men, subjected to the invasion of Israeli culture and traditions, were extremely reluctant to allow changes in the status of women. This is how one of these women explained the situation:

> We seem to have retained all the very old-fashioned bad habits which belittle women. In an attempt to keep our Arab identity the men seem to have frozen our habits, traditions, morals and values. So Arab societies under Israeli occupation preserve both the bad and the good for fear of losing their identity... women outside the occupied territories are much better off than women on the West Bank, who are still subjected to outmoded and outdated ideas.
>
> *[Shaaban 1988, p 140]*

The different interpretations given by men and women to the concept of 'national identity' explain the feeling of betrayal experienced by both Algerian and Iranian women after the revolution. For men, the return to tradition meant re-establishing the male domination of the patriarchal society. However, Algerian women who had participated in the revolution, had gained a new awareness of their abilities and potential, hence their expectations of a more egalitarian society where they would be able to play a full part in all domains. In Iran, although women were demonstrating against the westernisation of society imposed by the Shah, they never thought that the rights they had been given would be reversed by the new government. Another clear example of Iranian women's misjudgement of the intentions of the revolutionary leaders is symbolised by the wearing of the veil. During the revolution, all women demonstrators were asked to wear black veils. For some, it was the normal dress, but many chose to wear a veil as a statement of rejection of the Shah's forceful modernisation campaigns. For these women, wearing a veil was a political statement, appropriate during the revolution. They expected to have the choice to wear what they wanted after the revolution. But in the eyes of the religious leaders, the veil was a compulsory part of women's dress. Having been subjected to compulsory unveiling during the Shah's regime, as a sign of modernisation, Iranian women, forty years later were being forced to veil in the name of traditions. *The veil has thus been a mechanism of patriarchal control, as well as a political device [Moghadam 1994, p 125].* As *Glendora-Gates* concluded, one of the major factors which resulted in the exclusion of women after the Algerian and Iranian revolutions was the fact that *both revolutions emphasized cultural values which extolled seclusion, veiling and passivity for women [Glendora-Gates PhD 1987, p 356].* Both revolutions were definitely of the 'woman-in-the-family' model (see section 7).

Women's role in the war of independence took both the French government and the FLN by surprise. Women readily stepped out of their traditional roles. No one suspected them capable of performing the daring operations they undertook. The French administration's attempts at winning over women had, in fact, the opposite effect of making them more determined to regain their cultural identity.

PART 3
Post-Independent Algeria (1962 – 1978)

14 Algeria under Ben Bella

14.1 Overview 1962 - 1965

Ben Bella, the first president of independent Algeria, inherited a country devastated by eight years of war and abandoned by its ruling class, the French settlers, who until then had occupied the majority of the high and middle ranking posts in the economic, political and administrative spheres. Politically, the country was in turmoil due to the in-fighting among various factions struggling for power. As a consequence, although Algeria became independent on July 3rd 1962, it was only a month later (August 3rd 1962) that a government could be formed and parliamentary elections organised. On September 25th 1962 the newly elected National Assembly approved the government formed by Ben Bella. He formally became President of the republic in 1963 after a referendum on the new Constitution.

Economically, the country faced a terrible crisis. The human cost of the war, estimated at 1.5 million casualties, was worsened, in economic terms, by the sudden and massive departure of the French settlers (900,000 left in 1961 and 1962). This, in turn, created a critical shortage of qualified personnel, paralysing entire sectors of the economy in industry and agriculture. The situation was further aggravated by the withdrawal of bank deposits by settlers and a general reduction of the economic activity in the country as 40% of the national production had been previously aimed at the market generated by the French settlers *[Gauthier 1976, p 50]*. At the time of independence, an agreement allowing for economic and cultural cooperation was signed by France and Algeria.[47] However, the mistrust between the two countries and the disregard by both parties for some of the terms of the agreement meant that cooperation only lasted a few years and did not really help the Algerian economy.

In February 1963, 45% of workers in urban areas and 65% in rural areas were unemployed *[D'Arcy, Krieger & Marill 1965, p 102]*. A large proportion of the infrastructure of the country had been damaged, houses had been destroyed, livestock wiped out, forests and orchards burnt down. Millions of people were left without any resources, particularly orphans and war widows. The farmers who returned to their villages after the war could not resume their activities. They had no livestock to plough the fields, their groves of olive trees and fruit trees

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[47] The ceasefire agreement marking the end of the war was signed at the Evian Conference on March 18th 1962. This agreement, known as the 'Accords d' Evian', stipulated that Algerians would be consulted by referendum regarding the future of the country and economic cooperation would continue to exist between France and Algeria. In practical terms, this meant a financial aid programme and economic cooperation, particularly regarding the development of the petro-chemical industry in the Sahara.

had been burnt down. Many of them had no alternatives but to emigrate to towns or to France, in search of jobs. Between 1960 and 1970, the percentage of workers in non-agrarian activities went from 33% to 44% *[Bennoune 1976, p 361]*. The sociological consequences of these profound changes and urban drift were enormous and women were often the worst affected.

As the French economist, Gauthier, concluded:

> Le nouvel Etat avait hérité d'un potentiel économique non négligeable, mais qui avait été conçu en fonction des intérêts de la puissance coloniale et qui avait été partiellement détruit par la guerre ou rendu inutilisable, dans l'immédiat, du fait du départ des cadres européens.
>
> *[Gauthier 1976, p 118]*
>
> (The new State had inherited a substantial economic potential, but one which had been tailored to the interests of the colonial power and which had been either destroyed by the war or rendered unusable, in the short term, due to the departure of the European managers.)

It took years for the economy to recover. Between 1958 and 1966, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) only grew from 9,420 million francs to 12,490 dinars[48]. With an ever increasing population (9.8 million in 1958 to 12 million in 1966), the national income per head actually decreased from 1,018 francs to 949 dinars during the same period *[ibid, p 117]*.

Ben Bella gave Algeria its first Constitution and its first elected National Assembly. However, he did not succeed in fulfilling the population's expectations in terms of accession to 'modernity'. One of the reasons for this was the fact that no clear goals had been defined before or during the war. As Minces noted:

> The majority of Algerian militants... had no goal other than independence and were extremely vague when it came to envisaging the transformation of society, that is, to planning the society they wished to create.
>
> *[Minces in Beck & Keddie 1978, p 160]*

Furthermore, as Martin Stone stated in his book 'The agony of Algeria', *Ben Bella was dogged by challenges, ...throughout his relatively brief period in office. His position was fragile [Stone 1997, p 45]*.

14.2 Legislation and political texts

14.2.1 The Constitution of 1963

48 1 dinar was equal to 1 French franc at the outset.

The Algerian constitution was adopted by the National Assembly on August 28th 1963 and approved by a referendum on September 8th 1963.[49] In the preamble, the government clearly declared its objectives as being based on the Tripoli Programme (see section 12.3). The principle of a socialist economy was reaffirmed and the agrarian reform was presented as the first step towards the establishment of Socialism. In the paragraph referring to social policy, the question of women's emancipation was presented as follows:

> La révolution se concrétise ... par une politique sociale, au profit des masses, pour ... accélérer l'émancipation de la femme afin de l'associer à la gestion des affaires publiques et au développement du pays.
>
> *[Croissance des Jeunes Nations no. 26 Oct 1963, p 45]*
>
> (In concrete terms, the revolution implies ... a social policy in favour of the masses, to ... accelerate the emancipation of women in order to involve them to the administration of public affairs and the development of the country.)

The Constitution[50] itself, after declaring Islam the state religion (article 4) embraced the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (article 11) and declared it would fight *all discrimination in particular that based on race or religion* (article 10). Equal political rights, equal right to vote from the age of 19 and the right to work were recognised in articles 12, 13 and 16 respectively. Education was *obligatory ... with no discrimination except those resulting from the aptitudes of each individual and the needs of the collectivity* (article 18).

The conclusion one can draw is that the equality between men and women was established, at least in principle. However, the Constitution contained two major elements which have had significant consequences for the development of the Algerian state as a whole and the future of women in particular. These were the decision to make Algeria an Islamic state and the FLN[51] the only official political Party. By underpinning the foundation of Algerian democracy on Islam, the government created a framework within which the Algerian state was to develop. This choice was a legitimate reaction to the 124 years of de-culturalisation through colonialism and the 8 years of bitter fighting. However, the official commitment to Islam gave ammunition to the more reactionary elements in the government to fight any proposal aimed at altering women's status. Their argument being that these proposals went against Islamic precepts. The second important feature of the Constitution is the role it gave to the FLN. Not only was it declared the single Party, it was also given supremacy over the National Assembly and the President of the Republic. The Party was to choose the candidates for the presidency and the National Assembly. The Constitution described the FLN's role as follows:

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49 The text of the constitution was elaborated on the initiative of President Ben Bella, not by the National Assembly, but by a small group of men chosen by him. The text was then discussed by senior members of the Party and finally presented to the National Assembly. It was adopted with very few modifications *[Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord 1963, p 9]*.

50 The text used is a translation of the original document published in the Middle East Journal *[no. 17 1963, pp 446-450]*.

51 Front de Libération Nationale, the Party which had led the war of independence.

> The FLN carries out the objectives of the democratic and popular revolution, and constructs socialism in Algeria. (article 57)
>
> The Front of National Liberation reflects the profound aspirations of the masses, and guides them for the achievement of these aspirations. It educates and provides leadership for the masses. (article 58)
>
> The Front of National Liberation defines the policy of the Nation and inspires the action of the state. It controls the action of the National Assembly and the Government. (article 59)
>
> *[Middle East Journal no. 17 1963, p 449]*

During the debate on the adoption of the Constitution, a member of the National Assembly, Mr Benabdallah, declared:

> Cette constitution n'est ni présidentielle, ni parlementaire; c'est un régime constitutionnel de gouvernement par le Parti.
>
> *[Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord 1963, p 16]*
>
> (This Constitution is neither presidential, nor parliamentary, it is a constitutional regime of government by the Party.)

The FLN's omnipotence was a very significant factor. First of all, it contravened the principle of freedom of association in the political domain since article 22 of the Constitution stated:

> No person shall make use of the rights and freedoms enumerated above to impair the independence of the nation, the integrity of the territory, the national unity, the institutions of the Republic, the socialist aspirations of the people and the principle of the singleness of the Front of National Liberation.
>
> *[Middle East Journal no. 17 1963, p 447]*

Secondly, the FLN's position, as the single Party, was to result in the elimination of any real political debate. In the case of women, it meant that no autonomous women's association, representing their interests and making demands on their behalf could be created. Instead, women's rights were amalgamated with workers' rights or simply the people's rights. The women's association, UNFA,[52] created by Ben Bella's government, was totally controlled by the Party and, therefore, powerless. It acted as a conduit for government policy and not as a forum for discussion (see section 15.7). The FLN, possibly due to its leading and unifying role during the war of independence, was supposed to represent *the will of the people*. The Party, constituted of the elite of the nation, had to interpret the confused and vague aspirations of the masses and translate them into government policy. The nation would then give its approval to the interpretations made by the Party by voting for the pre-selected members of the National Assembly. The FLN which had successfully led the country to independence had to continue its revolutionary role by *thinking and acting in the name of the people [Annuaire de l'Afrique du*

52 Union Nationale des Femmes Algériennes.

Nord 1963, pp 13-20]. The 'myth' of the infallibility of the FLN was established. It gave the government its legitimacy and the feeling that 'it knew what was best for the country'. The Party's rejection of any voice of discontent meant, in concrete terms, the control by the Party of all political life. This, as will be shown later, became increasingly apparent over the years and was one of the causes of the social unrest which culminated with the riots of 1988 leading to the adoption of the multi-party principle.

A further comment needs to be made about the Constitution. The fact that sex discrimination was not specifically mentioned, alongside race and religion in article 10, cannot be seen as a trivial omission. El Moudjahid's article of 1961, entitled 'Preparing for the future' had clearly indicated that *any discrimination based on race, religion or sex [would] be banished [El Moudjahid no. 85 Oct 1st 1961, p 8].* The removal of sex discrimination from the adopted text of the constitution was probably decided to avoid taking a clear stand on this issue which might have angered the more traditional factions of the government. It is interesting to note, however, that the government felt it necessary to devote the whole of article 18 to the family, indicating that *the family, fundamental unit of society, is placed under the protection of the state [Middle East Journal no. 17 1963, p 447].* This clearly indicated the government's attachment to traditions. By stating so strongly its intention to protect the family, the constitution was sending clear signals to women, regarding their future role. The fact that they might have equal rights to education and work did not change their fundamental role in society as mothers and wives. The Constitution, it seemed, would ensure that this continued to be women's main contribution to society.

14.2.2 New legislation

The immediate concerns of the newly established independent state were economic and political. The elaboration of a completely new legislative code required time and careful thinking and the government decided that the best strategy, in the short term, was to keep the existing French legislation, except in cases where it *was contrary to national sovereignty* (Law of Dec 31st 1962) *[Bormans 1977, p 511].* Only, two new laws were passed in 1963. The first defined Algerian nationality (March 27th 1963) and recognised the right for an Algerian mother to give her nationality to her children if the father was unknown or a stateless person. Foreign women who had married Algerians could only obtain Algerian nationality if they renounced their own nationality. This was intended as a way of discouraging marriages with European women.

The second law, passed on June 29th 1963, was aimed at establishing a minimum age for marriage. The bill presented by Mrs. Khemisti and Dr. Stefanini (both MPs in the Aseemblée Nationale Populaire[53]) intended to completely outlaw marriages involving girls under the age of

[53] There were ten women MPs (out of a total of 194) in the first National Assembly in 1962. In 1963, there were only two women MPs (out of a total of 138). *[Vandevelde 1980, p 309]*

16. The draft contained very severe penalties: anybody (including, for instance, relatives and government officials) in breach of this law would be treated in the same way as someone convicted of rape (maximum sentence: 20 years imprisonment). Such a marriage would be considered null and void and the girl could ask the husband to pay damages and subsistence for herself and any children born from this marriage. Article 7 of the bill specified that a dispensation for a girl to marry before the age of 16 could only be granted by the President of the Republic. The intention here was to make such a dispensation rare and only granted in exceptional cases. The bill was debated at length in the National Assembly on June 19th and 25th 1963. There was strong opposition to the bill and one MP, Mr Louai, even suggested that no discussion should take place until a new Family Code, covering all aspects of family laws, had been presented to the Assembly *[Journal Officiel de la République Algérienne June 19th 1963, p 672].* His proposition was rejected. Most of the discussions which followed were centred around the sanctions for breach of the law. The rapporteur of the commission which studied the bill, Mr Ghersi, described the sanctions as 'excessive'. He gave the following example: a man asks his friend who lives in Algiers to recommend a girl he could marry. Having recommended a young girl, who he thought was 16 years old, the friend would then be faced with a 20 year imprisonment sentence if the girl was later discovered to be one day short of 16 *[ibid p 670].* By choosing such an extreme situation, the rapporteur's intention was to ridicule the proposed sanctions, disregarding the spirit of the bill which was to eradicate the practice of under age marriages by setting extremely severe penalties. Another MP, Miss Belmihoud, suggested that the sanctions should be particularly severe against the *Cadi* who allowed a marriage under age to take place. She argued that the *Cadi* should be sentenced to six months imprisonment and a 1,000 to 3,000 F fine, since he was guilty of professional misconduct *[Journal Officiel de la République Algérienne June 25th 1963, p 677].* She also proposed that the young couple should not be penalised. Miss Belmihoub's amendment was rejected on the grounds that the new law was supposed to bring uniformity into the legal system and protect women not just from external abuse, but also from their own 'inclinations' *[ibid p 678].* Another MP, Mr Akouche, pointed out that in many cases, particularly in rural areas, young girls were unaware of the laws and had to comply with their parents' wishes according to the local traditions *[ibid p 680].* The response from Mr Ghersi was that girls ought to know the law and in any case, the judge would choose the appropriate sentence between 400 F and three months imprisonment *[ibid].*

The law which was finally adopted was quite different from Mrs Khemisti's draft proposal:

- the minimum marrying age was set at 18 for boys and 16 for girls.
- anyone taking part or allowing a marriage under these ages (legal representatives, government officials, parents or spouses) would receive a 15 days to 3 months prison sentence and or a 400 F to 1,000 F fine.
- such a marriage would be declared null and void if not consummated.

- if the marriage had been consummated, only the husband or wife could ask for it to be nullified except if both had, by then, reached the legal age or if the wife had given birth to a child.
- for a marriage to be legally recognised, it had to be registered at the civil registry office.

[ibid pp 681,682]

This law is interesting in many respects: firstly, the existing law of September 1959 (see section 8.2.1) had already established minimum ages for marriage of 15 for girls and 18 for boys. Implementing a new law in order to change the marrying age for girls by one year might seem somewhat superfluous. One can surmise that the intentions of the legislators might have been to show the government's determination to see that this law, as opposed to the French one, would be effectively implemented. Severe penalties would be introduced to act as a deterrent. At the same time, with this law, the government could be seen as establishing its supremacy in the domain of family law which had been one of the major areas of intervention by the French authorities. However, the law which was passed did not fulfil either of these aims: the penalties contained in the actual law were much less forbidding than those in the original draft. The husband's penalty could be as little as a 400 F fine. Furthermore, the clause regarding the legalisation of the marriage after the birth of a child effectively opened the door to any abuse and left the young girl with no other recourse but to accept the situation. It could even encourage husbands to have a child as early as possible in the marriage to avoid legal wrangles. This completely defeated the purpose of the law (which was to give more protection to young girls) and might even have resulted in a greater number of child pregnancies. One remains perplexed at the rationale behind this law. It did not go far enough in its penalties to bring the marriage of girls under age to the level of serious crime and opened a loophole by declaring these marriages legal in certain circumstances. Although motivated by the desire to protect the physical and moral welfare of young girls[54], the law did little to effectively eradicate the practice of under aged marriages, especially in rural areas. Mrs. Khemisti, herself, had great reservations about the effects of this law. She declared in an interview for the magazine 'Jeunesse':

> ... vues les structures sociales existantes, ce douloureux problème n'est pas encore résolu.
>
> *[in Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord 1964, p 185]*

(... in view of the existing social structures, this distressing problem is not resolved.)

54 The original bill was described as 'the law fixing the minimum marrying age at 16 for girls' *[Bormans 1977, p 515]*

Indeed, the law did not seem to have much impact in rural areas. In 1972, the UNFA's magazine, El Djazairia, published an article on women's life in rural areas which showed that fathers were still marrying their daughters as soon as they had reached puberty. One father interviewed stated:

> Mes filles n'ont jamais dépassé l'âge de quinze ans. Je les ai toutes mariées avant.
>
> *[El Djazairia no. 23,24, July / August 1972, p 33]*
>
> (My daughters have never gone past the age of fifteen. I have always married them off before.)

Apart from the Nationality law and the Khemisti law, a number of circulars were also produced in 1963 by the Ministry of Justice to clarify certain points regarding marriages. Those between Algerians or between an Algerian man and a non Muslim woman which had been declared null and void during colonial times because they had not been registered with the civil authority, were now declared legal. It was also established that *according to Islamic laws, Muslim women could not legally marry individuals of other religions* (Circular 31 April 23rd 1963) *[Borrmans 1977, p 520].* Adoption was also declared illegal. The normal marriage procedure required a *cadi* to officiate the marriage and transmit the information to the civil registry office. As Borrmans suggested, these circulars show a tendency to return to the Islamic laws (see section 16.2.1). Furthermore, the equality of rights between men and women was evidently not respected in the case of marriage. While these minor changes were being introduced, the government was working on a complete reassessment of family laws. As early as 1963 a commission was set up to prepare a new legal document covering all aspects of family laws. This project was abandoned in 1964 due to the inability of the commission members to agree on major issues such as polygamy, the registration of marriages with civil representatives, the presence of the girl at the wedding to give her consent in person and the right of repudiation. Traditionalists were urging for a return to Islamic laws, arguing for instance that, according to the Qur'an, the presence of two witnesses at a wedding was sufficient whereas more modern interpretations were supported by war veterans and members of the UNFA[55] *[Borrmans 1977, pp 521-525].* Some members of the commission even proposed to extend polygamy to six wives (instead of four which is the maximum allowed in the Qur'an) because of the disproportionate number of women compared to men due to the war losses *[M'Rabet 1969, p 237].* Ben Bella's presidency came to an end before further progress could be made on the new legislation.

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14.3 Women's socio-economic situation

14.3.1 Family laws in application

Whilst the government was cautiously considering changes to family laws, women's experiences in every day life were, in most cases, similar to those of the pre-war period. The great hopes that independence would change everything and solve all the problems were soon shattered. The war and independence itself had not altered people's attitudes. The deeply rooted beliefs and traditions had not disappeared with independence, in fact, many saw the departure of the French as a chance to return to a traditional life, 'purified' from the evil influence of the West. In many cases, a return to traditions meant a restriction of women's rights. This was particularly evident in the domain of marriage, work and political involvement.

During the immediate post war years (1962-1965), women's emancipation was widely debated in the media. M'Rabet, a woman journalist was at the centre of the debate. She and her husband Tarik, were running two radio programmes in Algiers aimed at giving young people a chance to express their views and opinions[56]. She also published two books in 1964 and 1967 entitled 'La femme algérienne' and 'Les Algériennes' in which she described the situation of women in Algerian society and vigorously attacked Algerian men and the government of the time for not complying with the promise of equality between men and women inscribed in the Constitution. One of the traditional practices which still prevailed in 1964, was the *droit de djabr*, the right for the father to impose his choice of husband on his daughter. Personal accounts of young girls contemplating suicide when confronted with the prospect of a forced marriage became daily occurrences on M'Rabet's radio programmes. Newspapers such as the weekly 'Jeunesse' and 'Alger Républicain' reported actual suicides. Here are some of the tragic cases reported by these newspapers: on November 13th 1964, Dalila, a young girl aged 19, drank a large quantity of bleach and was found dead the next day in her bed. She was to be married to a 40 year old man *[M'Rabet 1969, p 149]*. In March 1964, Fatma-Zohra, a 15 year old school girl whose step mother wanted to marry her to her step brother threw herself from the window of their fourth floor flat. She did not die but was crippled for life. After the accident, her father was reported to have said:

> Ma pauvre fille... et moi je suis déshonoré.
>
> *[M'Rabet 1969, p 149]*
>
> (My poor daughter... but I have lost my honour.)

The sad story of Fatma-Zohra and the daily letters from desperate young girls resulted in a widespread outcry. Even Révolution Africaine, which was supposed to represent the Algerian

56 The two programmes were: 'Le magazine de la jeunesse' was aimed at young working people and 'La parole aux jeunes' was for school pupils or college students.

government's views abroad, decided to comment on the subject. In his weekly column, J. E. Bencheikh vigorously attacked the hypocrisy of the Algerian society which recognised women's rights in principle but refused to see them applied:

> Les chartes, les déclarations et autres programmes n'y feront rien: la loi est faite pour des hommes qui refusent de l'appliquer.
>
> *[Révolution Africaine no. 107 February 13th 1965 in M'Rabet 1969, p 155]*
>
> (Charters, declarations and other programmes will achieve nothing: the law is made for men who refuse to put it into practice.)

He went on to say that the problem stemmed from men's double standards: on one hand, they resented not being able to meet educated women and lead a normal social life with them, on the other, they refused to see their own sister or wife go out freely. This, they argued was a question of honour. However, this noble principle was only applied to *their* wife or sister and respect for women disappeared when they met young girls in the street. In his conclusion, the journalist urged women to continue fighting:

> Luttez, vous avez pour vous le droit et la raison... Nous ne serons libres un jour que pour autant qu'enfin vous le serez devenues.
>
> *[ibid, p 156]*
>
> (You must fight, the law and reason are on your side... We will only be free when you obtain your freedom.)

The topic of parental pressure on young girls was brought up on another occasion by Révolution Afrcaine. In an article which praised Fatma Oudali, a young woman elected president of the management committee of a nationalised company,[57] the newspaper declared that in the present context, when large numbers of girls were submitted to *moral torture* by their parents, Fatma represented a role model and parents should be more understanding towards their daughters *[Révolution Africaine no. 108 February 20th 1965, p 7]*.

The news of the suicide attempts were so distressing that one of the Algiers sections of the UNFA[58], the Plateau Saulière's section, published a letter in support of one of the young girls who had attempted suicide. The letter praised her courage and pledged to campaign against forced marriages. This, however, was not the view of the leaders of the association and, allegedly, in order to avoid shocking older women, the UNFA's national committee decided to remain silent on the subject *[M'Rabet 1969, p 156]*.

These suicide attempts were not a few isolated cases. M'Rabet quoted in her book statistics on suicides given by a doctor from a hospital in Algiers. He said:

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57 The company was C.A.M.A.(Complexe d'Ameublement et de Menuiserie Algérien)

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> En 1964, et dans la seule ville d'Alger, nous avons enregistré, à l'hôpital, 175 tentatives de suicide pour mariage forcé. Cela fait, en moyenne, une tentative tous les deux jours.
>
> *[M'Rabet 1969, p 149]*
>
> (In 1964, solely in Algiers, we have registered at the hospital 175 suicide attempts due to forced marriages. This means an average of one attempt every two days.)

These figures only reflected suicide attempts by gas or poison. It seems very likely that many more must have taken place which were reported as 'accidents' or even not reported at all. The doctor went on to say:

> ... il y avait eu, chez bien des filles, à la libération, une attente - une extraordinaire espérance - la certitude d'un renouveau; mais personne n'y a répondu, rien n'a changé;
>
> *[M'Rabet 1969, p 149]*
>
> (... there had been amongst many girls, at the time of independence, an expectation, an extraordinary hope, a belief in a new era but nobody responded, nothing changed.)

Indeed, the government's response to the spate of suicides was typified by its reaction to the radio programme: first M'Rabet and her husband were asked to avoid the topic of suicides, but when they continued talking about these issues, the programme was stopped in February 1965.

Another topic widely discussed at the time was the question of divorce and repudiation. Révolution Africaine published two articles in December 1964 and January 1965 on the question of divorce. Judges and magistrates were interviewed to establish whether the laws regarding divorce and repudiation were known to the public and implemented. Two major conclusions were drawn from this survey: a large proportion of marriages and repudiations were still taking place outside of the courts and the number of marriages breaking up since independence had greatly increased. Several reasons were given to explain the reluctance to turn to the legal system: in rural areas, the tribunals were few and far between. Villagers had to travel a long way to find a court of justice, which meant added expenses. Furthermore, in remote areas, there was often a total ignorance of the legislation. In cities, where the population had access to the courts and a better understanding of the laws, it was the inability of the legal system to help women, in a practical way, which deterred them from appealing to a judge. The procedures were lengthy and if the husband was jailed the woman was left without any financial support for months. Besides, despite the court rulings, maintenance was rarely paid by the husband. Although the legislation was in place, it offered very few practical solutions for the majority of women. Those who did resort to the tribunals to obtain a divorce were young educated and financially independent women. The judges in the survey declared that this was one of the reasons for the increase in divorces, especially amongst young people

(18 to 25 years old). The awakening of these women to their rights was often a cause of conflict within the marriage. Whereas in 1959, 70% of divorces were caused by repudiation, three of the judges interviewed said that an equal number of men and women had asked for divorce. Some of these women were ex-*Moudjahidate* who could no longer accept their husband's domination. This is what Mrs Benslimane Saida, a war veteran, declared in an interview for the UNFA's magazine El Djezairia:

> Les deux tiers des anciennes *moudjahidates* que je connais sont divorcées, ou pas mariées... quand on a vécu au maquis des rapports d'égalité avec l'homme, on refuse de vivre une situation d'infériorité au sein du foyer.
>
> *[El Djazairia no. 73 1979, p 17]*
>
> (Two thirds of the *ex-Moudjahidate* that I know are either divorced or not married... when you have lived on equal terms with men in the maquis, you refuse to be treated as an inferior in your home.)

It is also important to remember that a large number of repudiations were still taking place without being registered as divorces. Another major reason given to explain the increase in the number of divorces was the migration of couples to the cities. There, the living conditions were often cramped which increased the tension between wife and mother-in-law. Women who had had a certain freedom in villages were suddenly kept indoors. The husbands did not want to see their wives walk around the streets and be seen by other men. Furthermore, whereas in a village the close proximity of the extended family exerted a certain moral pressure on the couple to stay together, in towns, the situation was very different. Men could walk out on their wives without having to face the disapproval of their fellow villagers. The article also pointed out that women had greater difficulty obtaining a divorce in a court of law, whereas for men it was a formality. The proof of abandonment had to be provided by a woman, while a man could ask for divorce because of his wife's alleged misconduct. This could be as tenuous as: 'She has been seen with a man in the street' *[Révolution Africaine no. 101 Jan 2nd 1965, pp 4,5]*. It seems that legislation alone was not sufficient to bring about a profound change in attitudes. The government was well aware of the fact that the majority of the population was not ready for a true emancipation of women. It chose to do nothing rather than engage in an open debate on the question. It could be argued that women's liberation was not a priority in view of the serious economic problems the country had to tackle. However, it seems that the government's lack of resolution in this domain was rather a sign of its weakness demonstrated by the many unsuccessful attempts at producing a new Family Code. Faced with a problem which could potentially divide the country and the Party, it resorted to inaction.

A few weeks after studying the incidence and conditions of divorce in Algeria, the newspaper Révolution Africaine looked at the question of the dowry. Unfortunately, no survey of the percentage of marriages concluded without dowry, or even some indication of the average levels in 1965 were provided. The article, entitled 'The dowry, a distorted symbol' merely gave

what was obviously the official government view on the question. After a reminder that the dowry was a practice predating Islam and not mentioned in the Qur'an,[59] the article proceeded to explain why the vast sums of money exchanged as dowry since the end of the war were totally unacceptable.[60] Firstly, the article maintained that this was a practice limited to the bourgeoisie and represented a status symbol for the family. The article went on to say:

> Au niveau de la masse populaire qui est animée d'un esprit plus sain on rejette cette forme de spéculation...
>
> *[Révolution Africaine no. 104 Jan 23rd 1965, p 9]*
>
> (Amongst the masses, animated by a healthier spirit, this type of speculation is rejected.)

Amongst the middle classes the dowry sometimes included large sums of money as well as furniture, modern appliances for the home and even sometimes a car. These practices, concluded the article, went against the socialist principles adopted by the government and created very difficult financial situations for the newly married couples. Furthermore, if the husband divorced his wife, he was the looser since none of the expenses were paid back to him. Obviously, the woman's situation was not considered as traumatic, the assumption being that she would return to her family. The solution proposed in the article was that girls should refuse to be married with an exchange of dowry *[Révolution Africaine no. 104 Jan 23rd 1965, p 9]*. This shows that the question of dowry was only considered from an economic point of view and from the man's angle. Traditionally, girls saw the dowry and, in particular, the jewellery they received as a form of security in case of repudiation. This was not taken into account. Since the dowry was recognised as causing serious problems, a modern socialist government, truly concerned with women's emancipation, could have abolished it or made it into a symbolic gesture. This would have removed the degrading image of a 'price tag' attached to a woman (a young virgin being much more 'expensive' than a divorcee). Instead, it seems that the government, too frightened to take a stand on a controversial issue, was waiting for women to bring about changes by refusing to be married with an exchange of dowry.

14.3.2 Attitudes towards women after the war

In September 1962, the magazine Jeune Afrique published an article about Algerian women and their future after independence. Men, from different social groups were asked their views on the role of women in the new society. The interviews showed an acceptance of the fact that women's emancipation was inevitable because of their participation in the war. The opinions on the degrees of change and the speed at which these changes were to be implemented

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59 At the time of the prophet, it had become a tradition to offer a small gift, and Mohamed himself had received a handful of dates for his fourth daughter's wedding.

60 During the war, the FLN had limited the dowry to a maximum of 5,000 Francs (see section 8.2.2)

varied. The majority of men expressed the view that *the principle of emancipation [was] already accepted [Jeune Afrique no. 100 Sept 17th-23rd 1962, p 29].* Most of them felt that women should be politically active although they needed a higher level of education if they were to be elected to positions of power. All declared that they wanted their wives to be their equal. These interviews seemed to show a definite change in men's attitudes towards women. However, two years later, the same magazine looked again at Algerian women's position in society and the conclusions were quite different. The article was entitled 'Algerian women find peace ungrateful'. It gave the picture of a country where all promises about women's liberation and women's rights had been forgotten. The poorest uneducated urban women, many of whom had been working as maids for French families, were now abandoned, often without a husband or any source of income to support their family. Having been exposed to life in the city, having had to become very independent and self reliant during the war, these women could not go back to their village. Often, their only recourse was prostitution. The article described them as 'disoriented'. But they were not the only women to be disappointed after the war. Educated urban women were also suffering. One of them said:

> Dans le combat, nous étions des égales. A présent, la paix revenue, le mot d'ordre est: 'travail aux hommes d'abord, ils sont chefs de famille'... Ce que [les hommes] espèrent? Nous voir rentrer dans les maisons, nous voiler, tout oublier, faire comme si rien n'avait été, et adorer nos hommes!
>
> *[Jeune Afrique no. 188 June 15th 1964, p 30]*
>
> (During the war, we were all equal. Now that peace has come, the catch phrase is: 'work is for men first, they are heads of family'... What do men want? To see us go back to our homes, wear a veil and forget everything, as if nothing had happened, and look up to them.)

It seems that men simply wanted to go back to their old ways and expected women to follow suit. Those women who refused to conform were publicly chastised, often by arrogant young men. Jeune Afrique's article gave the example of a woman walking in the street in Algiers wearing western clothes being told by a young boy:

> Tu es nue comme une Française, putain!
>
> *[Jeune Afrique no. 188 June 15th 1964, p 30]*
>
> (You are naked like a French woman, whore!)

The other category of women who suffered in the immediate after-war years was the *Moudjahidate*. There was a definite reluctance, on the part of men, to recognise that women had played a major role in the war. Although government officials and newspaper articles were constantly referring to the wonderful courage of the women fighters, in practice, these women had enormous difficulties when they tried to register as *Moudjahidate* to receive the benefits they were entitled to. An *ex-Moudjahidat*, Aida, who had fought in the Aurès region, explained in an interview with the Maghreb Review what happened to her:

> A l'indépendence on m'a refusé le titre de maquisarde. A Constantine ils nous ont dit qu'ils ignoraient que les femmes avaient pris les armes.
>
> *[The Maghreb Review vol. 12 June 5th 1987, p 142]*
>
> (At the time of independence I was refused the title of woman fighter. In Constantine they said that they did not know that women had taken up arms.)

This was not an isolated case, although some women were helped by the war veteran association, many were left to fend for themselves. War widows with no income became domestic servants for the new Algerian bourgeoisie who took over the positions left by the French settlers. They perceived this as degrading. Having had to endure enormous hardship during the war, having lost their husbands and sons who died for their country, they were now forgotten. As Cherifati-Merabtine noted after interviewing ex-*Moudjahidate*:

> ... this was the first paradox of independent Algeria... social self-identity acquired in time of war was followed by a depreciation in status engendered by their salaried work.
>
> *[in Moghadam 1994, p 53]*

14.3.3 Work and political involvement

Before looking at the evolution of female employment during the Ben Bella's government, it is important to remember that before the war, there were only 38,500 women employed in non agricultural activities. The war disrupted the whole of the Algerian economy, it is therefore not surprising that by 1965, there were only between 95,000 and 100,000 women who received an income from their work (women in the rural sector are not counted in these figures). Amongst them, 4,000 were primary school teachers, 288 secondary teachers and four university professors. In the civil service out of 225,000 employees, 1,400 were women *[Daoud 1993, p 149]*. More revealing than figures will be the study of the government's attitude towards working women and the initiatives set up to encourage women's integration into the economy.

The cases of women attaining very high positions in companies or organisations were regularly reported in Révolution Africaine, but far from being the norm, they were the exceptions. In 1964, for instance, Nadia Hammadi became the youngest female judge in Algeria at 21 (there were only two female judges at the time) *[Révolution Africaine no. 59 March 14th 1964, pp 4,5]*. Two women were reported to be members of the management committees of nationalised companies in 1965: the CO.GE.HO.RE (Comité de Gestion des Hôtels et Restaurants) and the farm Bouchaoui. However, only five women out of 560 workers took part in the meeting to elect the new committee of the CO.GE.HO.RE. *[Révolution Africaine no.107 Feb 13th1965,p 4]*.

From March 23rd to 27th 1965, the second congress of the UGTA (Union Générale des Travailleurs Algériens)[61] met in Algiers. This was the first UGTA national congress since independence. Despite the claim, in an editorial of Révolution Africaine that *apparently, there (was) no discrimination* in education *and there [was] no need to worry about the integration of women in the activity of the country [Révolution Africaine no. 114 April 3rd 1965, p 3]*, only 23 women took part in the congress. Two women were elected members of the executive commission which consisted of 51 members and no woman was chosen at the National Secretary level. In the resolution adopted by the congress, only one short paragraph referred to women. Under the development of professional training, the congress asked that:

> ... soit développée la formation professionnelle féminine dans tous les domaines, que soit prévu en particulier les formations de monitrices pour les crèches et les garderies d'enfants et que soit réservées des sections de textiles à nos soeurs pour leur permettre de participer effectivement à la production. (sic)
>
> *[Révolution Africaine Supplement to no. 115 April 10th 1965, p 3]*
>
> (... feminine professional training be developed in all areas and, in particular, for crèche and nursery supervisors. Special training sections in textile work should be reserved for women to enable them to fully participate in the industrial process.)

These demands, although encouraging, were very limited and continued to reflect the traditional views of the 'socially acceptable' jobs for women. President Ben Bella, in his address to the congress made no mention of women. Some of the women delegates interviewed by Révolution Africaine declared that their demands were the development of professional training at all levels, the reopening of crèches and infant schools,[62] and equal treatment of men and women in case of redundancy. It is, however, revealing that two of the delegates saw their role as *helping men* in their work. A woman teacher, Fatima Ait Youcef, declared:

> Nous ne sommes pas venus faire du féminisme à ce congrès, mais nous sommes venus poser les problèmes de tous les travailleurs. Les délégués ne doivent pas intervenir seulement sur le problème de la femme. (sic)
>
> *[Révolution Africaine no. 113 March 27th 1965, p 13]*
>
> (We have not come to the congress as feminists, we have come to discuss the problems of all the workers. The delegates must not merely discuss women's issues.)

It is clear that specific problems facing women at work or trying to obtain work were not a high priority for the congress. Female delegates seemed satisfied with the vague promise that 'only

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61 General Workers' Union created by the FLN on February 24th 1956.

62 All infant schools and crèches had been closed in the whole country, except in the region of Algiers, to make room for older pupils due to the lack of teachers and premises *[L'ouvrier Algérien no. 4 Jan 4th 1963, p 5]*.

work would liberate women' and went along with the progressive image which was presented to the press showing women leading the march at the end of the congress.

The fact that a workers' congress dominated by men was showing little interest towards women is not really surprising. But there was a women's organisation, l'Union des Femmes Algériennes (UFA)[63] which was supposed to promote women's participation in all aspects of the life of the country. In 1962, El Moudjahid reported that a provisional committee of the UFA had been set up by the FLN and was working on the preparation of a national congress planned for January 1963. The committee's programme contained four major points: political education, opening of vocational centres, creation of an employment agency and literacy campaigns. The committee's members interviewed declared that the war had forced women to become aware of their responsibilities and that they had to take part in the economic regeneration. However, one of them (who had represented Algerian women at International Congresses) declared, regarding women's potential contribution:

> Les domaines sont nombreux où leurs qualités peuvent et doivent être utilisées, tels l'enseignement et la santé.
>
> *[El Moudjahid no. 105 Dec 8th 1962, p 4]*
>
> (There are many domains in which their qualities can and must be utilised, such as education and health.)

Another woman stated:

> ... il suffit de parcourir dans les journaux les offres d'emplois pour savoir que l'on demande des secrétaires, des dactylos, des infirmières, des aides médicales, des assistantes sociales, des institutrices.
>
> *[El Moudjahid no. 105 Dec 8th 1962, p 4]*
>
> (... one only needs to look at job advertisements in the papers to know that there is a need for secretaries, short hand typists, nurses, health advisors, social workers, primary school teachers.)

Indeed, these were very real needs, but the implication seemed to be that women should be confined to these jobs. There were other areas short of qualified workers which women should have been encouraged to enter. The UFA's congress did not take place in 1963, in fact, in September 1964, a new provisional committee was set up by the government. Its purpose was still the preparation of a national congress for 1965. According to a member of the first committee, a march was organised for International women's day (March 8th 1964) attended by a large number of women. The government saw this as an act of defiance and the next day, an order came stating that the committee should be 'modified'. The members of the committee

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63 This organisation had originally been created in 1944 (see section 9.2.3). After independence, the government decided to relaunch the association as the official national women's organisation, l'Union Nationale des Femmes Algériennes (UNFA).

asked for the reasons behind this decision and were told that these were orders from the Party. The committee resigned *[Amrane 1991, p 265].* The following year, a joint meeting of the UNFA and the UGTA[64] took place on International Women's day. In an interview with Révolution Africaine, women attending the meeting explained that equality between men and women was not yet a reality and, if the situation had not really improved, it was due to the following reasons:

> Déroutées par une fausse interprétation de l'Islam, nos soeurs ont subi l'influence du milieu social dans lequel elles ont évolué, ce qui a freiné leurs élans.
>
> *[Révolution Africaine no. 111 March 13th 1965, p 7]*

> (Baffled by a false interpretation of Islam, our sisters have been influenced by their social environment which smothered their enthusiasm.)

The advice given to women was to *free themselves*. The delegates went on to say:

> En se transformant la femme transformera l'homme algérien décidé à ne pas changer d'opinion à l'égard de son émancipation...
>
> *[Révolution Africaine no. 111 March 13th 1965, p 7]*

> (By transforming themselves, women will transform Algerian men determined not to change their opinion on emancipation...)

This was echoed by President Ben Bella, in his address to the meeting:

> Je suis convaincu que vos droits ne vous seront jamais attribués volontairement par les hommes. C'est par votre lutte que vous parviendrez à les obtenir.
>
> *[Révolution Africaine no. 111 March 13th 1965, p 12]*

> (I am convinced that your rights will never be granted to you voluntarily by men. You will have to fight to obtain them.)

The President did not go on to explain how the government was intending to support women in their fight. He stressed, however, that the emancipation of women had to occur within an 'Arab-Muslim' framework. Ben Bella was attempting to placate both constituencies: giving women the impression he was on their side and, at the same time, reassuring the right wing of the Party by establishing some limits to the liberation of women. Everything was being said in vague phrases leaving the audience to add its own interpretation. After the meeting 6,000 women walked through the streets of Algiers demonstrating the strength of their movement. According to Monique Gadant, a French scholar on Algeria, a large number of men responded by repudiating their wives for participating in the demonstration *[Gadant 1995, p 140].*

64 Union Générale des Travailleurs Algériens (National Workers' Union)

Referring to the national women's organisation, UNFA, Ben Bella said:

> Elle doit devenir une force vivante, animée par des militantes jeunes, des travailleuses de la campagne et de la ville rompues à la lutte systématique contre les préjugés sociaux qui tendent à faire de la femme un être mineur.
>
> *[Révolution Africaine no. 64 April 18th 1964, p 17]*
>
> (It must become a living force lead by young militants, women workers from the countryside and the towns, experienced in the systematic fights against social prejudices which tend to reduce women to the state of minors.)

He also called for a congress which:

> ... soit le point de départ d'un mouvement révolutionnaire et émancipateur, intégrant totalement la femme dans l'ensemble des tâches de construction du socialisme.
>
> *[Révolution Africaine no. 64 April 18th 1964, p20]*
>
> (... would be the starting point of a revolutionary and emancipating movement integrating women fully in the establishment of socialism.)

One could question the motives of the FLN wanting a parallel political organisation for women. The best way to promote a better understanding between men and women and a real integration of women would have been to create mixed FLN cells where issues could be debated collectively. Accepting women as equal participants was probably too big a step, even for Party members. This is illustrated by an anecdote M'Rabet[65] reported: when she and her husband responded to the request from the Party for ex-members to rejoin the Party and take a more active part in local affairs, her husband was welcomed but she was told that she would have to wait until other women came forward to form a women's cell *[Maschino & M'Rabet 1973, p 93]*. In fact, many women who wanted to join the Party were told to become members of the UNFA instead. As a woman interviewed by M'Rabet concluded, too many men in the Party did not really want to see women being emancipated. Although, publicly, they supported the government's official declarations, privately, it seems that they preferred to see their sisters and wives kept at home and married according to the traditions *[M'Rabet 1969, p 163]*.

As far as actual women's representation on the political scene, the figures were very small. The number of women in the newly created National Assembly went from ten (out of 194 members) in 1962, to two (out of 138) in 1963 *[Vandevelde 1980, p 309]*. The decline in the number of women representatives indicates the general attitude of society towards women entering the public sphere during that period.

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65 Algerian reporter and author of several books on Algerian women.

14.3.4 Education

One of the government's main priorities to help the country develop into a strong independent state was education. However, at the end of the war, the country was faced with serious problems. First of all the illiteracy rate was very high. It was estimated that 4,400,000 of the over 15 population was illiterate, representing 80% of that age group *[Confluent, vol. 50-52 April-June 1965, p 231].* Secondly, the rate of growth of the population had started increasing rapidly due to the progress in health and hygiene. The birth rate which was 38 per thousand in 1925 went up to 44 in 1945 and 50 in 1964 *[M'Rabet 1969, p 219].* Furthermore, during the colonial era, a large proportion of children of school age had never received any education. According to El Moudjahid, at the end of the war, only 40% of Algerian children of school age (between 6 and 14) were actually receiving any education *[El Moudjahid no. 95 Aug 5th 1962, p 6].* It is also important to note that the French government's attempts at improving the educational provisions came so late that it did not provide sufficient numbers of qualified men and women to take over the jobs left by the settlers at the time of independence. This was particularly significant in the education sector. The massive departure of French teachers left the education system in chaos. 18,000 out of 23,500 primary school teachers and 1,400 out of 2,000 secondary school teachers went back to France. Many schools and colleges had also been destroyed by the OAS[66] in the last few months of the war. In fact, the French terrorist organisation which had fought to keep Algeria under French rule went on a campaign of destruction of infrastructures and government institutions when independence was declared.[67] A number of schools run by the French army were also closed when the French soldiers left. Another factor which contributed to the government's problems in education was the decision to develop the teaching and use of the Arabic language in schools. In an attempt at reversing the 'de-culturalising' effect of the French education system which had confined the Arabic language to the position of second language, the Algerian government decided to make Arabic the main language in schools, starting with primary schools. In practical terms, this meant that in the first year, pupils would be taught in Arabic for 15 hours out of a total of 30 and for 10 hours out of 20 from the second to the fifth year *[Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord 1964, p 171].* Even such a limited programme caused tremendous problems in the recruitment of staff since there were very few qualified teachers who could teach in classical Arabic. This problem was compounded by the fact that few textbooks existed to support the teaching.

The government set out a vast programme aimed at educating the new generations. The intention was to educate all six year old children by the year 1971-72. The number of children to be educated during this period was estimated as follows:

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66 Organisation Armée Secrète, the French para-military terrorist organisation.

67 The library of the University of Algiers was set on fire by the OAS.

Figure 10 Numbers of six year old children to be educated: 1964 - 1972

Year	Estimated number of six year old children to be educated
1964	312,000
1965	333,000
1966	344,000
1967	355,000
1968	367,000
1969	425,000
1970	442,000
1971	460,000
1972	478,000

[Confluent, vol. 50-52 April-June 1965, p 233]

In order to achieve these objectives, certain measures had to be taken. To increase the number of primary school teachers, the academic levels of recruitment were lowered. The normal qualifications required for teachers were A level equivalent and/or a teacher training diploma, and GCSE equivalent for instructors. To facilitate the recruitment of teachers, pupils with a simple certificate delivered at the end of their primary education were allowed to become 'monitors' in the primary school sector. These monitors received their training either through conferences and intensive courses or by correspondence courses.

In 1965, the government recruited 4,200 new teachers, opened 3,360 new school buildings but some infant schools had to be closed to use the buildings and staff for older pupils. Garages, barracks even shops were used to alleviate the shortage of school buildings. The inevitable consequence of the drastic measures the government had to take in order to cope with the increasing number of children was a lowering of educational standards. Despite these efforts, the Minister for education declared at a UNESCO conference on illiteracy that more than one million children were not receiving any education *[Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord 1965, p 215].*

The following table gives an idea of the overall educational provisions during the years following independence:

Figure 11 Population in educational institutions, by sex: 1962 to 1965

	Primary Education Girls	Primary Education Boys	Secondary Education Girls	Secondary Education Boys	Higher Education Girls	Higher Education Boys
1962/1963	312, 690 *37.4 %*	523, 100 *62.6 %*	14, 364 *31.3 %*	31, 597 *68.7 %*	362 *14.3 %*	2, 355 *86.7 %*
1963/1964	414, 262	648, 833	35, 128	85, 288	373	3,020
1964/1965	467, 419	763, 142	28, 148	71, 837	717	4, 492

[Bulletins Statistiques 1965 in M'Rabet 1969, pp 204-211]

While these figures show a definite increase in the total number of girls receiving education, particularly in the Higher Education sector, the percentages reveal the enormous gap still existing between boys and girls in secondary schools. The claim, in Révolution Africaine, that *there [was] no discrimination in education [Révolution Africaine no. 114 April 3rd 1965, p 3]* was far from being a reality. In fact, sex discrimination often resulted in girls attending school irregularly (to help the mother at home or work in the fields during harvest time) or being removed from school altogether. The following statistics show the percentage of girls being removed from schools according to their age:

Figure 12 Proportion of girls removed from school by age

Ages	% of girls removed
11	38.3
12	37.2
13	36.65
14	35
15	32.3
16	30
17	25.7
18	22
19	19.3
20	22
21	23

[M'Rabet 1969, p 209]

The striking figure in this table is the large proportion of girls leaving school at the age of 11. Although the reticence of parents to send their daughters to a neighbouring town to receive secondary education might have explained this, according to M'Rabet, the figures for towns were similar to those in rural areas. Therefore, other factors must have influenced the parents' decision: typically, the mother, often illiterate herself, considered that her daughter had had

enough education and should now be kept at home, ready to be married. After all, the majority of the population considered marriage and bringing up children as women's primary role. It was felt that the sort of education required to fulfil these duties was best provided at home. Furthermore, parents still felt uneasy at the idea of allowing their daughters to mix with boys after puberty. For boys, however, parents' attitude was different since men had to support their family. A high level of education would mean better employment prospects. Parents were, therefore, more eager to see their sons continue their education.

One can conclude that although some efforts were made by the government to widen educational opportunities for girls, sex discrimination was still a major problem. A considerable amount of work remained to be done to convince parents of the necessity of sending their daughters to school, not merely to learn to read and write, but to acquire a level of education which would enable them to become economically independent.

The other major problem the government was faced with in terms of education was the high level of adult illiteracy. As was said earlier, the situation was dramatic with 80% of the over 15 population illiterate. It was decided that national campaigns relying entirely on volunteers, such as those organised in Cuba, could not be implemented in Algeria. The main reason for this being the scale of the problem (in Cuba only 23% of the population was illiterate) which meant that the country could not find enough educated volunteers to run literacy classes. Although university students were asked to help during their summer vacations, the government chose to organise its own programme of adult education. In parallel with the industrialisation programme, adult literacy classes were offered in rural areas close to future industrial centres. This way, the benefits would be immediate, providing an educated work force (albeit at a very basic level) for the new industries.

14.4 Conclusions (1962 - 1965)

The only conclusion one can draw in terms of the evolution of women's status during President Ben Bella's presidency is that for the majority of women very little changed. The government did appear to be keen to see women take a more active part in the life of the country but did not initiate any significant programme of reforms to enable women to integrate into the economic and political structures. The reason for this apparent contradiction stems from the colonial legacy. Changing women's role would have meant embracing the shift from a traditional patriarchal society to a modern state, in other words, 'westernising' the country. Ben Bella could not be seen to be emulating the West. Being the first president of independent Algeria, he had to distance himself from the French influence. Hence the government's lack of reforms to change women's status in society. Women's emancipation was only seen as a necessary element in the economic development of the nation and the establishment of

socialism. This was evident from the very beginning. Women's participation was essential due to their role in the family and their large numbers, not because they were equal members of society whose rights had to be recognised. At the first congress of the FLN after the war, April 16th-21st 1964, a text was adopted known as the 1964 Charter of Algiers. After quoting the Party's views on women, as defined in the Tripoli Programme (see section 12.3), the FLN conceded that women's emancipation would not be a quick and easy task, due to the present level of development of the Algerian society and the fact that:

> ... le poids du passé risque de freiner l'évolution...
>
> *[M'Rabet 1969, p 86]*
>
> (... the weight of the past may slow down this evolution...)

The document also stated that:

> La femme algérienne doit pouvoir participer effectivement à l'action politique et à la construction du socialisme en militant dans les rangs du Parti et des organisations nationales et en y assumant des responsabilités.
>
> *[M'Rabet 1969, p 86]*
>
> (Algerian women must be able to take an active part in politics and the establishment of socialism by campaigning and taking on responsibilities within the ranks of the Party and other national organisations.)

Economic and political activities were seen as a route to emancipation for women. In his address to the FLN congress, on April 16th 1964, President Ben Bella declared:

> La libération de la femme n'est pas un aspect secondaire qui se surajoute à nos autres objectifs. Elle est un problème dont la solution est un préalable à toute espèce de socialisme... Il ne s'agit pas pour nous de mettre seulement la femme sur un pied d'égalité avec l'homme sur le plan du droit, il faut aussi et surtout la faire participer pleinement à tous les aspects de la vie.
>
> *[Révolution Africaine no. 64 April 18th 1964, p 17]*
>
> (Women's liberation is not a secondary aspect which is added to our objectives. It is a problem whose solution is a precondition to any form of socialism... Our intention is not simply to establish equal legal rights for women, we must also strongly encourage their full participation in all walks of life.)

But very little was done to effectively help women enter these new fields of activity. In politics, a common reason given for not allowing women to participate was the fact that they did not have a sufficient level of political education. But this was never held as a barrier against men who did not all have solid political backgrounds. Women were discouraged from joining the FLN and those who tried to enter the political debate (see section 14.3.1) were soon silenced under the pretext of threatening the unity of the nation. As far as economic activity was concerned, women were encouraged to play an active role, but this was seen as essential for

the development of the country and not as a way of responding to women's aspirations. They were expected to participate as a form of duty to their country, but in return, the government was not prepared to make any concessions to them or defend their rights. Lazreg, in her book 'The eloquence of silence' claimed that there was an inherent flaw in the concept of socialism adopted by the new Algerian government. It was based on Yugoslavian socialism and used its phraseology: men and women were referred to as the 'masses'. This, according to Lazreg, *prevent[ed] the identification of a gender-specific form of inequality or 'exploitation' [Lazreg 1994, p 143]. Women as a group were seen as necessary to the building of the state, but as contributors, not participants... Sacrifice, not duty complemented by right, was the corner stone of the new state's view of women [Lazreg 1994, p 146].* Lazreg went on to say that when it came to recognising the 'historic' leaders of the revolution, the list compiled by the Party did not have any women's names. However, the government did not hesitate to call on women to donate their jewellery to help the national bank build its reserves in gold in 1963. One of the problems for the FLN was that it had not clearly defined and thought out its post-independence policy. Once the euphoria of the first few months had gone, the Party was faced with serious problems, implementing a socialist programme was one of them, recognising women's rights was another. But not enough time had been spent thinking about the implications of opting for a modern socialist state. In particular the contradiction between the socialist principle of equality between all citizens and the unequal status of women in a traditional Muslim society.

Ben Bella's image of emancipated women seemed to be symbolised by that of the *Moudjahidate* during the war. Certainly, many women during the war defied their brothers and fathers to join the ALN. Such behaviour was acceptable then because of the extreme circumstances brought about by the war. By 1963, the conditions were totally different: women were no longer fighting colonialism, if they demanded recognition of their rights, it was seen by many as the result of Western influence and against Islamic traditions.

The government had no answers to offer to the young desperate girls who were committing suicide rather than accept their parent's choice of husband. Ben Bella who *had constructed a regime that relied almost entirely on himself and a small group of supporters [Stone 1997, p 49]* devoted all his energies to eliminate opposition. His government, with no viable political base, was too weak to respond to demands coming from the more progressive members of society and too afraid to anger the traditional Islamic groups. Furthermore, Ben Bella did not have full support for his socialist plans. He was openly criticised by Bashir Ibrahimi (former head of the Association des *Ulamas*, see section 4.2.1) at the FLN congress in 1964. Ibrahimi declared:

> The hour is grave. Our country is sliding nearer and nearer to hopeless civil war, an unprecedented moral crisis and insurmountable economic difficulties. Those governing us do not seem to realise that what our people aspire to above all is unity, peace and prosperity and that the theories on which their actions should be founded are to be found not in foreign doctrines but in our Arab-Islamic roots.
>
> *[Humbaraci 1966, p 237 in Willis PhD Thesis 1995, p 56]*

Both the Socialist doctrine and women's emancipation were considered to be inspired by the West and against the traditional values of Algerian society. In 1964, Sheikh Al Hachemi Tidjani, one of the more traditionalist *Ulama* and the General Secretary of the faculty of Arts at the University of Algiers, created his own association 'Al Qiyam' (values). The association's journal, 'Humanisme musulman', made frequent attacks on the government's socialist programme. The previous year, Tidjani had already attacked the Western dress adopted by young Algerian girls and had even suggested the creation of separate beaches for men and women *[Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord 1963, p 555].* During a meeting held in Algiers on January 5th 1964 and attended by 3,000 people, Tidjani called for the adoption of more 'Islamic policies' such as the closing of shops on Friday, jobs reserved for Muslims and an Islamic status for women. In an interview with the journal Confluent, he even went as far as reaffirming the inferiority of women stating:

> Il va de soi que la nature même de la femme la rend inégale de l'homme... Aux yeux de Dieu, la femme est l'égale de l'homme. Mais il existe entre elle et l'homme des différences naturelles qui font qu'elle se trouve dans un état d'infériorité. Ce sont ces différences naturelles qui font qu'il y a des différences mentales.
>
> *[Confluent no. 42-43 June/July 1964, p 631]*
>
> (It goes without saying that the very nature of women makes them unequal to men... In the eyes of God, women are equal to men. But there are natural differences between them which put women in an inferior position. These natural differences result in mental differences.)

Tidjani was evicted from his post at the University, but at the same time, the government started giving a new definition to its programme. The new phrase used by government officials, 'Muslim socialism' as opposed to 'Marxist socialism', shows the change of emphasis. The ex-minister of the *habous* defined the new socialism as:

> ...hostile à la lutte des classes, il respecte la petite propriété privée, il respecte l'héritage et implique, bien sûr, la croyance en Dieu.
>
> *[Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord 1965, p 179]*
>
> (...hostile to class struggle, respectful of small private property and the right to inheritance but implying, naturally, the belief in God.)

Adam, in his analysis of the situation, in l'Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord, saw the appointment of Amar Ouzegane as director of Révolution Africaine (replacing Mohammed Harbi, a Marxist

socialist) as symptomatic of this new slant in the political agenda. Following this appointment, the magazine, previously expressing the views of intellectuals with little interest in religious matters, started giving much more emphasis to the specific aspects of Algerian Muslim socialism *[Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord 1965, pp 176-180].*

During its short life, Ben Bella's unstable government was torn between the dream of a modern socialist state and the pressure from the right wing of the Party fuelled by the *Ulamas.* Ben Bella vacillated between the two tendencies and even if, at first, his intentions were to establish a real socialist state, based on equality between all members of society, he soon gave in to the pressure from the right. 1963 and 1964 were marked by several events which highlight this move by the government in an attempt at pacifying the more right wing Islamic tendencies. In 1963, Ben Bella made the Ramadan fast and the charity offerings which end it a national duty. Later on that year, he re-imposed strict laws on alcohol consumption, closed down cafés and increased taxes on the sale of alcohol. Religious education was made compulsory from September 1964 in all state schools *[Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord 1964, p 179].*

In this context, women's emancipation soon became too controversial an issue to debate. In 1963, Ben Bella was still prepared to state publicly:

> Il y a des hommes qui, au nom de l'Islam, déclarent qu'il est impossible de faire évoluer la femme dans la nation... Il faut une fois pour toutes barrer le chemin aux faux doctrinaires de l'Islam, car il est faux de prétendre que les principes de l'Islam vont à l'encontre de l'évolution de la femme.
>
> *[Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord 1963, p 555]*

> (There are some men who, in the name of Islam, declare that the evolution of women within the nation is impossible.... We must, once and for all, stand in the way of the false doctrinaires of Islam because it is wrong to pretend that the principles of Islam go against the evolution of women.)

By 1965, his attitude had radically changed, even to the extent of stopping M'Rabet's controversial radio programme (see section 14.3.1). In her analysis of the reasons behind this decision, M'Rabet saw more than a response to the pressure from the traditional Islamists. She explained it as a political decision to counter the fears of the politically and economically dominant force of the bourgeoisie. The revolution had not been carried out by the 'masses'. It had been orchestrated by those who had the most to gain from the departure of the colonial powers i.e. the bourgeois. Once independence had been declared, they took over the posts of responsibility in the government and benefited from the requisitioned properties previously owned by French settlers. They did not want to lose their newly acquired privileges. In this context, how could they support initiatives aimed at reducing inequalities in the country? They did not want, for instance, to see the working conditions of house maids improved as this would affect their own standard of living. Furthermore, if the government started listening to the demands of one social group, where would it end? The workers of the nationalised farms, who

had not been paid for months due to the poor management of these co-operatives, would start making their own demands; the self-managed industrial companies waiting for orders while government officials were busy importing goods to furnish their villas and apartments, would also start complaining. The misuse of power and the corruption in the first few years of independence were so widespread that only a very small minority of people saw the benefits of independence. The problem was that since they were in power, they made sure nothing changed. Many 'petits bourgeois' hid behind the banner of Islamic traditions to protect their personal interests and try to slow down or divert the government's original objectives.

Torn between the desire to enforce the socialist principle of equality between men and women and the fear of seeing his government destabilised by the growing discontent on the right of the Party, Ben Bella chose to forget about women's rights. As Anissa Hélie concluded in her article 'Gender and settler society in Algeria', *Algeria's 'specific socialism' (or 'Islamic socialism') reinforced the tensions between 'tradition' and 'modernity'. It attempted to reconcile the transformation of economic/political structures in line with the project of the new socialist state with traditional identity politics [Hélie in Stasiulis & Yuval-Davis 1995, p 279].* President Ben Bella whose government was weakened by its lack of a strong political base compromised his socialist principles and allowed the question of women's rights to remain unresolved. Once again at the heart of the debate, but not politically strong enough to have any real effect, the interests of women were sacrificed for political expediency.

15 The Boumédienne era

15.1 Overview 1965 – 1978

Boumédienne, who had been Minister of war in Ben Bella's government, took over the government of Algeria, on June 19th 1965, by a military coup. Boumédienne did not have unanimous support and during his presidency he constantly had to manoeuvre to neutralise various factions. In 1965, the country was in turmoil, both econmically and politically. In rural areas, the self-managed farms were running into difficulties due to inefficient and bureaucratic management, lack of equipment and a shortage of qualified workers able to use and repair machinery. Poor co-ordination between agriculture and industry meant that parts required for farm machinery were not available. As a result, crops remained un-harvested and fields could not be ploughed. The situation was so disastrous that unpaid farm workers were resorting to stealing food from the co-operatives to survive. The UGTA's[68] newspaper Révolution et Travail reported on the unrest in the *Département* of El Asnam:

> Nous voulons parler essentiellement des travailleurs de l'autogestion agricole. Une grève de 1.000 ouvriers a déjà éclaté dans le secteur de Milana. Grâce aux efforts de l'UGTA sa durée fut limitée. Un cri de douleur s'échappe de la bouche de chaque travailleur: trois mois sans être payé.
>
> *[Révolution et Travail no. 95 Sept 17th 1965, p 4]*
>
> (We are mostly referring to the workers of the self managed agricultural sector. A strike involving 1,000 workers has already broken out in the area of Milana. Thanks to the efforts of the UGTA, its duration was limited. The distressing clamour coming from the workers says it all: three months without pay.)

In cities, the conditions were not much better and many factory workers went on strike in 1965 to show their anger at the ever increasing food prices. The population had lost faith in the government.

To remedy the situation, Boumédienne set clear targets. Economically, his intentions were to develop heavy industries, take control of key economic sectors and in so doing, free the country from the vestiges of its colonial past and launch an extensive agrarian reform. He also wanted to develop educational opportunities and continue the arabisation programme. Alongside his economic plan, Boumédienne also had a political programme intended to legitimise his government. A major part of his plan was to decentralise the administration of the country to *create a state based on the interplay between the rulers and the ruled [Stone 1997, p 54].* He also transformed the army into a professional body, the Armée Nationale Populaire (ANP), with greater influence in the political life of the country. Boumédienne, with

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68 Union Générale des Travailleurs Algériens, the National Workers' Union.

his vast programme of reforms appealed to both the educated urban population who supported the secular elements of his programme and the conservative rural population who identified with the persistence of traditional Islamic values. Steering the country through the modernising process was, nevertheless, a complex task at which Boumédienne's government was only partly successful.

This thesis will only consider those areas which had direct implications on the life of Algerian women. It will, therefore, concentrate on government declarations and texts relating to women, the educational provisions for girls during this period, work opportunities for women and the involvement of women in the political sphere.

15.2 Government Policy

15.2.1 Official government declarations

In his speech on November 1st 1965, President Boumédienne reaffirmed the revolutionary spirit inherited from the war of independence. He confirmed his attachment to the socialist principles of *social justice* within a *society respectful of national values [Révolution Africaine no. 144 November 1st 1965, special supplement pp 1-8].* He stated that economic and social developments were hindered by demographic growth. In an attempt to respond to the ever increasing population, the government decided to tackle the agrarian reform which had been planned since independence, hoping it would result in a better distribution of food. Industrialisation was also going to play a major role by helping to reduce the trade deficit. The development of education and professional training were also a major part of the government's plans. Regarding women, the President praised their role during the war and added that:

> La femme algérienne prendra une part effective à toutes les tâches de construction du pays, et saura sauvegarder les principes de notre morale.
>
> *[Révolution Africaine no. 144 November 1st 1965, special supplement p 7]*

> (Algerian women will fully participate in all aspects of the development of the country while maintaining our moral principles.)

The phrase 'maintaining our moral principles' had been more specifically defined by Boumédienne a few months earlier:

> Sauvegarder les principes de notre morale, en rejetant tout mimétisme et tout exhibitionisme, afin de donner son sens véritable à la participation de la femme algérienne à la vie de la nation.
>
> *[Révolution Africaine no. 130 July 24th 1965, p 4]*

> (Safeguard our moral principles, by rejecting all 'mimicking' and exhibitionism, in order to give a true meaning to the participation of Algerian women in the life of the nation.)

This clearly indicated a rejection of a Western interpretation of women's role in society. The same theme was also present in Boumédienne's address on International Women's day on March 8th 1966. He declared:

> Cette évolution ne signifie nullement imitation de la femme occidentale. Les femmes qui 'réclament' leurs droits sont dans l'erreur, la question des droits de la femme est une question résolue, car la femme algérienne a acquis ces droits en participant efficacement à la lutte de libération.
>
> *[Révolution Africaine no. 163 March 12th - 18th 1966, p 9]*

> (The evolution of women can in no way signify the imitation of Western women. Women who "demand" the recognition of their rights are mistaken, the question of women's rights has been resolved because Algerian women acquired their rights by effectively participating in the war of liberation.)

He went on to say that the government was not against women receiving an education or working, although high unemployment amongst men was causing a serious dilemma. He reasserted the fact that any evolution in the role of women had to be respectful of the morals of the Algerian society and that there were some sound traditions which had to be preserved. The conclusion of his speech was that instead of demanding more rights, educated women should consider themselves fortunate to have reached their current enviable position and start helping other women, particularly those in the countryside, who had not yet seen any improvements in their standard of living. These educated women had so far failed in their duty to the country and its socialist principles, by allowing the inequality of women in towns and in villages to persist. Boumédienne went on to say that women had to:

> ... se débarrasser de son complexe d'infériorité et ne pas limiter ses activités à revendiquer ses droits.
>
> *[Révolution Africaine no. 163 March 12th - 18th 1966, p 9]*

> (... rid themselves of their inferiority complex and not limit their activities to demanding rights for themselves.)

It seems that, from the President's point of view, the evolution in the role of women had, by 1966, reached the acceptable limits allowed within the Algerian society and all that remained to be achieved was a levelling of the situation throughout the country. There was no need for any further demands.

Nevertheless, in 1966, rumours were circulating that a Family Code was about to be promulgated. This Code only ever saw the light of day as an unofficial leaked document. There

is little doubt, however, about its existence since President Boumédienne himself referred to it in his speech on International Women's Day on March 8th 1966. He declared:

> Le code qui est appelé à paraitre est celui de la préservation du droit de la femme et de la famille algérienne...
>
> *[Révolution Africaine no. 163 March 12th - 18th 1966, p 9]*
>
> (The Code which is about to be published is intended to preserve women's rights and the rights of the Algerian family.)

Fadéla M'Rabet obtained the document and published it in 1969 in her book 'La femme algérienne, Les Algériennes'. The main features of the Code were as follows:
Article 1 declared that the head of the family was the husband and the couple would reside in his house. The document also stated that both bride and groom had to be present at the wedding to give their consent in front of a judge or registrar. The marriage was declared valid after agreement on a dowry (to be paid to the bride) and after the bride's father/guardian had given his consent (article 3). A woman, even if she had reached the legal age of majority, could not marry without the agreement of her father/guardian (article 18). Certain conditions could be stipulated in the marriage contract such as the undertaking by the husband that he would not take a second wife, or the agreement that the wife would be allowed to work outside the home (article 20). It was also stated that the dowry belonged to the wife exclusively and was to be paid in full if the marriage was consummated (article 21). A Muslim woman could not marry a non Muslim (article 32). Marriage to a second wife could only be allowed by a judge (article 33). The wife owed respect and obedience to her husband (article 38). The dissolution of marriage had to be pronounced by a judge. Either or both husband and wife could ask for divorce and in the case of the husband's request, the divorce could be approved in recognition of his right of repudiation (article 46). The husband was responsible for the maintenance of his wife during their married life. If he repudiated her, she was entitled to damages and maintenance for herself and her children. In case of divorce or death of the father, the custody of the children was given to the mother *[M'Rabet 1969, pp 253-263]*.

It is clear that this draft Family Code contained certain progressive measures such as the presence of the girl at the wedding, the right for a woman to ask for divorce and the entitlement to maintenance in case of repudiation. However, the majority of the marriage and divorce regulations proposed showed a strict adherence to many Maliki precepts: the wife owes obedience to her husband, has to live in his house and be financially supported by him, he has the right of repudiation and polygamy, a woman must have the consent of her father/guardian to marry. The introduction in the marriage contract of clauses regarding polygamy and the right for a woman to work outside her home were significant, but were also indicative of the fact that women's basic rights had not been fully recognised. If a woman's right to work had been truly established, there would have been no need for a special clause in the marriage contract

allowing her to exercise this right. Even though only a few timid changes towards a more progressive regime concerning family laws were being proposed, the draft was never adopted. These modest changes were unacceptable to the more traditionalist elements of the government. Consequently, the draft was abandoned to avoid internal conflicts.

After the 1966 aborted attempt, another draft document was prepared in 1970 and discussed by members of the Council of the UNFA (June 10th-13th 1971). According to the UNFA's own publication, El Djazairia, the organisation's main concerns, after studying the proposal, regarded the conditions of marriage. The UNFA requested the enforcement of the legal marrying age, the setting of an upper limit for the dowry and the establishment of strict penalties for men who abandoned their families *[El Djazairia no. 10 1971, p 16]*. This draft proposal was never officially published but unofficial copies must have been circulated since in July 1972, the Tunisian magazine Jeune Afrique published an article on it, declaring that:

> Le Code de la famille est prêt: il n'attend pour être appliqué que son adoption par le conseil de la révolution.
>
> *[Jeune Afrique no. 603 July 29th 1972, p 24]*
>
> (The family Code is ready: all that is required for its application is its adoption by the revolution council.)

The article gave a brief summary of the main points of the document. The woman would have custody of the children in case of divorce, repudiation could only be pronounced by a judge, polygamy would be virtually impossible since the woman could include a clause in her marriage contract forbidding her husband from taking a second wife. The breech of this clause would entitle the woman to divorce. Women would also be given the right to work and open a bank account without their husband's or father's permission. Finally, inheritance rights would be equal for men and women. Marriage between a Muslim woman and a non Muslim man, however, was still prohibited. The article made no comments on the new Code, it simply indicated that its application would not be immediate since the revolutionary council considered that:

> ... la révolution agraire entrainera suffisamment de bouleversements.
>
> *[ibid]*
>
> (... the agrarian revolution will cause enough disruption.)

Although this Family Code could have brought positive changes to the legal position of Algerian women, it was never promulgated. If Jeune Afrique's sources were accurate, the reason given for delaying the vote indicates clearly the government's priorities and its political weakness in the face of the expected opposition.

On March 27th - 28th 1973, a symposium on the problems of family laws was held in Algiers. Representatives of the Council of the UNFA participated in the congress, alongside doctors, lawyers, sociologists, members of the national commission working on the elaboration of the Family Code and representatives of the High Islamic Council. The newspaper, El Moudjahid, published a lengthy article pointing out the conflicting views of the UNFA and the lawyers. The main disagreements between the two groups seemed to have been on the questions of polygamy, inheritance rights for women, adoption and mixed marriages. While the UNFA pointed out that, in a modern society, it was virtually impossible for a man to support several wives and their children, the lawyers argued that polygamy was a major element of the 'Arabo-Islamic' values which had safeguarded the community against colonial attacks. This custom should, therefore, be preserved as part of the cultural heritage of the country. Furthermore, it would contribute to the 'reinforcement of the human capital' of the nation. The same argument of preserving cultural heritage was presented by the lawyers regarding women's inheritance rights, but they did not make any clear proposals and concluded that this problem would have to be resolved in view of the socialist orientation of the government. The UNFA's response was that, considering the fact that a large number of women were now working and contributing to the household expenses, they should equally be eligible to a fair share of their husband's inheritance. Of course, this would go against the Muslim law. On the question of adoption, the UNFA also favoured a departure from the Shari'a. They argued that the strict observance of the Quranic precept, forbidding adoptive parents from giving their name to the adopted child discouraged parents from adopting and left thousands of children destitute. Once again the position of the lawyers was unclear. They simply called for 'planned government action'. Regarding mixed marriages, the two sides were in total disagreement: whilst the UNFA advocated a total ban of such marriages, for both men and women, the lawyers declared that the Qur'an was clear on this question, only allowing a Muslim man to marry a non Muslim woman. Their position was uncompromising and they declared that there should be no further discussions on this matter. On the questions of dowry, marriage and divorce, both parties seemed to agree in principle. The amount of gifts exchanged for a wedding was considered excessive and a maximum value for the dowry (500 DA) was proposed by the UNFA whilst the lawyers simply called for the dowry to be reduced to a symbolic gesture. Regarding marriages, it was agreed that the legal marrying age would be 16 for girls and 19 for boys and that the judge would act for the father if the latter refused to give his consent. Just as the presence and consent of both bride and groom were required for a marriage, the same principle would apply for a divorce. These were the opinions of the representatives of the UNFA and the lawyers *[El Moudjahid April 13th 1973 no. 80 Supplement pp 12, 13].*

At the third Congress of the UNFA (April 1st - 4th 1974) Boumédienne explained that a consensus had not yet been reached regarding a Family Code. He declared that the debate would remain open until the opinions of the majority of the protagonists were in harmony with the political options available to the government and thus could stand a chance of

implementation. He was clearly not going to initiate any action which could be seen as controversial. Boumédienne was clear on one point, however:

> ...la liberté, le progrès et l'émancipation de la femme arabe, musulmane et algérienne en particulier, ne peuvent se faire au détriment de la morale sociale et des traditions qui sont à juste titre les véritables liens du peuple avec ses origines.
>
> *[El Djazairia no. 38 Dossier no. 20 1974, p 6]*

> (...the freedom, progress and emancipation of Arab Muslim and, in particular, of Algerian women cannot take place to the detriment of the social morals and traditions which are rightly the true links of a people with their roots.)

In terms of government priorities for action, women's emancipation was not going to be actively pursued at the risk of challenging traditions. And in any case, the onus for bringing about a change in social attitudes rested with women. He added:

> N'attendez pas que nous imposions par la force le changement de certaines mentalités figées. Vous êtes certainement capables d'agir pour le mieux dans le cadre de l'Union des Femmes, dans la mesure où vous contribuerez à en faire une organisation suffisamment forte pour vous aider à exercer vos droits et à résoudre les problèmes qui entravent votre émancipation, tels le divorce, la polygamie et autres questions que j'ai déjà abordées.
>
> *[El Djazairia no. 38 Dossier no. 20 1974, p 7]*

> (Don't expect us to impose through force a change in certain stilted mentalities. Your best line of action is within the Women's Organisation since your support will make it into a strong movement capable of helping you exercise your rights and solve the problems which hamper your emancipation such as the problems of divorce, polygamy and other such issues already mentioned.)

By criticising women for their lack of support for their national organisation, the government was putting the blame on them for the slow progress in their emancipation. Instead of showing a lead by bringing in new legislation or enforcing existing laws, such as equality of pay and working conditions, the government was leaving the initiative to women and their organisation. However, one could not blame women for not joining an organisation which was totally powerless. A handful of women from the UNFA were selected to work in the various commissions set up by the government, but this was no more than a token gesture as their numbers, in relation to men, never gave them any real influence on the decisions. There were no women in the government and no women at the top level of the Party. The rhetoric about the lack of commitment and disinterest on the part of women acted as a smoke screen behind which the government could hide its own inefficiency and weakness. In other areas, such as the agrarian reform, Boumédienne was prepared to face the antagonism of certain sections of the population and introduce radical changes, but women's position in society was too sensitive a subject on which he did not seem to want to take a clear stand. During Boumédienne's presidency no agreement was reached on the Family Code.

15.2.2 Family planning - Government position 1965 - 1979

15.2.2.1 Demographic situation

The question of family planning or the 'spacing out of births' as it was termed in Algeria needs particular attention since it directly affected women, but also in view of the rapid growth of the population which threatened the economic development of the country. The following table demonstrates the extent of the problem:

Figure 13 Algerian resident population, birth rate and population growth 1967-1979

Year	Total resident population	Birth rate per thousand	Population growth per thousand
1967	12,567,000	50.1	34.2
1968	12,950,000	47.7	30.3
1969	13,346,000	49.8	32.8
1970	13,746,000	50.1	33.7
1971	14,177,000	48.4	31.4
1972	14,612,000	47.7	32.0
1973	15,065,000	47.6	31.4
1974	15,513,000	46.5	31.4
1975	16,018,000	46.0	30.5
1976	16,521,000	45.4	29.8
1977	17,058,000	45.0	31.7
1978	17,626,000	46.3	32.9
1979	18,104,000	44.0	31.3

[Office National des Statistiques no.15 April - June 1987, p 6]

The figures show that the birth rate, one of the highest in the world, hardly changed between 1967 and 1979. It was constantly higher than the growth rate of the overall population, leading to an increasing demand on the primary education sector. This had dire consequences for the country: despite the enormous efforts made by the government to educate all children of school age, this target was never achieved (see section 15.5.1). Furthermore, with a very large proportion of children under working age (in 1977, 54.2% of the population was under 18) *[Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord 1977, p 642]*, the economy could not respond to the ever growing needs of the population in terms of food supplies and housing. The birth rate also had very serious effects on women's health, with a high mortality rate amongst women, and on children's health, with a high proportion of premature births and infant mortality. In 1965, the

infant mortality[69] in Algeria was 154 per thousand, compared with 145 in both Morocco and Tunisia, 172 in Egypt and 23 in the West *[La Documentation Française Notes et Etudes Documentaires no. 4878 1989, p 66].*

In urban centres, women suffering from the devastating effects of repeated pregnancies, were becoming aware that they did not have to accept their situation and were beginning to ask for contraceptives. A doctor from the Mustapha Hospital in Algiers declared in an interview in 1965 that the question most women posed when coming to the hospital was: 'what can I do not to be pregnant all the time?' Most of these women already had four or five children and wanted to 'space out' or avoid pregnancies for health as well as economic reasons *[Confluent nos. 50-52 April-June 1965, p 329].*

Despite the serious economic consequences of the high birth rate and evidence of a change of attitude amongst some sections of the population, the government seemed extremely reluctant to act. And yet, a number of public figures had expressed their concern at the lack of government intervention in this domain. In March 1966, in her address at the celebration of International Women's day, Mrs Kheira Tazit, member of the Executive Commission of the National Workers' Union, UGTA,[70] called on the government to make family planning accessible to all *[Révolution Africaine no. 163 March 18th 1966, pp 10,11].* A few months later, Dr Taleb, minister for education, declared during a radio and television broadcast that if the massive demographic growth was not curbed by appropriate birth control measures, the educational plans set by the government would be impossible to achieve *[M'Rabet 1969, p 230].*

Other Islamic countries had, for some time, decided to introduce family planning programmes: Turkey in 1961, Jordan, Tunisia and Egypt in 1964. As we saw earlier (in section 16.2.1), in Tunisia, the government went even further and, in 1965, legalised abortion under certain conditions. However, the response from the Algerian government was extremely limited. In 1967 one family planning centre was opened in Algiers and two years later two others were opened in Oran and Constantine. These centres were known as PMI: 'Protection Maternelle et Infantile', which emphasised the fact that they were not part of a national birth control programme, but were aimed at the development of health care for mothers and children. El Moudjahid indeed commented:

> Le problème de la régulation des naissances, tel qu'il se pose en Algérie, consiste avant tout à assurer la protection de la mère et de l'enfant. La régulation concerne donc, dans un premier temps, les femmes dont l'état de santé ou la situation matérielle ne permettent pas d'élever plusieurs enfants à la fois... La stérilisation et l'avortement sont exclus... Soulignons la nécessité de respecter la liberté des

69 Percentage of deaths of children up to one year old.

70 Union Générale des Travailleurs Algériens

> parents d'accepter ou de rejeter le recours à toute méthode de limitation de la famille.
>
> *[El Moudjahid June 3rd 1967 in Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord 1967, p 388]*
>
> (The problem of birth control, as far as Algeria is concerned, consists primarily in providing health care for mothers and children. In a first stage, birth control will be offered to mothers whose health or living conditions prevent them from bringing up several children at the same time... Sterilisation and abortion are excluded... We must stress the fact that parents' choice to use or reject contraceptive methods must be respected.)

It was only in 1974 that a real family planning programme was set up. According to M Ladjali who was responsible for the programme at the Health Ministry, only the Algiers' centre was still operating at that time. Despite its claim of being a modern socialist state, the government was not prepared to challenge traditional views on contraception.

15.2.2.2 Resistance to the implementation of a family planning programme

The first reason which might be invoked for postponing the introduction of a large scale birth control programme was that the country was not ready for it. A proportion of the population, especially in rural areas, did not want to limit the number of children per family. This was true to some extent. In her evaluation of the effectiveness of the family planning programme between 1975 and 1979, Ladjali talks of 'women's desire for children'. In the Algerian society of the time, women's only recognised status was still that of mother and wife. School books portrayed young girls as future mothers whereas boys were encouraged to go out and establish their position in society as bread winners *[Haddab 1979,pp 7-18]*. The only way to attain a respectable position for women was by becoming mothers. Society saw women who wanted to play a different role as 'anomalies'. These women were made to feel guilty for not fulfilling their expected role. The corollary of this cultural phenomenon was that women who had a large family felt more secure, especially against the threat of repudiation: it was much more 'acceptable' to repudiate a wife without children than one with eight children. Another factor which encouraged women to have large families was the high rate of infant mortality. As in all developing countries, children were seen as a means of increasing the family income and a safeguard for old age. The more children there were, the more secure was the economic future of the family and of the mother in particular. Women's desire for children can also be explained by the fact that women assumed, to a large extent, the responsibility for the death of their young children. Consequently, a child's death had to be 'compensated' for by the birth of another child. Very often, the death of a young child was not reported to the registry of births and deaths and the next baby of the same sex was given the name of the dead child to replace him or her in the family *[Ladjali 1985, pp 105,106]*. All these reasons partially explain why some women were reluctant to use contraceptive methods, or having started to use them, abandoned them after a few years. However, according to a survey conducted in 1966 by the government run organisation 'Association Algérienne pour la Recherche Démographique et

Sociale' (AARDES), large sections of the population were aware of contraceptive methods and were willing to use them. The survey discovered that:

- in urban areas 45% of women and 51% of men preferred to have 3 to 4 children,
- in rural areas, 46% of women wished to have a maximum of 5 children, whereas 37% of men would prefer 3 to 4,
- in urban areas, 40% of women and 64% of men were aware of some method of contraception,
- in rural areas, these numbers were respectively 16% and 39%,
- 65% of women in urban areas and 52% in rural areas expressed the wish to receive more information on contraceptive methods,
- 45% of men were interested in more information. [71]

[El Moudjahid Supplement no. 80 April 13th 1973, pp 13,14]

Even though the percentage of people in favour of contraception was higher in urban areas than in rural areas, it seems that, as early as 1966, a substantial proportion of the population would have been prepared to limit their number of children to 4 or 5 if contraception had been available. It seems that the question of contraception was certainly of interest to women but also to men.

Religion is the second factor which might have explained the apparent unwillingness on the part of the government to set up a comprehensive national birth control programme. And yet, there should not have been any doubts since, as Minai pointed out:

> [Early Muslim jurists'] writings show that Islamic medicine of the Middle Ages knew about and recommended both condom and forerunners of modern vaginal suppositories and the diaphragm.

[Minai 1981, p 164]

Furthermore, in February 1965, the *Mufti* of Algiers, when asked, in a radio interview, if birth control was allowed by Islam, gave the following answer:

> Le contrôle des naissances est autorisé. Il est permis d'utiliser les méthodes contraceptives; mais on ne peut agir qu'avant la formation du foetus. L'avortement reste strictement interdit.

[Confluent nos. 50-52 April-June 1965, p 313]

(Birth control is authorised. Contraceptive methods can be used; however, one must act before the formation of the foetus. Abortion is strictly prohibited.)

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71 It is not clear from the article whether this percentage refers to both urban and rural areas or only to rural areas.

The message seemed quite unequivocal. However, in 1968 the Health Ministry sought further reassurance and asked the High Islamic Council (HIC) to give its opinion on contraception. The response was:

> La limitation des naissances est ... permise dans les conditions suivantes:
> 1 Qu'elle soit pratiquée d'une façon individuelle en cas de nécessité existante ou éventuelle, concernant la mère ou ses enfants nés ou à naitre.
> 2 Que la détermination de cette nécessité soit réservée à l'appréciation des intéressés eux-mêmes.
>
> *[Al Chaab April 23rd 1968, in Ladjali 1985, p 146]*

> (Birth control is ... allowed under the following conditions:
> 1 It should be offered on an individual basis, if it were deemed necessary by existing or anticipated circumstances concerning the mother or her children, living or to be born.
> 2 The decision regarding the need to use birth control methods should be left to the individuals concerned.)

The document also recommended that the government should organise an information campaign prior to setting up a birth control programme. As we can see from the HIC's response, family planning was quite acceptable from a religious point of view. However, the controversy persisted and in 1975, after a television broadcast by a religious figure condemning birth control, a number of women stopped their contraception. It can be concluded that, although there were no real religious grounds for banning contraception, the population was not given sufficient reassurance from the government to fully adopt a family planning programme.

Algeria was not the only Maghreb country reluctant to introduce an effective Family Planning programme. The situation in Morocco was very similar. Interest in Family Planning started, at government level, in the mid 1960s after a report from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development advocated birth control as the best way to increase the standard of living of the population (the birth rate was around 5% in the late 1960s *[Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord 1979, p 295]*. But the government's response was very slow. In 1972, less than 10,000 women attended Family Planning centres each year *[ibid]*. And yet, the population was not totally opposed to contraception. A survey conducted in 1966-1967 showed that only 21% of the people interviewed wanted five to six children, the majority (47%) only wanted three to four children. Furthermore, 56% of women under 50 years of age and 50.5% of men in the same age group declared that they were in favour of using some form of contraception. As in Algeria, there were some misconceptions, among the population, about the position of Islam regarding contraception, and the lack of clear information from the government seemed to be the main problem *[ibid, pp 299, 300]*.

15.2.2.3 The limited government programme and its achievements (1974 -1979)

The following table gives an idea of the evolution of the family planning programme set up by the government in 1974:

Figure 14 Number of family planning centres and new patients: 1975 - 1979

Year	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979
Number of PMI[72]	38	95	122	156	237
Number of new patients	13.784	23.743	33.941	50.352	82.076

[Ladjali 1985, pp 69,70]

The conclusions one can draw from these figures are that there was a substantial increase in the number of PMI centres and new patients between 1975 and 1979. Both figures increased six-fold during this period. However, in relation to the total number of women of procreating age, the percentages were very low: in 1978, 90,787 women received contraception at a PMI centre which represented 3.63% of the target population. The vast majority of women receiving contraception lived in urban areas (84.1%) but, in rural areas, only 2.2% of women had access to contraception *[Ladjali 1985, p 77]*. It seems that the government information campaign had not been totally successful since the majority of women did not understand contraception as a means of deciding if and when they wanted children. Ladjali stated that, on average, women who attended PMI centres already had five children. This indicates that, instead of controlling and planning their fertility, these women had bowed to social pressures and were already in a very difficult situation by the time they resorted to contraception.

In conclusion, it seems undeniable that, until 1974, the government was not proactive in terms of family planning. Even when a limited programme was established, it was grossly inadequate, particularly in rural areas where the needs were greatest. Apart from the limited number of birth control centres, doctors and paramedical staff were not receiving adequate retraining. This resulted in a very disparate effectiveness across the country. The lack of real commitment on the part of the government is demonstrated by the fact that there was no separate budget for PMIs. All expenditure had to come out of the preventative medicine budget *[GRFA-CDSH April 1982, p 17]*.

The reasons for the slow and hesitant approach, from the government, could not have been based on religious grounds since, as early as 1968 the High Islamic Council had given its approval for a national campaign. A substantial proportion of the population was also in favour of a limitation of the number of children per family. One can, therefore, conclude that if the

[72] Protection Maternelle et Infantile (name given to family planning centres in Algeria).

government was so unwilling to establish a family planning programme, it could have been because it did not want to see the status of women in society profoundly changed. Giving women a real choice regarding their fertility would have been the recognition that women were more than just procreators. It would have been an acknowledgement of their status as adult citizens, in charge of their life. This would have required a total change of attitude towards women. In 1966, the General Secretary of the UNFA, Mrs Chentouf, recognised the need for such a profound change. She talked of the necessity of a *demystification... of pregnant women.* She even went further and called for a *rehabilitation of childless women [Révolution Africaine no. 197 November 18th-24th 1966, p 9].* Some 20 years later, another woman echoed the words of Mrs Chentouf. Malika Ladjali, in her evaluation of the situation in 1979 declared:

> Les prestations médicales... n'influenceront que très peu la maitrise de la fécondité si l'environnement n'offre pas en parallèle l'information nécessaire, une accessibilité totale aux soins, et surtout un changement du statut social de la femme dans la famille et dans la société.
> Il faut agir sur la représentation traditionnelle de la femme, parfois réduite au seul statut de reproductrice.
>
> *[Ladjali 1985, pp 125,126]*
>
> (Medical support will only have a very marginal influence over the control of fecundity unless there is in parallel a framework of information, total access to facilities and most importantly, a change in the status of women in the family and society.
> One must act on the traditional representation of women, sometimes reduced to the single status of procreator.)

As we will see in sections 17.3.3 and 18.1.3 in the 1980s and 1990s, another crucial factor was going to start influencing women's attitude to contraception, namely their higher educational levels. The girls born after independence who benefited from the widening educational opportunities were, by the 1980s, beginning to have a different perception of themselves and their role in society. Some were entering the job market. At that time, the government also changed its stance on contraception, realising the devastating economic effects of an uncontrolled population growth.

15.3 Political and legal texts

15.3.1 The Charter of 1976

By 1974, Boumédienne felt that he had secured the main economic and administrative reforms he had intended and it was time to turn to political readjustments. He declared, in an interview with the newspaper Al Ahram, that 1974 marked the end of the first stage of the Algerian revolution and 1975 would see *a new revolution, that of socialism [Annuaire de l'Arique du Nord 1974, p 306].* A major element of this socialist revolution was the introduction of a new National Charter replacing the 1964 Charter of Algiers and redefining the fundamental

principles underpinning the future of the country. A new Constitution was also written giving the framework in which the Charter would be implemented. Finally, Boumédienne asked the country to show its commitment to his leadership by electing him as president.

The new Constitution, after re-stating the fact that the Algerian Republic was based on Socialism and Islam was the state religion, reiterated the basic principles of equality of rights for all citizens. In Article 39, relating to discrimination, sex discrimination was specifically mentioned:[73]

> Tous les citoyens sont égaux en droits et en devoirs. Toute discrimination fondée sur les préjugés de sexe, de race, ou de métier, est proscrite.
>
> *[Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord 1976, p 775]*
>
> (All citizens are equal in rights and duties. Any discrimination based on sex, race or prejudices directed at certain occupations is banned.)

Article 42 strictly concerned women's rights:

> Tous les droits politiques, économiques, sociaux et culturels de la femme algérienne sont garantis par la Constitution.
>
> *[ibid]*
>
> (All political, economic, social and cultural rights of Algerian women are guarantied by the Constitution.)

As in the 1963 Constitution, the government emphasised the importance of the family, calling it 'the basic cell of society' and declaring that it was under the 'protection of the state' (article 65). Education and work were deemed to be absolute rights for all citizens (articles 66 & 59), remuneration being based on the principle of 'equal pay for equal work'. Women were explicitly urged to participate fully in the establishment of socialism and the development of the nation (article 81) *[Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord 1976, p 777].*

It seemed that women had nothing to fear regarding their constitutional rights. They were equal citizens in all aspects of social, political and economic life of the country.

The text of the National Charter is of particular importance firstly due to its size (seven chapters covering in detail all aspects of the future political social and economic orientations of the government) and secondly due to the way the President chose to present it to the country. In order to gain a clear public mandate for his future political and economic reforms, Boumédienne organised a national debate around the new National Charter. A draft of the document was circulated to all local assemblies, national organisations, management committees, private and national companies in all the economic sectors. During a whole month

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73 This particular type of discrimination had not been mentioned in the 1963 Constitution. (see section 14.2.1)

(May 1976), all citizens were invited to attend meetings to give their opinion on the draft document. A summary of the debates was then collated at regional level and passed on to a national commission whose role was to amend the original document taking into account the wishes and criticisms expressed by the population. The importance given by the government to the debate on the Charter, casting it as 'the people's Charter', the genuine and wide-spread interest during the month of discussions and the massive show of support in the referendum to adopt the final text of the Charter, make it an essential document to study.[74] It is particularly revealing to compare the draft document with the final text to see what changes were made and to analyse their significance.[75] An attempt will also be made to include, whenever possible, the views expressed by the population and those of the UNFA on women's issues.

One of the first questions discussed in the Charter was the relationship between socialism and Islam. The draft document merely stated, under the heading 'Socialism and Islam':

> Le peuple algérien est un peuple musulman.
>
> *[draft, p 374]*
>
> (The Algerian nation is a Muslim nation.)

In the final document, however, greater emphasis was given to the religious aspect. The heading was changed to 'Islam and the Socialist revolution' and a further sentence was added:

> L'Islam est la religion de l'Etat.
>
> *[final, p 86]*
>
> (Islam is the state religion).

This showed the influence of the traditionalists and the pre-eminence the government was prepared to give to Islam. This is of paramount importance since the position of women in Algeria has always been defined in relation to the 'Arabo-Islamic' context. Boumédienne's ideals for the Algerian society of the future did not extend to a total separation of state and religion and the commission which revised the text of the Charter made sure that there was no ambiguity on the matter.

Amongst the "fundamental principles of the edification of socialism", employment was presented as "not just a right but also a duty and an honour". This section made a specific reference to women. The draft document stated that:

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74 The Charter was adopted on June 27th 1976 with enormous popular support: 91% of the people registered on the electoral lists voted, 6.8 million voted in favour of the text and 102.000 voted against *[Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord 1976, p 306]*.

75 The text of the Charter used here is the integral text published by Editions Sociales in 1976, prefaced by an introduction by the French journalist R. Lambotte. References to the draft document are taken from extracts published in 'Un Algérien nommé Boumédiène', Francos & Séréni, 1976. References to the two documents hereon will be indicated 'draft' and 'final' only for greater clarity.

> Partant du principe de l'égalité des sexes, le socialisme, qui reconnait l'effort méritoire qu'elle fournit au foyer, encourage instamment la femme, dans l'intérêt de la société et de la famille, à occuper autant que faire se peut un poste de travail.
>
> *[draft, p 384]*
>
> (Based on the principle of sex equality, socialism, recognising the commendable role women play in the home, strongly encourages them, in the interest of society and the family, to take employment whenever possible).

This paragraph was amended to:

> Partant du principe de l'égalité des sexes, le socialisme qui reconnait la place essentielle qu'elle occupe dans la cellule familiale en tant que mère, épouse, et citoyenne, encourage la femme, dans l'intérêt de la société, à occuper un poste de travail.
>
> *[final, p 105]*
>
> (Based on the principle of sex equality, socialism which recognises the essential role women play in the family unit as mothers, wives and citizens, encourages them, in the interest of society, to take up employment).

These changes mainly emphasised what the government considered to be the 'essential' role of women: mothers, wives and citizens. Women were only encouraged and no longer 'strongly' encouraged to work outside their home and, this too, in the interest of society as a whole. Women's personal development did not appear in the document. However, the qualifying phrase: to take up employment 'whenever possible' was abandoned.[76]

The next paragraph in which women were specifically mentioned was concerned with individual freedoms. After reasserting the respect of fundamental human rights and the equality of all citizens in front of the law, the draft text stated:

> Le socialisme doit ... assurer ... la libération de la femme; le Code de la famille, en particulier, devra contribuer à la libération de la femme des survivances de nature féodale et garantir ses droits dans le cadre du respect de la personnalité nationale et des éxigences du monde moderne.
>
> *[draft, p 386]*
>
> (Socialism must ... ensure ... the liberation of women; the Family Code, in particular, will have to contribute to the liberation of women from feudal relics and protect their rights taking into account our national identity and the demands of the modern world.)

The changes made to this section were quite substantial. Instead of a lengthy paragraph recognising the need to introduce new legislation in order to alter attitudes and feudal practices (albeit within the framework of the specific Algerian identity) we are faced with a vague

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76 According to El Djazairia, the women's national organisation publication, this phrase had angered some women. They felt that if the phrase had been maintained, some people could have argued that the socio-economic conditions were not right for employing women and, therefore, it would have been perfectly legal not to offer them work *[El Djazairia no. 51 1976, p 15]*.

undertaking promoting women's participation in the life of the country. No mention of guaranteeing women's rights, even the term 'liberation' seemed too strong. The government took a definite step back in its support of women as can be seen from the new paragraph:

> Le socialisme doit ... assurer ... la promotion de la femme et sa pleine participation à la vie politique, économique, sociale et culturelle de la nation.
>
> *[final, p 107]*

> (Socialism must ... ensure ... the promotion of women and their full participation in the political, economic, social and cultural life of the nation.)

Another interesting point to note is that, in both documents, women as a group were not considered to be amongst the 'fundamental forces of the revolution'. The list given included workers, - manual and intellectual - djounouds (revolutionary fighters), young people and patriotic revolutionary elements. One could argue that women were included in these groups and did not warrant a special mention. However, in certain sections of the Charter, such as employment and individual freedoms, women were mentioned separately. Since the government had always praised women for their participation in the war of independence, it could have been expected to see them recognised as an essential element of the socialist revolution in this official document. In another section of the Charter, when referring to the choice of Party representatives at the higher levels, young people were singled out as representing a valuable element in society who should be welcomed at the higher echelons of the FLN as they would bring enthusiasm and a new vision in their appreciation of problems *[final, p 127]*. Women could also have brought different perspectives and new approaches to debates. The government could have demonstrated its intention to treat them as valuable members of the society and encouraged women to see themselves as such by acknowledging the specific contribution they could make to the Party leadership.

Regarding national organisations, the message was unequivocal: national organisations were under the tutelage of the FLN. In both documents, we can find the statement:

> Le Parti jouera un rôle d'impulsion, d'orientation et de contrôle vis-à-vis des organisations de masse, sans pour autant affaiblir leur capacité d'initiative, ou se substituer à elles.
>
> *[final, pp 128, 129]*

> (The Party will be a driving force, guiding and controlling national organisations, without reducing their initiative or acting for them.)

The Charter stated that leading figures in these organisations would have to be Party members whose objectives were to spread the FLN ideology *[final, p 128]*. Regarding the women's organisation, UNFA,[77] we can read in the draft document:

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[77] It is interesting to note that this organisation was treated last after all the other national organisations.

> La Révolution algérienne, qui a contracté envers la femme une dette historique, doit répondre aux espoirs de toutes les femmes du pays en créant les conditions nécessaires de leur émancipation (sic).
>
> *[draft, p 394]*
>
> (The Algerian Revolution contracted a historic debt towards women and must respond to the hopes of all women by creating the necessary conditions for their emancipation.)

The 'historic debt' was no longer mentioned in the final document, although an introductory paragraph praising women for their role in the war was still present. This might be considered a minor alteration, but it is indicative of the pressure put on the government by the traditionalists to minimise the need for the nation to recognise women's rights. Later on in the document we are told that the UNFA must aim to group all Algerian women, becoming an important instrument in their emancipation which would have to comply with the nation's ethics. The organisation's targets were defined as follows:

> ... l'UNFA doit faire un travail permanent de sensibilisation, d'éducation et de formation, s'attacher avec persévérance à élever le niveau culturel et la conscience politique des femmes, les mobiliser selon leurs aptitudes et suivant les conditions locales, dans des tâches pratiques d'envergure nationale, élargir sans cesse leur participation effective à la vie économique, sociale et politique du pays.
>
> *[final, p 134]*
>
> (... the UNFA must engage in a constant heightening of awareness, education and training, strive to raise the cultural level of women as well as their political conscience, mobilise them according to their aptitudes and the prevailing local conditions, to take part in practical tasks of national dimension, continually widen their active participation in the economic, social and political life of the country.)

Although these aims were, as a whole, very important, it is regrettable that the Charter was not more radical by giving the UNFA the role of defending and furthering all women's rights and not merely the right to education and training. The UNFA's role was also curtailed by the phrase, 'according to the prevailing local conditions'. This left the door open to any interpretation. In rural areas, parents were often reluctant to continue sending their daughters to school after the age of 11. In those circumstances, it was not clear what attitude the UNFA should take. The same applied to the participation of women in politics which met with much disapproval from men, particularly in rural areas. By allowing this proviso to be introduced in the Charter, the government was once again bowing to the pressure from the traditionalists. One could argue that a large proportion of the population was not ready for a fundamental change of attitude towards women. However, nor was the whole nation behind Boumédienne regarding his socialist plans. Those were nevertheless clearly set out as constituting the foundation of the future developments in Algeria. The same could have been done regarding women's rights, if the determination on the part of the government had been there. A paragraph devoted to women's 'promotion' (the words 'emancipation' or 'liberation' had been dropped) was added in the final Charter document, under the heading 'Cultural Revolution'. Once again this aspect of

the revolution seemed low on the government's priorities since it came eighth out of the nine subjects considered. It stated that, although the status of women had greatly improved since the war, certain feudal attitudes and traditions were still prevailing in some areas. Further progress would have to be made in order to comply with the established principles of equality and social justice for all. According to the Charter, changes should occur in view of:

> ...transformer une sorte d'environnement mental et juridique négatif et parfois préjudiciable à l'exercice de ses droits reconnus d'épouse et de mère, et à sa sécurité matérielle et morale.
>
> *[final, p 163]*

> (...transforming a negative environment both in attitude and judicial terms, which is prejudicial occasionally to women in the exercise of their established rights as mothers and wives, and in their material and moral protection.)

The conclusion one can draw from this statement of intent is that women were still principally viewed as mothers and wives.

Examples of the domains where changes should occur were:

- the levels of dowry, qualified of 'excessive and ruinous',
- husbands abandoning their wife and children without any source of income,
- children taken away from their mother unjustifiably,
- unjustified divorces without payment of any maintenance,
- violence against women,
- exploitation of women by anti-social elements of society.

The paragraph concluded that although the state was fully committed to the promotion of women,

> ...la femme... reste le meilleur défenseur de ses propres droits et de sa dignité...
>
> *[final, p164]*

> (...women... remain the best protectors of their own rights and dignity.)

A detailed analysis of the text shows that it often carefully avoided crucial issues. The abolition of the dowry was advocated not because it was degrading for women, but because it was too costly (for men and the country's economy). Unjustified divorces were criticised, but repudiation was not mentioned. A statement such as the *exploitation of women by anti-social elements of society* lost any real significance due to its vagueness. The final declaration that women were ultimately responsible for defending their own rights only serves to reassert the government's impotence and possibly lack of commitment to the question of women's emancipation.

In the chapter devoted to the programme of measures aimed at creating full employment, the question of women's work was raised. It was recognised that since women represented half of the active population, it was imperative for the economy to integrate them into the work force. However, this had to take into account the constraints inherent in the essential role women played within the family unit. Consequently, the government undertook:

> ... la création progressive de crêches et de jardins d'enfants, et la multiplication des cantines scolaires.
>
> *[final, p 273]*

(... the progressive development of crêches and kindergarten, and an increase in the number of school canteens.)

This was a positive step towards working mothers, but when the question of providing training for women was mentioned, the government's approach was much less daring. Its intentions were to increase the numbers of training centres

> ... spécifiques au travail de la femme.
>
> *[final, p 267]*

(... specifically aimed at female employment.)

Here again, the implications were that women's employment, although indispensable for the development of the economy, should be confined to socially acceptable roles such as teachers, nurses or secretaries.

The last chapter, dedicated to the development of the cultural and social plans, emphasised the determination of the government to pursue its strategy for providing education and medical care for all. However, despite the fact that the percentage of girls in education was still behind compared with boys, no special schemes were envisaged. As far as health was concerned, the protection of mothers and children did not extend to advocating the development of family planning centres or the announcement of a birth control policy.

The conclusion one can draw from the contents of the National Charter and Constitution is that in 13 years since independence, nothing much had changed for women. In principle, they had equal rights in all domains, but in reality, these were not rigorously imposed and women were not considered as equal citizens. Their prescribed role was that of mothers and wives. Work was open to them, but as a secondary occupation, limited to certain areas where their contribution was essential for economic development. It is clear that far from advocating profound changes to women's status, the government was merely interested in using women's work potential while keeping them in the position of subordinates with duties but very few actual rights. Boumédienne's Cultural Revolution was no more than a 'touching up' operation, paying only lip service to the transformation of the 'negative environment'. By refusing to tackle crucial issues relating to women's status in society, the government was perpetuating their

position as 'minors' in a male dominated environment. The country needed women, but they had to fit in with the government's concept of what Algerian women should be. As Mr Kaid Ahmed, member of the FLN leadership declared to the UNFA:

> Aidez la paysanne à organiser son pays, concourir à la doter de rudiments d'instruction, participer à la révolution culturelle féminine par des discussions hors des sentiers battus et des banalités c'est là la seule et unique oeuvre, à laquelle doit s'attacher l'Algérienne, pour qu'elle devienne ce que nous voulons qu'elle soit. (sic)
>
> *[El Djazairia no.6 February-March 1971, p 7]*
>
> (Helping peasant women to organise themselves, giving them a basic education, participating in the feminine cultural revolution through real discussions divorced from trivialities, this is the one and only task Algerian women must embark on, in order to become what we want them to become.)

There could not be a clearer declaration of intent. Women were not to be 'liberated', they were to evolve in a very narrow way, complying with the role the government wanted them to play and, as we have seen from the Constitution and the National Charter, this role was that of procreators under the supervision of men.

15.3.2 Legal changes affecting women

There were few but revealing legal changes affecting women introduced during the Boumédienne era. The first one regulated the sentence in case of adultery. The law of June 8th 1966 established that a man guilty of adultery would receive a prison sentence of six months to one year and a woman would be sentenced to one to two years imprisonment for the same offence. This was in total contradiction with the Constitution which declared the equality of men and women in front of the law, but was no real surprise in view of the society's views on women's sexual behaviour. As stated earlier in section 16.2.1 Tunisia adopted a much more egalitarian attitude in this domain, giving equal sentences to men and women.

Another example of legal discrimination against women was the law forbidding a Muslim woman from marrying a non Muslim man. In 1967, this law was reaffirmed by a notice from the Justice Minister. This, of course, was aimed at pleasing the traditionalists, since it followed the principles of the Shari'a. In the same year, during the local elections, men were given the right of attorney to cast a vote on behalf of up to five women *[Révolution Africaine no. 208 February 6th-12th 1967, p 5].* This is an example of the contradiction between the rhetoric of the government and the reality of women's lives. On one hand, Boumédienne was encouraging women to fully participate in politics, but on the other, he was allowing men to curtail their voting rights. When a man did not like the idea of his wife or sister going out of the house, he would use his right of attorney and cast a vote on their behalf. If the government's intention was to heighten women's awareness in politics, it should have protected their constitutional

right to vote instead of creating a loophole allowing men to act on their behalf, thus perpetuating men's domination of women.

Finally, on July 5th 1973, the government decided to repeal all legislation introduced before independence. This was to come into effect from July 5th 1975. It left judges the option of following either the Muslim law, or local customs. In practice, it meant that the French decree of 1959 regarding marriage and divorce regulations (see section 8.2.1) was no longer applicable. Once again, the government was responding to the pressure from the right wing of the Party who wanted to destroy all vestiges of the colonial era and replace them with what, in their eyes, constituted the true Muslim identity. It was a definite step back in relation to family laws and symbolised the ambivalent attitude of the government trying to establish itself as a modern independent socialist state, in the eyes of the world, and yet unable to implement progressive legislation. In conclusion, it seems that the various laws introduced during Boumédienne's presidency indicate a general tendency to move further and further away from the socialist ideals of equality between all citizens. During the 1970s, the Islamists were gaining in power and influence. Boumédienne who needed their support to introduce certain elements of his economic programme was trying to pacify them at the expense of women's rights.

15.4 Women's representation in politics

To evaluate women's political representation, we will first consider their position within the ruling Party (FLN) and the number of women representatives in the elected assemblies. We will then attempt to assess women's views on politics through two surveys conducted by Vandevelde and Delcroix. Although these surveys have limited scopes (Vandevelde looked at women in the Constantine region and Delcroix did a comparative study of women in Algiers and in Cairo) they will highlight other aspects of women's political involvement.

Within the statutes of the FLN, there were no obstacles to the incorporation of women into the Party:

> Il [le Parti] n'est formé que de l'élite des militants révolutionnaires: ouvriers, paysans, intellectuels (hommes et femmes). Dans ce cas, une femme considérée comme remplissant les critères du militantisme doit être admise à part entière dans les rangs du Parti. Elle doit avoir la possibilité d'accéder aux postes de responsabilités, sans qu'à aucun moment sa seule qualité de femme ne vienne diminuer cette possibilité, elle doit participer effectivement aux organes de conception du Parti: commissions spécialisées, commissions permanentes.
>
> *[Provisional statutes of the FLN January 1968, in Vandevelde 1980, p 309]*

> (It [the Party] is solely formed of the elite of the revolutionary activists: workers, farmers, intellectuals (men and women). Consequently, a woman fulfilling the criteria of militancy must be fully integrated at all echelons of the Party. She must be able to have access to posts of responsibility, regardless of her gender, and must participate effectively in the elaboration of Party policy through the special and permanent commissions.)

However, the reality was quite different: very few women ever achieved high positions in the Party or were effectively represented in the various commissions. Their influence on the elaboration of policies was, therefore, minimal. In 1979, there were only two women at the Central Committee of the Party out of a total of 159 members. In the Economic and Social National Council (CNES), there were eight women out of 120 members *[Vandevelde 1980, pp 309,310].* In the words of the UNFA, women's representation at the highest political level was 'symbolic' and not at all representative of the female population *[El Djazairia no. 34 Dossier Spécial no. 18 1973, p VI].*

During Boumédienne's presidency, a decentralisation of the government was initiated with the creation of elected local and regional assemblies: 'Assemblée Populaire Communale' (APC)[78] and 'Assemblée Populaire de *Wilaya*' (APW)[79]. President Boumédienne was very keen to see women represented in both. Although he tried to impose some quotas for women candidates, there were no quotas for the number of female candidates who should be elected in the different assemblies. The Charter of the *Wilaya* contains the following statement:

> Il y aura lieu par ailleurs d'encourager vivement et de susciter les candidatures féminines de manière que la femme conformément à nos options participe pleinement à l'édification du pays.
>
> *[Vandevelde 1980, p 351]*

> (Furthermore, it will be necessary to strongly encourage and incite female candidatures so that women can fully participate in the development of the country, which reflects our political option.)

However, the following tables show how insignificant women's representation at local and regional level was:

78 Local assembly.

79 Regional assembly.

Figure 15 Participation of women in the elections of the APC (Assemblée Populaire Communale): 1967 - 1975

	1967	1971	1975
total number of candidates	20.478	20.842	23.040
number of women candidates	260	96	625
% of women candidates	1.26	0.46	2.71
number of women elected	208	46	160
% of female representation in the assembly	2.03	0.44	1.38

[Delcroix 1986, pp 137,138, Acte des Journées d'Etude et de Réflexion sur les femmes algériennes May 3rd - 6th 1980, pp 242, 251]

Figure 16 Participation of women in the elections of APW (Assemblée Populaire de Wilaya)

	1969	1974	1979
total number of candidates	1.322	2.216	2.466
number of women candidates	125	125	83
% of women candidates	9.45	5.64	3.36
number of women elected	25	45	37
% of female representation in the assembly	3.78	4.06	3.08

[ibid]

In 1977 for the National Assembly elections (Assemblée Populaire Nationale, APN), there were 39 women out of a total of 783 candidates. Only 8 women were elected out of a total of 261 members of parliament which represents about 3% *[Vandevelde 1980, p 352]*. As we can see from the tables, not only was there an under representation of women as candidates and as elected members of the assemblies, but the trend over the years was worsening.[80] In order to explain this situation which was in total contradiction with the official texts and government declarations, it is important, first of all, to look at the selection process for the candidates. This was done by local and regional commissions of the FLN, the civil service, the army and national organisations. It is not surprising that only a token number of women were selected since the majority of the selecting bodies were made up of men. Furthermore, the situation in rural areas, where men were not in favour of seeing women step out of their traditional roles, was even worse. Before the APC elections of 1967 Mrs Chentouf, General Secretary of the UNFA, declared that in certain areas, there was some reluctance from men to comply with the President's wish to include at least two women candidates on the lists of each constituency *[Révolution Africaine no. 206 January 20th - 26th 1967, p 15]*. In the 1971 APC election there were no women candidates on the lists of any of the constituencies of the Aurès region. The same applied to the APW election of 1969 in this region *[Vandevelde 1980, p 303]*.

80 The only exception was 1975, when the number and the overall percentage of female candidates for the APC election increased. This could be explained by the fact that 1975 was International Women's Year and the Algerian government wanted to be seen as actively supporting women's emancipation.

One other aspect of women's representation in politics is their participation in elections as voters. Women's electoral rights were inscribed in the 1963 as well as the 1976 Constitutions. However, as we have seen, in 1967, men were given the right to vote on behalf of up to five women. Nevertheless, the question of women's views on politics is also worth considering. According to Vandevelde's study of women in the Constantine region, several elements influenced their attitude to politics: their place of residence, their socio-economic group, their level of education and their age group. In rural areas, there was a general lack of interest in formal politics at national level. This was due to the limited opportunities these women had to meet and exchange views or be informed about political issues. The second factor which explained their apathy was the weight of traditions and the disapproval of men. However, their very difficult living conditions and lack of education resulted, for some of them, in a desire to get involved in politics at a local level, in order to bring changes to the lives of their children, particularly regarding education. Vandevelde's survey showed that 20% of housewives, from rural as well as urban areas, wanted to be candidates for the APC (local assembly) elections *[Vandevelde 1980, p 282]*. In urban areas, a total lack of interest in politics was found amongst the poorest sections of the population. Well informed educated women with a reasonable standard of living were the most politically active. They tended to be under 25 years of age. However, women belonging to the upper class were generally not interested in politics. Vandevelde concluded that better economic conditions did not necessarily result in greater political participation for women. With more information, even the most destitute, would have been prepared to get involved in local political matters if it resulted in immediate benefits for the community. But the UNFA, the only organisation capable of developing women's awareness and disseminating information did not have the means to effectively discharge these responsibilities. As a result, many women were left out of the political process. Their voice was not heard because of their minority position in most organisations and elected assemblies. Women themselves realised the futility of trying to participate in a political debate where no one was prepared to listen to them or take their problems seriously. As Vandevelde concluded:

> Les femmes ne peuvent jamais pratiquement intervenir de façon instrumentale et efficace; leur est seulement laissé le droit d'adhérer à des décisions auxquelles elles n'ont pris aucune part.
>
> *[Vandevelde 1980, p 332]*

(Women can never intervene in an efficient and instrumental way; the only right left to them is to adhere to decisions in which they have had no part.)

In a survey on women and political participation in Algeria and Egypt[81], Catherine Delcroix interviewed women aged 15 to 60 in Algiers and Cairo. The main themes of the discussions covered women's interpretation of political participation, the role of Islam, women's legal status and attitudes regarding government policies. The survey showed a number of differences between the two sample groups. The Algerian women interviewed had a fairly high level of political awareness, a desire to assert themselves through their professional activity and a sense of pride to participate in the economic development of their country. The younger ones seemed to be looking for an identity which was both feminine and Arab, rejecting any Western influence. All were dissatisfied with their social and legal status and felt that the government's efforts were being hampered by the pressure from the Islamic revivalists. Islam was seen by the younger ones as a barrier to their development, but older women had a more favourable view, claiming that false interpretations of the Shari'a were to blame. The Egyptian women interviewed were much less willing to discuss politics and if they admitted to any political activity, it was as members of charitable organisations. They were more concerned with improving people's living conditions than their own legal status. In fact, they were generally satisfied with the government's programmes. Islam was seen by all as beneficial to women.

The divergence of opinions and attitudes between the Algerian and Egyptian women interviewed probably stems from the history of the two countries. Algeria was submitted to colonial power for more than 130 years and had to fight a long and devastating war to gain independence. This inevitably gave the population a greater awareness of political struggle and a more acute sense of the need to assert their cultural identity. In Egypt, women's political participation started at the turn of the 20th century. It was always centred around social welfare activities.[82] In the 1970s, the government introduced a number of reforms in favour of women[83]which explains their sense of satisfaction and feeling of trust in the government, at the time of the survey.

As far as Algerian women are concerned, the two surveys emphasise the fact that a number of women had a certain degree of political awareness. As we will see, in the 1980s, this political potential, which the UNFA was unable to channel, was to lead to the emergence of independent women's organisations taking charge of the defence of women's rights.

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81 The survey in Algiers was conducted between March 1979 and May 1982. The survey in Cairo took place between October 1980 and June 1981.

82 The first feminist union in the Arab world was formed in 1923 by Huda Sharawi. It concentrated mostly on social welfare activities.

83 In 1975 a Parliamentary Commission for women was created, in 1978 a number of amendments to workers' rights were introduced which gave women three months maternity leave and the possibility to have a two year break to look after their new born baby. A law in 1972, revised in 1979 introduced quotas for women in all elected assemblies. Amendments to family laws made in 1979 gave women a much stronger position within marriage (right to divorce in case of polygamy, a two year entitlement to maintainance in case of repudiation, right to keep the couple's accommodation if they had custody of the children, etc). It is worth noting that the survey was done in 1980-1981, before the 1979 family laws were repealed and replaced (in 1985) by new legislation much less favourable to women *[Delcroix 1986, pp 122-126, 148].*

15.5 Educational developments

15.5.1 Boumédienne's plans

The development of educational opportunities was part of Boumédienne's economic plans. In fact, the objectives of the first quadrennial plan (1970-1973) were:

- total schooling of all children born since independence,
- at least 2,780,000 children in primary education,
- a minimum of 26,000 more students qualified with a Baccalauréat (equivalent to an A level),
- at least 25,000 students in Higher Education of which 8,300 leaving with a degree,
- a minimum of 1,000,000 adults receiving basic literacy.

[El Moudjahid October 31st 1970, p 15]

Indeed, the part of the budget allocated to education represented a substantial proportion of the total budget between 1967 and 1978 as demonstrated in the following table:

Figure 17 Educational budget: 1963 - 1976

Year	Total budget (Algerian Dinar - 000's)	Educational Budget (Algerian Dinar - 000's)	Education as % of Total budget
1963	2,912,737	322,719	11.0
1964	3,740,900	719,708	19.2
1965	3,956,040	731,338	18.5
1966	4,945,715	660,000	13.3
1967	4,707,000	880,000	18.6
1968	5,076,200	892,850	17.5
1969	7,899,000	1,464,000	18.5
1970	11,020,000	1,634,000	14.9
1971	7,750,000	1,825,599	23.5
1972	8,935,000	1,759,365	19.6
1973	10,620,000	2,094,900	19.7
1974	20,695,000	2,275,900	11.0
1975	21,853,776	3,131,083	14.3
1976	25,473,500	2,804,000	11.0

[Information statistique, Ministère de l'Education Nationale 1976, p 29]

Boumédienne's objectives in education were twofold: firstly, he wanted to give every child free access to education and create opportunities for adults to return to school. Secondly, he

wanted to use education as a means of developing a cultural identity amongst the younger generation. To this end, he made religious education compulsory in all state schools and developed the plan of 'arabisation' of education which consisted of the gradual replacement of the French language by Arabic as teaching medium.

Boumédienne's idea of developing a cultural identity based on Islam was not merely targeted at young people. He also gave religion a much greater role in public affairs by creating the Ministère de l'Enseignement Originel et des Affaires Religieuses (Ministry of original teaching and religious affairs). This ministry had its own publication, organised seminars on religious questions and was responsible for religious education classes in all state schools. It also controlled all Islamic educational establishments. The number of pupils educated in these institutions grew rapidly: in 1970 there were 8,682 pupils in religious educational establishments, by 1974, the figure had grown to 24,432. The new ministry also played a major role in the literacy campaign, by offering classes for adults in mosques. The number of mosques increased from 2,200 in 1962 to 5,278 in 1973 *[Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord 1973, pp 99-103].* All these developments show the increasing role religion was playing in public affairs. Boumédienne did not foresee the consequences this would have for the country. French teachers were progressively being replaced by Egyptian, Syrian, Tunisian and Moroccan teachers. They actively proselytised Islam which was to result in the flourishing of Islamic revivalism in the country in later years. This was to have a direct impact on the position of women in society.

15.5.2 Achievements under Boumédienne

The following tables show the progress made in the educational provisions during the Boumédienne era.[84]

Figure 18 School population in the 'Elementary' sector (6-13 years): 1967-1978

	Totals			Boys				Girls			
Year	Total School-age pop.	Total School pop.	% in School	Total School-age pop.	Total School pop.	% in School	% of school pop.	Total School-age pop.	Total School pop.	% In School	% of school pop.
1967	*2866497*	*1370357*	***47.8***	1451596	857242	***59.1***	***62.6***	1414901	513115	***36.3***	***37.4***
1968	*2943819*	*1460776*	***49.6***	1486337	917000	***61.7***	***62.8***	1457482	543776	***37.3***	***37.2***
1969	*3044882*	*1551489*	***51.0***	1542451	976110	***63.3***	***62.9***	1502431	575379	***38.3***	***37.1***
1970	*3126063*	*1689023*	***54.0***	1591151	1058153	***66.5***	***62.6***	1534912	630870	***41.1***	***37.4***
1971	*3231975*	*1851416*	***57.3***	1634503	1150492	***70.4***	***62.1***	1597472	700924	***43.9***	***37.9***
1972	*3302130*	*2018091*	***61.1***	1682200	1246575	***74.1***	***61.8***	1619930	771516	***47.6***	***38.2***
1973	*3431395*	*2206893*	***64.3***	1742949	1351862	***77.6***	***61.3***	1688446	855031	***50.6***	***38.7***
1974	*3533559*	*2376344*	***67.3***	1796704	1448201	***80.6***	***60.9***	1736855	928143	***53.4***	***39.1***
1975	*3642894*	*2499605*	***68.6***	1852146	1514614	***81.8***	***60.6***	1790748	984991	***55.0***	***39.4***
1976	*3753505*	*2641446*	***70.4***	1909297	1589686	***83.3***	***60.2***	1844208	1051760	***57.0***	***39.8***
1977	*3879162*	*2782044*	***71.7***	1977330	1653885	***83.6***	***59.4***	1901832	1128159	***59.3***	***40.6***
1978	*3993467*	*2894084*	***72.5***	2033852	1712508	***84.2***	***59.2***	1959615	1181576	***60.3***	***40.8***

[Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord 1980, p 304]

The progress in terms of numbers is undeniable, with nearly twice as many children in the 'elementary' sector between 1967 and 1978, nearly six times more children in secondary education and more than five times the number of students in higher education. Despite this enormous effort, the government's objectives were not achieved: in 1978, only 72.5% of children between 6 and 13 were receiving education, whereas the original plan was to educate all 6-13 year olds by 1971. This was a direct consequence of the lack of government action to tackle the demographic growth. The large sums of money directed to education were insufficient to cope with the number of children born each year. Besides, although more children were educated, the standards in education were deteriorating. Since there were not enough schools to accommodate all children, they were taught in shifts, some in the moming some in the afternoon, thus, reducing the number of teaching hours per child. Class size was on average 50 and, to compensate for the lack of qualified teachers, 'instructors' were introduced. These were young people merely with the equivalent of a GCSE qualification and even, sometimes, with only two years in secondary education. With the introduction of Arabic

84 Data on education is often unreliable, the information given by different sources, including government sources is often incomplete and sometimes contradictory.

as the main teaching medium and the lack of human resources and equipment required to implement this measure, children's education suffered greatly. Furthermore, the job market required people who could read and write in French. In cities where educational standards were higher and French was more widely used, young people had a better chance of finding jobs. In rural areas, on the contrary, where conditions in schools were much worse due to the lack of equipment and qualified teachers, young people had very few job opportunities. As Adam, social affairs commentator of the Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord stated that the education system was producing:

> ...quantité de double semi-analphabètes et d'unilingues handicapés, traumatisés.
>
> *[Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord 1975, p 381]*

> (...vast numbers of semi-illiterate children in both French and Arabic and traumatised children handicapped by only knowing one language [Arabic].)

During this period, girls' education did not progress sufficiently to bridge the gap with boys. The number of girls in 'elementary' education as a proportion of all those in school did increase marginally from 37.4% in 1967 to 40.8% in 1978 indicating a higher take-up rate of girls than boys. However, the proportion of girls receiving 'elementary' education out of the total number of girls in that age band only reached 60.3% in 1978, whereas the corresponding figure for boys was 84.2%. Clearly, prejudices against keeping girls at school after puberty were still very strong as witnessed by the numerous letters from young girls to the UNFA's[85] magazine, El Djazairia, and as shown in the following table:

Figure 19 Percentage of girls in elementary education by age group: 1976-1979

Age yrs	*<= 5*	*6*	*7*	*8*	*9*	*10*	*11*	*12*	*13*	*14*	*15*
1975-1976	38.67	42.8	40.82	41.53	40.6	40.19	38.21	37.29	34.78	26.63	14.37
1976-1977	40.76	42.7	42.3	41.83	40.83	40.96	39.86	37.67	35.61	28.36	13.4
1977-1978	41.41	42.75	45.15	39.58	42.38	41.46	39.92	37.7	34.04	25.58	14.85
1978-1979	41.01	42.46	43.85	43.36	41.95	41.59	40.71	38.15	35.18	26.11	15.28

[Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord 1980, p 305]

As we can see, the percentage of girls starts going down substantially from the age of 11 and marks a sharp drop at the start of secondary school, at the age of 14. Nevertheless, the percentage of girls in secondary education increased from 28.18% in 1967-68 to 36.96% in 1978-79. However, the number of girls in technical secondary education did not progress as

85 Union Nationale des Femmes Algériennes (national women's organisation).

fast. In fact, the number of technical options offered to girls decreased: in 1978, there were 14 options open to girls out of a total of 32, in 1979 this figure had gone down to 11 options out of 29. Three options which were previously open to girls had been removed. *[Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord 1980, p 292].*

In higher education, although the total number of girls progressed significantly, they still only represented 24.07% of the total number of students in 1978-79.

The second objective of the government in education was to tackle illiteracy. Here again, the plans were not realised. In 1967, 74.6% of the population were illiterate, 63.3% of men and 85.9% of women *[Farouk 1970, p 14].* By 1977, the total figure was 61.5%, of which 48.2% were men and 74.3% were women *[Office National des Statistiques Données Statistiques no. 88, p 1].* This represented an appreciable decrease in men's illiteracy rates, but for women, the situation had not substantially improved.

The conclusions one can draw from the analysis of educational developments during the Boumédienne presidency are that education was a real priority for the government. The budget allocated to education was 6.3% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 1975 and it rose to 7% in 1978 *[Notes et Etudes Documentaires no. 4878 1989, p 88].* The following table compares the three Maghreb countries' increase in public expenditure during the 1975-1980 period.

Figure 20 Increases in public expenditure in the Maghreb: 1975-1980

	Algeria	Morocco	Tunisia
Education expenditure / pupil	7.3	0.4	0.6
Health expenditure / inhabitant	4.1	1.1	8.8
Defence expenditure / inhabitant	7.8	9.4	51.1
GDP	7.1	6.0	5.8
School population	5.5	8.0	3.7
Total population	3.1	2.3	2.6

[La Documentation Française Notes et Etudes Documentaires no. 4878 1989, p 89]

Algeria was far ahead of the other two Maghreb countries in terms of education expenditure per pupil and the school population was increasing substantially. However, the population growth was slowing down the rate of progress in education. Unfortunately, by the time a birth control programme had been set up, the deterioration of the country's economic situation forced the government to drastically cut all public expenditure. In the period 1981-1985, the growth of education expenditure per pupil fell to 0.7% *[ibid].*

15.6 Employment

15.6.1 Professional training

In the first few years after independence, professional training for women was virtually non-existent. The national employment agency, Office National de la Main-d'Oeuvre (ONAMO) published statistics in 1965 which showed that 93.7% of unemployed women had no qualifications. Indeed, in 1965 there were 24 training centres for men and only 2 for women *[M'Rabet 1969, pp 191, 192]*.

Some efforts were made by Boumédienne's government to develop professional training for women. In a Ministry of Information brochure published in 1968, the government defined its aims and objectives regarding women's professional training. The document stated that since work was the key to women's emancipation, a serious effort was to be made to provide them with adequate training. The plan was to triple the number of centres for women in three years, increasing their number from 7 to 21 by 1970. The type of training to be provided was also defined as follows:

> La FPA [Formation Professionnelle pour Adultes] s'est refusée d'envisager la formation féminine comme une formation ménagère donnant à la jeune fille des rudiments de cuisine, de couture et de puériculture qu'elle peut mettre à profit dans son ménage. La FPA se propose au contraire de former des stagiaires, dans un premier stade, dans les spécialités de bureau, et dans une seconde étape, dans la confection industrielle et dans les autres spécialités où la femme algérienne n'a pas encore accès... La FPA offre cependant déjà un éventail assez large de spécialités aux jeunes filles: secrétaire de direction, sténo-dactylo, dactylographe, enseignement ménager, confection, bonneterie, coiffure pour dames, etc.
>
> *[Ministère de l'Information 1968, p 55]*

(The Adult Professional Training programme for women has not been envisaged as mere home economics education providing young girls with basic cooking, sewing and child care skills to prepare them for their future role as housewives. The objectives of the Adult Professional Training programme are, in a first stage, to offer training in office skills and, in a second stage, to provide training for the clothing industry and in other areas which have not so far been accessible to Algerian women... However, the Adult Professional Training programme already offers girls quite a wide range of options: personal assistant, short-hand typist, typist, home economics, clothing, hosiery, ladies' hairdressing, etc.)

Although, according to this document, there seemed to be a willingness to develop professional training for women, it appeared to be mostly in response to economic plans (such as the development of the clothing industry) and remained extremely vague about other sectors it would open to women. Furthermore, in a paragraph devoted to the practical aspects of the pre-training programmes, it stated that young women would receive a subsidy of 50 DA whereas other trainees would receive 90 DA for the same course *[ibid, p 70]*. No reason was given for this discrimination.

Despite its intentions, the government plans of 1968 totally failed to achieve their objectives. In 1971, there were only nine female training centres (instead of 21 which were supposed to have been created by 1970) offering the same two options: training for office work and the clothing industry *[Révolution Africaine no. 953 May 28th - June 3rd 1982, p 16]*. This evidence is corroborated by other sources such as Vandevelde's study on women's condition in the Constantine region, which declared that, in the whole of Algeria, in the late 1960s, there were four major professional training centres for women receiving all together between 800 and 1.000 women *[Vandevelde 1980, p 402]*. This situation did not improve rapidly for the first half of the 1970s, as we can see from the following table:

Figure 21 Number of women receiving professional training in female training centres 1971-1981

	Office work	Textile Industry	Electrical, Electronics	Mechanical, Metallurgical	Chemical Industry	Architecture, Design	Furniture	Crafts	Total trainees
1970	182	220							402
1971	184	105							289
1972	328	254							582
1973	324	203							527
1974	437	148							585
1975	603	307							910
1976	599	412							1011
1977	1095	654							1749
1978	1247	787	38		22				2094
1979	1695	1209	38		88	36		25	3091
1980	2213	1730	81		113	87		65	4289
1981	2586	1911	48	91	153	93	8	76	4974

[Révolution Africaine no. 953 May 29th - June 3rd 1982, p 17]

It was not until 1977 that the number of female trainees significantly increased. However, this figure only represented a small proportion of the female population in need of professional training. Furthermore, it was only after 1978 that new options were opened to women.

The UNFA[86] was involved in the development of some women's co-operatives. But even these initiatives had a limited effect due to the lack of financial support from the government. In 1976, El Djazairia (the UNFA official publication) reported on the 13 women's co-operatives

86 Union Nationale des Femmes Algériennes (Women's national organisation).

which had been created by the organisation. These co-operatives gave women the opportunity to sell the products they manufactured at home: embroidery, pottery, textiles and other local crafts. It was felt that these centres would provide women with immediate financial benefits as well as improve their self-confidence by recognising the value of their work. It was thought that, later on these women would be more likely to take on employment outside of their home *[El Djazairia no. 48 1976, pp 18,19].*

15.6.2 Work opportunities for women

In order to analyse the evolution in the female working population during President Boumédienne's era, we have to rely mostly on the census of 1966 and 1977. Two other surveys, one conducted by Benatia in 1970, on women's employment in the region of Algiers during the period 1965-1968, and the study of the situation of women in the Constantine region published in 1980 by Vandevelde also offer useful information.

The data from the government census is, as always with government figures, prone to errors and inconsistencies. In the case of working women, it is also misleading in its terminology: the term 'active population' for instance includes unemployed people aged 15 and over, people available for work aged 6 and over and 'working people' defined as anyone having worked for at least 6 days during the month of the census. Housewives, however, are not counted as 'active' and yet they represented the majority of the female population. It is, therefore, deceptive to use the percentage of working women out of the total 'active population' since this does not take into account a large proportion of women. The following table gives a more realistic picture, of the evolution of women's employment during the period 1966 / 1977:

Figure 22 Male and female working populations: 1966 - 1977

Year	1966	1977
Total population in Algeria	11 821 679 (1)	17 104 000 (derived value)
Total male population	5 799 579 (derived value)	8 474 000 (3)
Total female population	6 022 100 (4)	8 630 000 (3)
Total working population	1 729 029 (derived value)	2 379 123 (derived value)
Working women (including women working part-time in 1977)	99 830 (1)	180 385 (2)
Working men	1 629 199 (1)	2 198 738 (2)
Working women as a proportion of the female population	1.6%	2.1%
Working women as a proportion of the working population	5.77%	7.58%

[(1)Annuaire Statistique de l'Algérie 1971, p 34]
[(2) Direction des Statistiques et de la Comptabilité Nationale 1980, p 3]
[(3) Office National des Statistiques numéro spécial 35, p 6]
[(4) Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord 1980, p 301]

It is clear from these figures that, although the number of working women increased between 1966 and 1977, this was barely noticeable in relation to the female population (1.6% to 2.1%). Furthermore, by 1977, the female workforce still represented an insignificant proportion of the whole working population (7.58%). In fact, Algeria was amongst the countries which had the lowest employment figures for women. In 1980, the percentage of women aged 20-59 working outside of their home was 7.1% in Algeria, 8.6% in Egypt, 16.7% in Morocco and 21.8% in Tunisia. However, these figures only give a partial picture. Although Morocco had a fairly high proportion of working women, the majority of them had low paid unqualified jobs as maids or craft workers. This was due to the fact that the majority of working women was illiterate (3/4 in 1982). In Egypt, on the contrary, except in the agricultural sector, working women had a high level of education (in 1976, 52% of working women had a secondary or higher level of education). This enabled them to obtain higher paid qualified jobs *[La Documentation Française Notes et Etudes Documentaires no. 4878 1989, pp 29, 30].* In Algeria, the distribution of women in the different professions in 1966 and 1977 was as follows:

Figure 23 Percentage of women in the different professions: 1966 & 1977

Professions	1966	1977
Scientific or professional	18.6	30.5
Directors or senior management	1.25	1.21
Administrative personnel	10.5	21.93
Shopkeepers and associated professions	1.65	0.63
Workers in Agriculture	22.77	5.20
Workers in industry	14.67	10.06
Workers in the service industry	29.61	27.64
Non specified	0.95	2.83
Total	100	100

[Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord 1980, p 312]

According to these figures, the most significant change between 1966 and 1977 occurred in agriculture: whereas in 1966 this sector offered employment to a substantial number of women, it was no longer the case in 1977. In fact, 2.2 women were working in agriculture for 100 men in 1966, representing 23% of the female active population, whereas in 1977 there were 1.2 women for 100 men which represented 6% of the female active population *[Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord 1980, p 294].* Most women could only find seasonal employment at harvest time. A few young girls with a minimum level of education were employed as secretaries of the management committees in nationalised farms, but none were members of the committees with actual decision making power *[M'Rabet 1969, pp 188,189].* The agrarian reform implemented by Boumédienne did not really help women find employment. With the introduction of machinery on the large nationalised estates, fewer workers were needed and women found it more difficult to get employment. Since the attitude of men towards working women was more traditional in rural areas, the managers of the estates preferred giving jobs to men. This resulted in a worsening of the situation of women economically and socially. Without work outside the home, women had fewer contacts with each other and became more isolated.

If we consider the distribution of women in the other professions, we notice that the service industry remained the largest source of employment. Women were found mostly in the government services, particularly as teachers, considered to be a desirable profession for women. The increase in the number of women working in scientific / professional sectors and in administration can be explained by the development of girls education and professional training. However, the effects of higher standards of qualifications were not all positive for women as shown in the following table:

Figure 24 Distribution of the working population by sex according to the last qualification obtained: 1980

Last qualification obtained	% of working women	% of working men
Higher education qualification	2.1	0.52
A Level equivalent	4.28	0.95
O level equivalent	16.68	3.49
Elementary certificate	12.7	6.68
Higher engineer / managerial diploma	0.31	0.24
Technician / middle management diploma	1.41	0.44
HND equivalent	4.99	1.74
Skilled shop-workers	2.4	0.24
Non specified	0.95	0.77
Without any qualification	54.18	84.93
Total	100	100

[Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord 1980, p 310]

It is evident from these figures that working women were better qualified than their male counterparts. This was indeed a positive outcome of the development of educational opportunities for girls. It seemed that qualifications were the passport to employment for women, conversely, those women without any qualifications were much less able to find employment. This explains the decrease in the number of women employed in industry from 14.67% in 1966 to 10.06% in 1977. The percentage of women employed in the leather industry, for instance, went from 28,2% in 1966 to 6.39% in 1977 *[Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord 1980, p 314]*. We can conclude that better education for girls had resulted in a shift of women's employment from sectors requiring low levels of education to those requiring high levels of education.

Another factor which needs to be considered is the internal career progression offered to men and women. It seems that sex discrimination prevailed in the work place which meant that men were favoured for employment and promotion even when they were not as well qualified as women. The UNFA's magazine made the following remarks:

> ...on demande à la femme une formation parfaite, des diplômes, des garanties, que l'on exige pas toujours pour les mêmes profils de postes, d'un homme. On admet facilement l'évolution, de l'autodidacte homme que celle de la femme. Nous citerons à ce titre l'exemple de la nomination de certains cadres masculins parfois sans aucun critère technique ou universitaire, au moment où des femmes diplomées sont reléguées à des postes inférieurs. (sic)
>
> *[El Djazairia in Révolution Africaine March 12th-18th 1982, p 43]*

(...a woman is expected to have the perfect educational background, diplomas and guaranties which are not required from men for the same posts. The lack of formal

> qualification is much more acceptable for a man than for a woman. We will give as example the appointment of male senior managers sometimes without any technical or university qualifications when qualified women were relegated to inferior positions.)

It seems that, although a greater number of girls had access to education, this was not, as it had been proclaimed, the answer to women's emancipation. It was only the first step and much remained to be done to change attitudes towards women in the work place. In 1972 the UNFA's magazine made this comment about the situation women faced when attempting to enter the job market:

> Nul ne peut ouvertement s'opposer à son entrée dans la vie active, mais si elle est tolérée, elle n'est pas adoptée tout à fait, elle n'est pas encouragée dans cette voie.
>
> *[El Djazairia no. 18 1972, p 23]*
>
> (No one can openly oppose [women's] access to work, but if they are tolerated, they are not really welcomed or encouraged.)

The article added that if a woman was given a position of authority in a company, men often refused to take orders from her. Consequently, she would either be given a job which did not correspond to her training and qualifications or she would never be given the grade corresponding to the level of work she was doing *[El Djazairia no.18 1972, p 24]*.

The government could have shown a lead, however, its attitude to women's employment was quite ambivalent. In a speech on International Women's Day on March 8th 1966, President Boumédienne declared:

> Lorsqu'il y a un emploi vacant, faut-il l'attribuer à l'homme ou à la femme? Faut-il laisser l'homme à la maison et permettre à la femme de travailler?
>
> *[Révolution Africaine no. 163 March 12th - 18th 1966, p 9]*
>
> (When there is a vacancy, should the job be given to a man or a woman? Should men be left at home in order to allow women to work?)

Some women did not need an answer to these questions. According to Adam, the Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord's commentator on social affairs, a group of women walked out of the meeting in a gesture of protest *[Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord 1966 p 316]*.

In fact, sex discrimination was institutionalised. A text regulating women's access to public sector employment stated:

> Les femmes ont, en règle générale, vocation à tous les emplois publics dans les mêmes conditions que les hommes. Néanmoins l'administration conserve la possibilité de les écarter de certains emplois si la nature des fonctions ou les conditions dans lesquelles elles sont exercées le justifiaient.
>
> *[Revue Internationale des Sciences Administratives no. 1 1967, p 31 in Benatia 1970, p 44]*

> (As a rule, women are entitled to public sector employment under the same conditions as men. However, the state reserves the right not to allow them access to certain functions due to the nature of the job or the conditions in which it is performed.)

The government's discriminatory attitude regarding women and work was displayed on several occasions. An advertisement placed in the newspaper El Moudjahid by the Ministry of Agriculture in 1973 is a prime example. Young people were invited to take an entry examination for the Police College in Algiers. There were 250 vacancies, 50 of which were reserved for female candidates. However, the qualifying conditions for the exam were different for men and women: men had to be between 19 and 30 years of age whereas for women the maximum age was 25. Furthermore, women had to be single which was not a condition for men. Finally, the advertisement indicated that successful candidates would have to attend a two year course in the Police College in Algiers and boarding facilities were available for men. Nothing was said about accommodation for women *[El Moudjahid June 14th 1973, p 8]*. Here again, the lack of commitment to implementing real equal opportunities for women is evident. Another example demonstrating that the government was only paying lip service to women's rights in the work place is the very small number of women who were given positions of responsibility in the Civil Service. In 1977, 766 women had managerial positions in the civil service. Although there had been a definite increase, this figure still only represented 0.55% of this category of workers. As shown in the numerous articles of the UNFA's magazine, the more competent and qualified women were, the more difficult it was for them to progress in their career.

If we compare Benatia and Vandevelde's studies with an article in Révolution Africaine in 1982 (mostly based on the result of the 1977 census), we find that the majority of working women lived in towns and originated from towns. Benatia's survey, apart from providing valuable data, also gave an insight into women's attitudes to work. Her conclusions coincided with those of Vandevelde: for the vast majority of women, paid work was seen as a liberating factor. Even for those women who worked out of economic necessity, doing repetitive and physically strenuous tasks, work was more than a means of attaining a certain level of financial security. They saw it as a way of escaping from the 'traditional role' of women, it gave them a greater awareness of their value as individuals. Even if they had no control over the money they brought to the family, the fact that they had earned it gave them a sense of worth. Vandevelde concluded:

> Les femmes envisagent ce travail non seulement pour améliorer le niveau de vie de la famille mais aussi pour leur épanouissement personnel. Cela confirme bien que le travail professionnel est vu par les femmes comme moyen de réalisation personnelle, d'intégration spirituelle dans la société et non seulement d'intégration matérielle.
>
> *[Vandevelde 1980, p 189]*

> (Women consider work not only as a means of improving the standard of living of their family, but also in terms of personal development. This confirms that professional work is seen by women as a means of personal growth, giving them a feeling of integration into society and not just material integration.)

Another interesting factor which was studied was the age of the female working population. The following table compares the distribution of working women according to their age in 1966 and 1977(the figures include full-time and part-time workers for 1977).

Figure 25 Percentage of working women according to their age: 1966 & 1977

Age	1966	1977
6-9	1.1	0
10-14	na	1.2
15-19	3.7	4.2
20-24	3.6	7.2
25-29	2.7	6.0
30-34	2.4	4.4
35-39	2.5	3.8
40-44	2.9	5.5
45-49	3.0	6.2
50-54	3.3	4.4
55-59	3.2	4.2
60-64	2.6	3.6
65-	1.4	2.1

[Révolution Africaine March 12th-18th 1982, p 42]

These figures show that the correlation between women's ages and their employment followed the same pattern in 1966 and 1977. The highest proportion of working women was between the ages of 20 and 24. Their number declined after that until the ages of 40 to 49 when there was a further increase. We can relate these trends to the social constraints affecting women. Marriage and children would explain the sharp reduction after the age of 30, with a return to work probably out of economic necessity (especially for divorcees and widows), when the children could look after themselves. It is also significant that the percentage of women working after the age of 60 increased between 1966 and 1977. This was probably caused by the terrible economic situation many older women found themselves in. With the displacement of populations from rural close-knit communities to urban areas where nuclear families prevailed, women who had been abandoned by their husband after a divorce or repudiation, could no longer turn to their extended family for support. They had to fend for themselves and work was the only way to survive.

The conclusion one can draw is that Boumédienne's era did not see a vast development of work opportunities for women. As M'Rabet concluded, most of the jobs open to the majority of women were still low paid and merely constituted a secondary income to supplement their husband's or father's salaries. Few women could live on their salary and the type of work they were engaged in was not, in most cases, a source of fulfilment or liberation. *[M'Rabet 1969, p 194].* It seems that the government's main aim was to use the female workforce to respond to the economic needs of the country. This was clearly stated in a government brochure, published in 1976, entitled 'The Algerian woman':

> The women's participation to the economic and social activity is both a duty for the women and an indispensable element for the development of our country.
>
> *[Ministry of information and culture 1976, p 47]*

Women's rights or personal development needs were not considered. Furthermore, women were still, to a large extent, confined to socially acceptable jobs, such as teachers and secretaries, and sex discrimination in the work place was an acceptable norm.

15.7 The women's organisation UNFA (Union Nationale des Femmes Algériennes)

15.7.1 Evolution and role

The UNFA was the women's organisation created by the government in 1964 to represent Algerian women. In order to understand the evolution of women's rights it is essential to analyse the position of the UNFA on important questions concerning women and the influence it had, if any, on women's lives and government policy. Although the organisation was never given any real autonomy, the government strongly encouraged women to join it if they wanted their opinions to be heard and their status changed.

The first question which has to be considered is how representative of Algerian women the UNFA was. Its membership grew from 30,000 in 1968 to 50,000 in 1973 and, was about 200,000 in 1977. The total female population in 1973 was 7 million *[Vandevelde 1980, p 311 & Révolution Africaine March 12th-18th 1982, p 32].* It is clear from these figures that the organisation did not speak for the majority of women. Yet, the resolutions adopted at every National Congress and the articles in the UNFA's own magazine El Djazairia,[87] show that the problem of developing a broader base was a major preoccupation for the leaders of the organisation. The reasons why they did not succeed in attracting a wider audience will become clear after the study of the role the UNFA played during Boumédienne's presidency.

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87 The magazine was first published in 1970.

Before looking at the various programmes the UNFA organised or supported, it is important to clarify what the organisation considered its role to be. This was described in the second issue of El Djazairia:

> ... [l'organisation] doit être une avant-garde socialiste, un foyer de patriotisme et de civisme, la rencontre de toutes les énergies révolutionnaires du pays.
>
> *[El Djazairia no. 2 October 1970, p 13]*

> (... [the organisation] must be a socialist avant-garde, a breeding ground of civic values and patriotism and a meeting point for all the revolutionary energies of the country.)

This definition, which seems to have been taken out of some FLN propaganda leaflet, summarises the status of the organisation: its purpose was to disseminate government policy amongst women, explain socialist principles, instil a profound sense of duty and patriotism and channel women's demands. These objectives seemed to be fully endorsed by the UNFA since, the report on the National Council's meeting of December 1970 / January 1971, stated:

> ... [notre organisation] doit devenir une véritable force dynamique au service du Parti ...
>
> *[El Djazairia nos. 4 - 5 December 1970 / January 1971, p 30]*

> (... [our organisation] must become a true dynamic force at the service of the Party...)

This position remained unchanged throughout Boumédienne's presidency. Except during two short periods, which will be studied separately, the UNFA's message was merely that of the government. This comes as no surprise since its leaders had to be Party members. Consequently, the UNFA was mostly echoing the government's views. The main themes which filtered through every UNFA statement were:

- the condemnation of the Western approach to women's emancipation, since Algerian women had to remain respectful of the 'Arabo-Islamic' values,
- the rejection of an individualist approach deemed to be a 'petit bourgeois' attitude contrary to socialist principles and as a consequence, the objective of educated women was to help their less fortunate fellow country women in rural areas,
- the belief that women's emancipation could only come as a consequence of the economic development of the country as a whole,
- the conviction that their emancipation would be obtained through education and work,
- the fact that women were responsible for their own development and had to rely on themselves to fight 'reactionary attitudes'.

To demonstrate that the government had total control over the organisation, we can look at the report on the celebration of International Women's day on March 8th 1966. The UNFA's message faithfully echoed president Boumédienne's wish to see educated women living in towns turn their attention to the less fortunate women in the countryside *[Révolution Africaine no. 163 March 12th-18th 1966, p 11]*. A few months later, at the General Assembly of the Departmental Committees of the UNFA held in Algiers, representatives of the Executive Committee of the FLN announced the creation of the National Council of the UNFA presided by Mrs Lalliam and seconded by Mrs Chentouf as general secretary.[88] This council was deemed to be the highest authority of the UNFA and directly responsible to the Party. Révolution Africaine devoted a full page article to the objectives of this organisation *[no. 173 May 20th 1966, p 7]*. It seems that, once again, its aims were totally in line with the President's desire to see educated women take the responsibility of improving the living conditions of women in rural areas. No mention was made of furthering women's rights, the question of family planning was not tackled, nor was there any discussion on the impending Family Code. It was, however, felt that:

> Le rassemblement politique des femmes en une organisation nationale exclusivement, spécifiquement féminine, c'est en soi l'aval d'une inégalité fondamentale entre les sexes.
>
> *[ibid]*
>
> (Gathering women into a national political organisation exclusively and specifically female, [was] in itself the endorsement of a fundamental inequality between the sexes.)

The gathering of men and women in the same political organisation was considered to be unattainable in view of the existing discrepancy between the lives of women in towns and the majority (85%) of women in rural areas. The dream of a single mixed Party could only become a reality after a levelling of women's living conditions in the whole country. It seems that the way village women spontaneously took over men's responsibilities during the war and were fighting alongside men, disregarding many traditions, had been forgotten. Times had changed, the country had to return to some normality and the best way to achieve this was to re-establish women into their traditional roles as mothers and wives while playing their part in the economic development of the country.

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88 Mrs Lalliam was Nefissa Hamoud before her marriage. Both women, Hamoud and Chentouf, had been politically involved for many years, creating in 1947 the Association des Femmes Musulmanes Algériennes (AFMA) and were actively involved in the war of independence (see section 9.2).

15.7.2 El Djazairia – the UNFA's publication and portrayal of women

From 1970 onwards, the organisation published its own magazine, El Djazairia. It is interesting to study the style of this publication and the issues it addressed. Although El Djazairia was supposed to be a monthly magazine, its publication was irregular[89]. Typical features were the reader's letters, reports on the activities of the UNFA, a fashion section (which was very similar to any French magazine of the time), a culinary page, advice on health issues, children's education and home improvement. The rest of the articles touched on general social issues such as marriage, the life of women in the countryside and working women. There was also regular praise for the role women played during the war of independence. In most cases, the articles consisted of a description of situations, always emphasising the new opportunities offered to women since independence. However, they rarely engaged in any analysis of the real causes of the problems or any criticism of the government. In fact, the conclusions were generally either a reminder that socialism would be the answer to all the problems women faced, or an incitement for women to take charge of their own emancipation. This was totally in line with the government's views. It is no surprise, therefore, that the National Charter of 1976 (see section 15.3.1) was warmly welcomed by the UNFA. The following comment was published in the association's magazine:

> ...la Charte Nationale c'est la garantie d'un avenir qui verra se concrétiser les aspirations populaires.
> [les femmes] ont ... compris que seul le socialisme leur assurera dans l'égalité le travail, le pain, la culture et la santé, et leur ouvrira les portes d'une société plus belle où s'épanouiront dans l'harmonie, l'individu et la famille.
>
> *[El Djazairia no. 52 Dossier Spécial - Charte Nationale 1976, p 2]*
>
> (...the National Charter is the guarantee to the future realisation of the people's aspirations.
> [women] have understood that only socialism will guarantee them equal access to work, food, culture and health, and will open the doors of a better society in which the individual and the family will blossom in harmony.)

The readers of the UNFA's magazine were professional women and young educated girls. The image El Djazairia was trying to portray was that of a dynamic, elegant, independent woman with a strong sense of commitment to her family and the country at large. The following description gives a clear picture of what women should aim to be:

> La femme doit assurer son rôle de citoyenne consciente de ses responsabilités ... d'autre part, elle est responsable de l'éducation de ses enfants.
>
> *[El Djazairia no. 2 October 1970, p 30]*
>
> La femme qui travaille doit absolument arriver à équilibrer harmonieusement ses obligations professionnelles et familiales.

89 The month of publication was not always given.

> ... elle peut très bien exercer une profession, et assurer son rôle de mère de famille: elle peut satisfaire toutes ses obligations, il lui suffit d'être bien organisée.
>
> *[El Djazairia no. 3 November 1970, pp 25,26]*
>
> (Women must play their role as citizens aware of their responsibilities ... furthermore they are responsible for the education of their children.
> Women who work must harmoniously balance their professional and domestic obligations.
> ... they can very well have a job and play their role as mothers: they can satisfy all their obligations, they just need to be well organised.)

The advice given to women as far as their family life was concerned was always in keeping with the traditional image of the woman respectful of her husband or father's authority, and it was up to her to prove that she was worthy of their respect:

> La femme en tant que responsable et éducatrice de ses enfants doit rechercher toujours la conciliation avec son époux ... Cela veut dire que la femme doit mener sa révolution sociale, construire son nouveau statut, tenter une autre définition du couple, animer la cellule familiale sans créer de tempête. Elle doit continuer à revendiquer ses droits sans abandonner un seul de ses devoirs.
>
> *[El Djazairia no. 10 June 1971, p 32]*
>
> (Women, having the responsibility of their children and their education, must always seek conciliation with their husband ... This means that women must conduct their social revolution, build their new status, attempt to create a new definition of the couple, be the life of the family unit without making waves. They must continue to demand the recognition of their rights without abandoning any of their duties.)

As we can see, the UNFA's image of women was totally in line with the government's views: mothers and wives first, with a strong sense of their duty to the country.

15.7.3 Position on matrimonial laws

While upholding the government policy overall, the UNFA did try, occasionally, to show some support for women on certain issues such as the promulgation of the Family Code. It seems that despite the repeated calls for the government to bring in the new legislation, the organisation was unable to pressurise the government into taking a decision. We have analysed in detail the UNFA's position on the 1972 proposal (section 16.2.1), but it is important to follow the evolution of the organisation's thinking on various aspects of family laws. We can identify its main concerns by examining the numerous articles on family matters published in its magazine. The most common topic discussed was that of marriage, including repudiation, polygamy, divorce and unmarried mothers. Repudiation was always denounced and in 1971, the UNFA asked for it to be abolished. In 1973, El Djazairia published a dossier analysing the various legal and social aspects of divorce (such as unilateral repudiation and abandonment of family) and its effects on women. Under a heading, 'The temptation of repudiation', this practice was strongly condemned:

> ... la possibilité de répudiation avec ses facilités incite à la désinvolture, au mépris de l'épouse réduite au silence par la menace qui pèse sur elle; elle incite aussi à la débauche et à l'adultère que l'homme peut tranquillement légaliser par la répudiation de la première épouse...
>
> *[El Djazairia no. 33 Dossier Spécial no. 17, 1973, p 30]*
>
> (... easy access to repudiation incites men to behave carelessly and with contempt towards their wife reduced to silence by the impending threat; it is also an incitement to debauchery and adultery, which men can easily legalise by repudiating their first wife...)

On the subject of polygamy, the organisation's views changed over the years. In the early 1970s, the organisation wanted it to be allowed under exceptional circumstances to enable the father to give his name to the children he had had with another woman. In this case, the wife would have the choice of accepting the second wife or asking for divorce *[El Djazairia nos. 7&8 March / April 1971, p 23]*. By 1972, the UNFA changed its stance and declared it totally rejected polygamy *[ibid no. 22 June 1972, p 20]*. The organisation showed its concern for abandoned women or divorcees by regularly publishing letters from readers describing their desperate situation. It seems that, as the years went by, the magazine felt less and less capable of commenting on the situations presented. In 1973, having described the terrible condition of unmarried mothers, the magazine openly criticised a hypocritical society prepared to condemn the mother but making no attempt at finding the father of the child, even encouraging him to ignore his responsibilities:

> La première lâcheté penserons-nous, c'est celle qui consiste à absoudre les pères pour accabler les mères.
>
> *[El Djazairia no. 30 1973, p 14]*
>
> (We consider that the first act of cowardice is that which absolves the fathers and condemns the mothers.)

However, by 1977 the magazine seemed much less able or willing to express any opinion on these situations. We hear of the plight of divorcees receiving 100 dinars a month per child, regardless of the father's earnings. In other cases, the husband had simply disappeared, leaving his wife and children without any financial support *[ibid no. 53 1977, pp 13,15]*. The letters were simply published without any comments. The same approach was adopted in a series of articles on the marriage celebrations. The article merely reported the terrible consequences of marriages arranged by families without the consent of the young people. Numerous examples were given of girls and even women in their late twenties whose arranged marriages were a total failure. The article merely ended with a series of unanswered questions:

> Pourquoi le jeune homme pourrait-il choisir son épouse et amener petit à petit ses parents à l'accepter, ... et estimer que la jeune fille doive couper tous les ponts, rompe tout lien avec les siens, avec un homme que ses parents n'ont pas accepté? ... dans le meilleur des cas on pardonne à son garçon ce que l'on ne permet pas à sa fille. Pourquoi? (sic)
>
> *[El Djazairia no. 54 1977, p 18]*
>
> (Why should a young man be able to choose his wife and slowly bring his parents to accept her, ... whereas a young girl has to break all contacts with her family because of the man her parents have not accepted? ... in the best cases, the boy will be forgiven, but not the girl. Why?)

All these dramatic situations were presented in a very compassionate way, but the lack of proposals on how to change this state of affairs gave the impression of an acknowledgement of failure and impotence on the part of the organisation.

Another aspect of traditional marriages which was discussed time and again in the UNFA's magazine was the question of the dowry. Here, the criticisms were expressed in much stronger terms:

> Pour sa famille, et pour sa belle famille, parfois même pour son mari, la femme qui se marie selon les traditions devient un objet de transaction, et ce, par le biais de la dot, du trousseau ...
>
> *[El Djazairia no. 55 1977, p 14]*
>
> (For her family, her in-laws, and sometimes even for her husband, a woman who marries according to the traditions becomes an object of transaction, by means of the dowry, the trousseau ...)

A survey conducted in 1977 by the magazine showed that those marriages which were agreed without a dowry were an exception. In the majority of cases, long discussions took place before the marriage about the level of dowry given by the groom on one hand and the content and value of the trousseau brought by the bride on the other. The dowry levels were constantly increasing: from 2,000 to 3,000 dinars in 1962, to an average of 10,000 dinars in 1977. The trousseau included items of jewellery, expensive clothes and household goods such as carpets and furniture. These practices not only meant that young men had to get into debt in order to get married, but they reduced the marriage to a financial transaction between two families, and the woman to an object. The article concluded that it was up to young people to refuse these 'degrading practices' *[El Djazairia no. 55 1977, pp 14-25 & no. 56 1977, pp 10,11]*.

It is clear that the government had managed to 'control' the editorial content of the UNFA's magazine and reduced its campaigning zeal. A member of the UNFA, responsible for external relations in the late 1970s, declared in an interview:

> J'ai découvert petit à petit les freins qui doivent être levés par les membres de l'organisation pour braver l'extrême prudence du pouvoir politique essentiellement

masculin. Elles sont obligées de tenir compte de cette peur et de réduire l'audace et l'agressivité des demandes provenant de la base.

[Delcroix 1986, p188]

(I have slowly discovered the blockages which have to be removed by the members of the organisation to counteract the extreme caution of the political powers, mostly men. [Members] are forced to take account of this fear and reduce the boldness and aggressiveness of the grass-root demands.)

She then explained the procedure for presenting a proposal to the Party. Any motion, emanating from the grass-root, had to be transmitted to the UNFA's national secretariat. It would only be presented to the Party once it had been reviewed and amended in such a way that it would not be rejected. In her opinion:

La difficulté majeure de l'organisation est liée à la peur éprouvée par l'autorité essentiellement masculine de voir une force féminine s'organiser. Ils craignent les conséquences de l'émancipation des femmes sur le système politique. Celle-ci pourrait à leurs yeux occasionner une importante révolution sociale qui ferait évoluer... la famille traditionnelle élargie sur laquelle repose encore aujourd'hui la société algérienne.

[Delcroix 1986, p188]

The main difficulty for the organisation is linked to the fear of the male dominated authorities, to see the emergence of a female force. They fear the consequences of women's emancipation on the political system. In their eyes, it could provoke an important social revolution which would affect ... the traditional extended family on which Algerian society is based.)

15.7.4 Attitude towards working women

Apart from studying various aspects of family life, the UNFA's magazine also conducted several surveys on working conditions for women. The organisation was constantly encouraging women to take up work, since they represented a substantial workforce essential for the economic development of the country. At every occasion, women were reminded that work was not simply a right but a duty. The organisation did not seem to object to the fact that the husband could stop his wife from working:

La femme peut accéder à bon nombre d'emplois.... Notre législation dans le domaine du travail est favorable à la femme. Le mari ne peut s'y opposer. Son opposition n'est recevable que dans la mesure où l'exercice de la profession de sa femme peut porter un préjudice moral à l'harmonie du foyer.

[El Djazairia no. 3 November 1970, p 24]

(Women have access to a large number of jobs.... Our legislation concerning work is favourable to women. The husband cannot oppose it. His opposition is only acceptable if his wife's work is detrimental to the harmony of the household.)

This only serves to confirm the idea the government and, therefore, the UNFA had about women's role in society: mothers and wives first and foremost. Work was seen as a duty for women in order to respond to the economic needs of the society, but it should not interfere with family life.

As far as defending women's rights at work, the UNFA spoke vehemently and repeatedly against the employment of foreign women. According to the UNFA, wives of foreign employees were given priority over Algerian women, especially as secretaries and receptionists, a sector where there was a large number of qualified Algerian women seeking employment. But the association also denounced sex discrimination against women in public and private companies:

> ... malgré l'existence de textes légaux, officiels sans cesse rappelés en toutes opportunités, il existe encore certaines formes de discrimination dont souffrent les femmes. Ce sont les taux de salaires, la classification professionnelle, ou tout simplement les comportements individuels à l'égard des femmes...
>
> *[El Djazairia no. 39 Numéro Spécial 1974, p 21]*
>
> (... despite the existence of official legal texts constantly evoked, there are still certain forms of discriminations affecting women. These concern salaries, professional classification, or simply attitudes towards women...)

Sex discrimination, according to the UNFA, particularly targeted women who had a certain level of competence and qualifications. However, the only comment the organisation could make was:

> ... les femmes doivent y mettre du leur pour parvenir à imposer leurs compétences par delà leur féminité.
>
> *[El Djazairia no. 18 February 1972, p 24]*
>
> (... women must make an effort to succeed and become competent beyond their femininity.)

The same advice was given to peasant women whose working conditions were often described as appalling. In this domain, though, the UNFA never failed to blame educated women for not doing enough to help women in rural areas. However, the agrarian reform was deemed to be the long term solution for these women. The UNFA pointed out that the decision to give heads of destitute families, regardless of their sex, plots of land and the creation of 'agricultural villages' were positive steps towards improving women's lives in the country side. The new villages, it was thought, would give women more opportunities to meet and discuss their problems, organise themselves into co-operatives, receive health education and practical skills *[El Djazairia no. 29 Dossier Special no. 13 1973, p V]*.

A number of articles in El Djazairia depicted the strenuous lives of peasant women who, as well as their hard work at home and repeated pregnancies, also had to help in the fields and supplement the family earnings by weaving or making pottery utensils. They were described as:

> ... ces femmes vieillies avant l'âge, ... découragées et vivant en marge de tout ce qui les concerne car peu informées et trop préoccupées par leurs problèmes de subsistance pour s'y intéresser.
>
> *[El Djazairia, nos. 19 & 20 1972, p 27]*
>
> (... these women who have become old before their age, ... disheartened, too preoccupied by their daily problems of survival to be interested in issues concerning women in society of which they know little and from which they are cut off.)

The article went on to describe the insalubrious living conditions, the low standard of hygiene and the poor health of these women. However, nothing was said of the repeated pregnancies which were at the root of many of their problems.

15.7.5 Views on family planning

One determining factor in women's lives, especially in rural areas, was the high birth rate (the birth rate which in 1964 was 5%, was still 4.8% in 1972). Yet, the question of birth control, which should have been a major element in the UNFA's programmes of action, was rarely mentioned. At the first Congress of the UNFA, in 1966, the question of family planning was mentioned as part of the protection of the health of the mother and child:

> [Le planning familial] doit permettre à la femme d'espacer les grossesses afin de protéger sa santé qui se répercute nécessairement sur celle de l'enfant qu'elle porte.
>
> *[Borrmans 1979, p 390]*
>
> ([Family planning] must enable women to space out their pregnancies to protect their own health which has inevitable repercussions on that of the child they are carrying)

At the conference on rural women held in Hammamet (Tunisia) in 1973, the question of family planning was evoked by delegations from Egypt and Tunisia. Representatives from the UNFA explained the position of the Algerian government on this issue: the objective of the family planning programme was, as in 1966, the protection of the health of the mother and child. The programme was entirely controlled and implemented by the government in hospitals and special health centres for women (Centres de Protection Maternelle et Infantile). Four such units were in operation in the major cities: Algiers, Constantine, Oran and Sétif.[90] It was said

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90 According to Ladjali, responsible for the family planning programme started in 1974, only the Algiers centre was functioning. The Oran and Constantine centres closed after two years *[Centre de Documentation en Sciences Humaines – Groupe de Recherche sur les Femmes Algériennes University of Oran April 1982, p 11].*

that the government was planning to open other centres in the future (see details of family planning programme in section 15.2.2).

The question of family planning was raised again by El Djazairia in 1978. The article did not take a clear stand on the issue. Having declared that the government should make family planning or 'spacing out of births' (the terminology adopted in Algeria) available to each couple, it went on to state:

> Ce qui importe de réduire fondamentalement, c'est le sous-développement, et non la démographie. Seul le développement économique, social et culturel pourra réduire et faire de la masse énorme de force de travail existante un facteur de développement et de libération.
>
> *[El Djazairia no. 62 1978, p 13]*
>
> (What needs to be fundamentally reduced is under-development and not the birth rate. It is only economic, social and cultural development which will be able to reduce (the population) and transform the enormous existing workforce into a factor for development and liberation.)

Although, in the West, it is well known that economic development is usually followed by a decrease in the number of children per family, the demographic situation in Algeria was so dramatic that it cancelled out any economic and social progress and, in fact, acted as a brake upon the development of the country. Furthermore, Algerian women were only valued by society once they had children and sons in particular (see section 2.1). A cultural change had to take place, reassessing women's role in society, before one could expect them to abandon the only role which gave them a sense of worth, i.e. that of mother. As far as family planning was concerned, the UNFA was once again merely acting as the government's 'spokesman'. This passivity was heavily criticised by the women who participated in the workshop on contraception organised by the Algerian Women Research Group[91] (Groupe de Recherche sur les Femmes Algériennes, GRFA) at Oran University. This is what they had to say:

> De notre point de vue, loin de constituer le lieu d'expression des positions politiques des femmes, l'UNFA au contraire est la consécration de leur exclusion. (L'un des critères sur lequel nous fondons notre hypothèse sur l'UNFA est son absence de combativité pour imposer une politique d'espacement des naissances).
>
> *[Centre de Documentation en Sciences Humaines – Groupe de Recherche sur les Femmes Algériennes University of Oran April 1982, p 68]*
>
> (In our opinion, the UNFA, far from being a focal point where women can express their political views, is, on the contrary, the consecration of their exclusion. (One of the criteria on which we base our claim about the UNFA is its lack of combativeness to impose a policy of spacing out of birth.)

91 In the late 1970s, lecturers at the University of Oran set up research groups on various topics related to the status of Algerian women (see section 16.3.1). Their reports were published by the University.

15.7.6 Outcomes of actions

We can now return to the question of the reasons for the lack of support for the UNFA by the masses. It stems mostly from the very status of the organisation. As we have seen, it was very much under the tutelage of the Party. This meant that it was totally dependent on the government for its action. In most cases the UNFA's campaigns were directed by the government. The organisation supported, for instance, the Agrarian Reform by developing a programme of young student volunteers spending their summer holidays in rural areas, running childcare and general hygiene awareness classes, as well as advice on modern farming methods. At election times, the organisation was active in making women more aware of their political rights, organising meetings and sometimes going from door to door to explain the purpose of the elections. The UNFA was also involved in literacy campaigns and the creation of training centres for women. However, the one question which preoccupied most, if not all women, was that of the Family Code, but in this domain, the organisation was incapable of pressurising the government into bringing out new and progressive legislation. The UNFA was, therefore, not fighting for women's rights at government level, but was simply trying to make them comply with the government's vision of their role in society.

Could the organisation be blamed for its lack of militancy? It seems that during Boumédienne's presidency, there were two attempts made by the UNFA to openly criticise government policy. In 1969, after calls from the UNFA for a Family Code respectful of women's rights and a national family planning campaign, the National Committee of the UNFA had to resign. The newspaper El Moudjahid reported the event as follows:

> Considérant la démission présentée par les membres du secrétariat national de l'UNFA quelques jours avant la tenue du 2ème Congrès... considérant l'attitude nuisible adoptée par les membres de ce secrétariat national... [le gouvernement] condamne l'attitude démagogique et les agissements perturbateurs des membres démissionnaires du secrétariat national de l'UNFA... leur dénie le droit de parler au nom de la base dont elles ne sont nullement issues, et ne font partie de ce fait ni de l'organisation ni des effectifs du commissariat national du Parti du Grand Alger...
>
> *[El Moudjahid April 3rd 1969, p 4]*

> (Considering the resignation presented by the members of the national secretariat of the UNFA a few days before their second Congress... considering the damaging attitude adopted by the members of the national secretariat in front of the Congress.... [the government] condemns the demagogic attitude and subversive schemes of the resigning members of the national secretariat of the UNFA...[and] denies them the right to speak on behalf of the masses to which they do not belong and, consequently, denies them the right to be members of the organisation or of the national council of the Party for the Algiers conurbation...)

It seems that the UNFA had gone beyond its remits (as defined by the Party) and its interference in political matters was totally unacceptable to the government. The UNFA should

have concentrated its activities on social and economic aspects of women's emancipation and leave politics to the men in the Party.

1973 was the second period of marked militancy. At the National Council of the UNFA in January 1973, the government was openly criticised for not actively supporting women's emancipation through their organisation and consequently acting against the principles of the socialist revolution:

> ... à chacune de nos rencontres l'accent est principalement mis sur la non assimilation par beaucoup (voire même par certains responsables) du rôle de la promotion de la femme...
> Il faut donc que venu du sommet, des plus hautes instances de notre pays, "un souffle nouveau soit insuflé". ... rien ne pourra être mené à bien, aucun des objectifs fixés ne sera réalisé si la réalité psychologique, si l'idée que se fait la société sur le bien fondé d'une organisation féminine n'est pas radicalement changé.
>
> *[El Djazairia no. 30 1973, p 28]*

> (... at each of our meetings attention is mainly focussed on the lack of understanding by many (even by some Party leaders) of the role of women's emancipation...
> A new impetus, coming from the highest authority in the country, must be given. ... nothing will be achieved, none of our planned objectives will be realised if the psychological reality, if the idea society has of a women's organisation is not radically changed.)

The organisation went on to detail the changes required:

- the reopening of female training centres, run by the UNFA,
- the allocation of funds for these centres so that trainers could receive a salary,
- the alignment of the salaries of UNFA personnel to those of other national organisations,
- the allocation of an autonomous budget for the organisation.

On International Women's Day (March 8th 1973), the assessment of the situation of women in Algeria was also very critical of the government. After recognising that women had gained certain political and economic rights, it was pointed out that:

> ... ces droits n'ouvrent pas toujours droit à la femme à l'exercice de responsabilités importantes. On n'a pas encore vu de femme au gouvernement, comme on n'en a jamais vu accéder à des postes élevés au sein du Parti.
>
> *[El Djazairia no. 30 1973, p 8]*

> (... these rights do not always enable women to assume important responsibilities. We have yet to see a woman in the government, or in a position of responsibility at the highest echelons of the Party.)

The daily occurrences of sex discrimination at work were also denounced as well as the unequal status of women in the family. The fact that, in the whole country, only one woman had been promoted to manager of an office was a clear indication that companies were not giving women equal opportunities at work *[ibid]*. The law was also often applied in an unfair way towards women: although a woman was entitled to ask for divorce, it was always granted against her *[ibid, p 11]*. It seems that these demands and criticisms were not heard. At the third National Congress of the UNFA (April 1st - 4th 1974), the same questions were raised, although in a less direct way, but no concrete changes occurred. By 1976, the UNFA was again totally behind President Boumédienne, unequivocally supporting his new Charter.

As we can see, the UNFA, totally controlled by the government, was incapable of influencing decisions. The autocratic style of government left no room for real dialogue. The women's organisation was, therefore, left with the impossible task of mobilising women on a programme which, although advocating women's emancipation, was in fact anchoring them to their traditional role. The contradiction between the declared objectives to see women fully integrated in the economic process and the preservation of the barriers which prevented them from achieving these aims resulted in a demobilisation of women. All the organisation could give women was the hope to see their situation improve with time. However, on a day to day basis, women realised that the UNFA was powerless in front of the constant discriminations at home and at work. They were told to take charge of their own liberation. Some women thought that education would open the door to their emancipation, but as we saw, the more qualified they were, the more discriminated against they were in the work place. Political rights gave them no real power either since local and national elected bodies were dominated by men. The UNFA was perceived by women as impotent, occasionally rallying against the government on a specific issue, but always eventually following the Party line. As a consequence, its support among the female population at large was minimal. Some women who became active in independent women's associations after 1989 were very critical of the UNFA. Mrs Rachedi, vice president of the Association for the Emancipation of Women[92] declared:

L'UNFA n'a jamais fait de politique. Mieux encore: elle a contribué à la cristallisation du clivage des sexes en vouant la femme au foyer et à la procréation.

[Algérie Actualité June 8th-14th 1989, in Saadi 1991, p 139]

(The UNFA has never had any political role. Furthermore, it contributed to deepening the division between the sexes by confining women to the role of housewives and procreators.)

92 This women's association was one of the many associations created after 1989 (see section 16.6.1)

15.8 The reality of women's lives

The social changes within the family which had started immediately after the war of independence continued and were accelerated by the economic reforms introduced by President Boumédienne. The continuing drift from rural areas to towns partly caused by the industrialisation efforts had considerable effects on family life. In 1966, a report was produced by the government's social services department, describing the emergence of a new type of family unit, called 'the new families' *[Secrétariat Social d'Alger 4th series no.1 April 1966, pp 10-31].* According to this study, the traditional patriarchal family system was in crisis. These 'new families' were to be found mostly in the towns of the north of the country and consisted of young couples living on their own, instead of sharing the husband's family home. In these families, the wife often worked and the children were sent to school for their education instead of receiving it at home. Attitudes towards marriage were also changing: these young people had often chosen their future wife/husband. One of the consequences of this new life style and the separation from the extended family was total isolation for many women. If they were working, not only were they not accepted in the male dominated work place, but their status as working women further alienated them from both their husband and their own mother. Men had great difficulties accepting that their wife could work and gain a certain independence. Although these women had responsibilities and a degree of autonomy outside the home, their husband expected them to behave in the traditional submissive way at home. This is what a young middle class man living in Algiers declared:

> Une femme peut être une intellectuelle dans son travail, dans ses études, mais pas avec son mari. Là, elle doit être une femme avant tout.
>
> *[Autrement no. 38 1982, pp 224-225]*
>
> (A woman can be an intellectual in her work, in her studies, but not with her husband. In this domain, she must be a woman first and foremost.)

As the UNFA's magazine noted in an article devoted to the question of divorce in Algeria *[El Djazairia no. 33 dossier special no. 17 1973, p 30]*, many marriages broke down because of the conflicts resulting from the fact that the wife was working outside the home[93]. Either the husband could not accept his wife's desire to be treated on an equal basis at home and consulted on family matters, or the wife's salary was the main cause of dissension. If her income was superior to her husband's, his pride was hurt and he often demanded that she stopped working. The way in which the wife's income was spent could also become a main source of discord, especially if the woman insisted on having total control over her salary, as she was entitled to according to Muslim law.

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93 The divorce rate was quite high in urban areas. El Moudjahid reported that in 1972, only 46% of families in Algiers had both father and mother present. 34% were broken up by divorce *[El Moudjahid April 1st-2nd 1973, p 6]*.

These educated, so-called independent women were in fact living between two worlds, not belonging to either. As we have seen, they were not allowed to play a fulfilling role either at work or in their home. Furthermore, their own family and, in particular, their mother also frequently rejected them. The traditional education normally provided by mothers for their daughters, preparing them for their married life, had become obsolete. The refusal by the daughter to fit into the traditional pattern was perceived by the mother as a denial of her own status in society as procreator and educator of the new generations. This widened the gap between mothers and daughters. If mothers could not fight against the inevitable development of educational opportunities for girls, they devalued their daughter's 'externally acquired knowledge', reducing it to a mere added advantage at the time of marriage. The social ambitions invested in education for girls were not to be realised in giving them access to work and a more independent life, but through the improved opportunities to find a husband with a better social standing. The following statement is from a mother giving her views on education for girls:

> C'est bien qu'une fille fasse des études; après elle peut faire un bon mariage, avec quelqu'un de bien.
>
> *[Autrement no. 38 1982, p 226]*

> (It is good for a girl to study; then she can make a good marriage, with a 'well placed' man.)

As we can see, employment for educated women did not necessarily result in a happier life. In many ways it was worse since they were rejected by both the modern and the traditional world.

The move from rural areas to towns also resulted in a more isolated life for uneducated women. They followed their husband in search of a job and found themselves in an alien environment, away from family support and cut off from other women due to the fact that most of these couples lived in blocks of flats. These women also found that the only activity they could still perform was looking after their house and children. Other traditional activities such as pottery making, weaving and poultry rearing had become impossible. Their life had, in the eyes of many, turned into that of a prisoner:

> La communauté féminine de la grande famille s'est défaite. Les femmes ont suivi, une par une, l'homme potentiellement productif. Elles se retrouvent seules, leurs activités se sont appauvries, et leur univers rétréci n'a même plus le ciel comme horizon, mais le mur d'en face. La cellule d'en face. Jumelle et ennemie.
>
> *[Autrement no. 38 1982, p 223]*

> (The women community of the extended family has broken down. One by one, women have followed the potentially economically productive men. They find themselves alone, with limited activities in a confined world where their horizon is no longer the sky but the opposite wall. The opposite cell. Identical and alien.)

If, as it was often the case, their husband abandoned them they had no relatives to turn to. Divorce was not a solution for them either. The first hurdle was to get their husband to appear in court for the divorce. But even when the divorce had been granted, the judge's role did not extend to enforcing the payment of the maintenance. Remarrying was not an alternative either, men did not want to burden themselves with children from another marriage. Consequently, many women resorted to prostitution as the only means of survival. For others, the only solution was suicide, infanticide, or abandoning their child. In 1971, the number of suicides was three times higher amongst women than men. This particularly affected young women: 76% of suicides were committed by young people under the age of 25, 82% of them were young women *[Gadant 1995, p 113].* Life was so desperate for these women that some of them, abandoned by their husband or the man who had promised to marry them, resorted to abandoning or killing their children. Between 1965 and 1970, about 6.000 children were abandoned each year and there were 664 cases of infanticide per year *[Daoud 1993, p 359].* But, as always, the blame was on the mother. Whenever a case of infanticide came to court, it was never the father who received a prison sentence.[94] His role in the tragedy was never taken into account. Children were the mother's responsibility. This belief was particularly well illustrated in a photograph published by El Moudjahid immediately below an article on single mothers. The article did not specifically blame women, its conclusion mainly stated that people should consider marriage as a sacred institution, but the photograph printed after the article left no doubt as who to blame if something happened to the children. It showed young children walking in the middle of a road and the accompanying message was:

> Mères de familles, vous êtes responsables de la vie que vous donnez.
> Et si une voiture venait à surgir?
>
> *[El Moudjahid September 11th 1970, p 11]*
>
> (Mothers, you are responsible for the life you have given.
> What if a car was to appear suddenly?)

As we have seen, certain social changes had occurred within the family, making women's lives even more difficult, furthermore, attitudes towards girls had remained on the whole very traditional. Most of the readers' letters published in El Djazairia concerned the denial of girls' rights within the family. As late as 1977, young girls were complaining about their father taking them away from school or forcing them to marry an old man. Not only the father had full authority over his daughter, but very often this role was also taken up by the girl's brother. In 1978, a case of abduction of an Algerian woman by her brother made international headlines. Dalila Maschino was a young Algerian woman living in Canada and married to a Canadian. Her brother, former liberation fighter, abducted her to marry her to an Algerian man chosen by

94 From the court reports published in El Moudjahid in 1970, it seems that the sentences for infanticide ranged between one and two years' imprisonment.

the family. Dalila's husband wrote a letter to President Boumédienne, but it was passed on to the Foreign Affairs Minister who rejected the appeal *[Le Nouvel Observateur June 26th 1978, p 30]*. Dalila's marriage to a Canadian was illegal according to Algerian laws and the fact that her brother dared abduct her from a foreign country indicates that he felt totally within his rights and had the support of his countrymen. M'Rabet, commenting on the incident declared:

> Dans une société en pleine évolution, souvent les pères sont un peu dépassés. Les frères, surtout les frères instruits, prennent alors la relève de l'autorité paternelle. Ils deviennent les maitres de leurs soeurs.
>
> *[Le Nouvel Observateur July 10th 1978, p 25]*
>
> (In a changing society, fathers often feel overwhelmed. It is then the brothers and, in particular, those who are educated, who take on the paternal authority. They become the masters of their sisters.)

Brothers, father, husband and other male relatives often ganged up to protect the honour of the family. Girls and even older women were being watched, questioned, accused and condemned of dishonourable behaviour, even without proof. Countless examples of husbands killing their wife for suspected adultery were regularly reported by the newspaper El Moudjahid. The sentences given reflect the implicit endorsement by society of such acts. In 1970, a man was sentenced to three years and six months imprisonment for killing his wife. Although, according to witnesses, the woman had a good reputation, her husband suspected her of adultery after seeing her talk to her cousin ten metres away from their house *[El Moudjahid March 7th 1970, p 6]*. It is worth remembering that adultery was considered a greater offence for women than for men. The 1966 law set the prison sentence for men to between six months and one year whereas for women it was between one and two years imprisonment (see section 15.3.2).

Under the circumstances, it is no surprise that women, and those living in rural areas in particular, were not interested in political involvement. Their everyday life was such a struggle that they had no time for anything else. Besides, the centrally-controlled style of Boumédienne's government left no room for political debate. A young woman researcher interviewed by Delcroix declared:

> La participation politique consiste à être attentive à l'évolution politique de son pays. Il ne m' est pas possible de participer directement à un groupe politique formel dans mon pays car l'Etat exerce un dirigisme si important sur la nation qu'aucun groupement ne peut se manifester sans être investi par le parti.
>
> *[Delcroix 1986, p 182]*
>
> (Political participation consists in being attentive to the political evolution of the country. It is not possible for me to be directly involved in a formal political group in this country because the state has such a hold over the nation that no group can exist without being taken over by the Party.)

As we have seen, even the UNFA was not allowed to question government policy.

15.9 Conclusions (1965 - 1978)

The Boumédienne era was marked by profound economic changes. The industrialisation programme, the agrarian reform, the development of education and the nationalisation of major sectors of the economy (banking, insurance, oil and gas production) were some of Boumédienne's major achievements. Politicaly, like his predecessor, Boumédienne had to mediate with various factions which meant that *government policy was often steered towards dilution and compromise [Stone 1997, p 53].* On the one hand, Boumédienne was attempting to create a modern economy, which corresponded to the wishes of the educated urban elite, on the other, he was cautious not to lose the support of the right wing Islamic traditionalists. In economic terms, the modernising process was fully underway. In political and social terms, traditions prevailed. This is particularly evident in the government's position regarding women's status. The modern socialist state Boumédienne was trying to establish should have been accompanied by a rethinking of the role of Islam and, therefore, of the position of women. However, the political discourse only concerned public life and stopped short of entering the realms of civil and family life. The main reason for this was the refusal by the government to open the debate on religion, which, it was feared, would split the country. Furthermore, this was a tactical decision. Keeping women in their traditional roles was giving men some reassurance about the future: even if socialism was going to dramatically change the country, at least men's position within the household would not be altered. This contradiction within the political discourse, embracing modernity at one level, and yet retaining a strong attachment to tradition, was at the root of the political problem for women. The consequence was a 'minorisation' of their status. Any progress for women had to be confined within the boundaries of established arabo-Islamic values. As *Glendora-Gates* concluded in her study of the Algerian and Iranian revolutions:

> In 1966, Boumédienne redefined women's emancipation. It would not be an imitation of western women as Algerian society was socialist and Islamic. It would also not be an excuse for corrupting society. For him, women's emancipation was a question of respect for morality.
>
> *[Glendora-Gates PhD 1987, p 114]*

Nevertheless, during Boumédienne's presidency, girls benefited from the government investments in education. Although the target of educating all children aged 6-13 by 1971 was not achieved, definite improvements occurred. Efforts to tackle the literacy problems among adults, however, had limited success. Women's employment figures did not improve substantially in the ten years of Boumédienne's presidency. Some women, with high levels of education, had better employment opportunities, but uneducated women were experiencing more difficulties finding work. Discrimination was also present in the workplace with women

being rarely given the posts corresponding to their experience and qualifications. Although better educational opportunities had opened the door to greater work opportunities for women, it had not removed all barriers. Furthermore, even if some women had acquired a certain degree of autonomy in the public sphere through their work, this was still denied them in their private life. Had there been an independent women's movement debating women's issues, the situation might have been different. However, the government wanted total control over all national organisations. This resulted in the UNFA merely becoming an agent for disseminating the Party's propaganda instead of representing women's rights. Once again, this is symptomatic of the tensions resulting from the passage from a traditional society to a modern state. Urbanisation and industrialisation, two key factors in the development process, were taking place but secularisation and popular political participation had not been allowed to develop at anything like the same pace. This was, to some extent, due to the precarious political situation the government faced and the prevailing anti-colonial feelings. Political instability prevented the government from allowing any political debate and genuine popular participation. At the same time, the strong anti-colonial feelings precluded any discussion on the role of Islam, indeed Boumédienne was hoping to unite the country around its arabo-Islamic traditions. Consequently, a political apathy developed in the 1970s among the population. This was partly due to the economic success of Boumédienne's policies supported by the oil revenues and partly to the fact that ordinary Algerians were denied any significant political voice. The creation of regional and local assemblies (respectively Assemblées Populaires de *Wilaya* and Assemblées Populaires Communales) did not result in a democratisation of the decision making process. *Their function was largely to implement decisions from above and to provide a channel for political advancement and mobilisation at local level [Stone 1997, p 54].* It is revealing to see what a student had to say about women's role during the debates on the National Charter:

> Beaucoup de mentalités rétrogrades ne croient pas en la sœur-camarade. C'est donc une lutte amère que mène la femme... Il faut éviter le féminisme. Il n'y a pas de problèmes spécifiquement féminins. Certes les obligations qu'elle remplit à l'intérieur du foyer lui rendent la tâche lourde pour travailler. Ce qu'on demande c'est l'allégement des structures...
>
> *[Gadant 1995, p 147]*
>
> (Many backward looking mentalities reject the idea of women as comrade-sisters. Therefore, women have to fight a bitter struggle... We must avoid falling into feminism. There are no problems specific to women. Of course, women's obligations within the family make it difficult for them to work outside. What we are asking for is an improvement of the structures...)

These young girls born after independence had been influenced by the education they had received, emphasising the socialist ideals and the Algerian identity through its language and religion. They had not participated in the war and, therefore, had not experienced the changes it had brought to women's lives.

Another notable feature, during Boumédienne's presidency, was the absence of the *Moudjahidate* from public life: how could these women accept to step back into their pre-war roles? The main reason was that, after the war, their desire for peace and stability was paramount. These women had sacrificed years of their lives to the revolution. They wanted to return to a 'normal' life. They also believed that their participation in the war had given them their rights, they never thought they would have to fight for them again. They had faith in the government's promises and hoped that education would give the next generation of women more opportunities and a better life. In any case, the *Moudjahidate* were not a homogeneous group, they came from all walks of life and were only united in their fight against colonialism. As one of them explained:

> Malgré notre solidarité, nous ne formons pas un bloc politique, et la moindre tentative de caporalisation a pour effet de démobiliser nombre d'entre nous... aucun groupe, plus ou moins restreint, ne peut prétendre représenter l'ensemble des *moudjahidate*. Telles sont nos limites, telle est notre réalité.
>
> *[Guerroudj 1993, p 140]*

> (Despite our solidarity, we do not constitute a political bloc, and the slightest attempt at political take over results in demobilising us... no group, small or large, can pretend to represent all the *moudjahidate*. These are our limits, this is our reality.)

Boumédienne died unexpectedly in November 1978. Although he had achieved some of his economic objectives, he had not succeeded in uniting the country. Factionalism was still rampant and the country remained hesitant about its future, torn between the traditionalists and the modernists. Keeping women's status fundamentally unchanged was the price he had to pay in order to keep the traditionalists on board. Since women did not have any political power, they were an easy target.

PART 4
Algeria under Chadli Benjedid (1979 – 1992)

16 Political Developments

16.1 Overview 1979 - 1992

When President Boumédienne died in 1978, there was no consensus on who his successor should be. The two contenders, Mohamed Salah Yahiaoui, co-ordinator of the FLN, and Abdelaziz Bouteflika, foreign Minister, were brushed aside for Colonel Chadli Benjedid, the army's candidate. As with his predecessors, the new President had to play a balancing act between the various factions to establish his authority. In order to counterbalance his tentative moves towards economic liberalisation which angered the left, he tried to obtain the support of the conservatives by further developing the arabisation programme in all areas, including the replacement of French speaking government officials by Arab speaking personnel. This, in turn created more problems: it alienated the Kabyle population who wanted the recognition of their Berber language whilst giving the Islamist conservatives more power and influence.

In December 1985, the collapse of the oil and gas prices resulted in a sudden and drastic reduction of the country's revenues. The economic crisis which followed had dire consequences for the poorest sections of the population: ever increasing prices for basic commodities, food shortages and high unemployment. The government was unable to contain the mounting dissension which culminated in the riots of October 1988 brutally supressed by the security forces who had been ordered to fire on the crowds. This was *the most significant upheaval since Algerian independence and a turning point in the country's history. It permanently altered the role of the FLN and its relationship to the regime and finally demolished the myth of the military as the honourable guarantor of the revolution [Stone 1997, p 66].* It has been suggested that Chadli's opponents had taken advantage of the popular unrest to try and force the government to abandon its programme of reforms *[ibid, p 67].* Whatever the causes, the outcome was the end of the FLN monopoly of power and the introduction of multi-party politics.

During Chadli Benjedid government, the question of women's role in society was finally settled with a Family Code adopted in 1984 despite vehement protests from women. The introduction of multi-party politics opened new horizons for women who were able to create a number of associations to continue the fight for the recognition of their rights. However, the political unrest which followed the rise of radical Islamist groups threw the country into a civil war from which it has not yet fully emerged.

16.2 Family Codes of 1981 and 1984

16.2.1 The Algerian Code in the Maghreb context

Before looking at the 1981 and 1984 Algerian Codes it is important to understand why any attempts at modernising this particular area of law have been met with such resistance in most Muslim countries and how the two neighbouring Maghreb countries, Tunisia and Morocco, have dealt with the question of family laws. Jurisprudence in Muslim countries is, to a greater or lesser extent, based on the Shari'a (revealed law) found in the body of texts constituted by the Qur'an (divine revelations), the Sunna (practice of the Prophet) and the Hadiths (orally transmitted thoughts, decisions, actions and sayings of the Prophet). To ensure the viability of the Shari'a for all times and societies, the principle of *ijtihad* (interpretation or independent reasoning) has been applied by Muslim jurists to adapt the law to societal changes *[Mir-Hosseini 1993, p 5]*. Over time, certain aspects of the Shari'a were altogether abandoned, such as commercial codes and state organisation. At the turn of the 20th century, modernist legislation was introduced in many Muslim countries, but the area of family law remained the last bastion of Islamic law.[95] Mir-Hosseini, in her comparative study of family laws in Iran and Morocco, gives three main reasons for this: the wealth of texts in this particular area, the fact that family laws were deemed to be less significant politically and, therefore, the belief that they could be left to the religious scholars, thus avoiding direct conflicts with them *[Mir-Hosseini 1993, p 12]*. Beck & Keddie, in their book 'Women in the Muslim World', put forward another reason which probably also influenced governments:

> Changing commercial and civil codes was of obvious advantage to increasingly powerful bourgeois and governmental classes, and often a prerequisite, along with criminal code changes, to throwing off Western extra-territorial privileges, whereas the reform of personal status codes appears to many men not as an advantage but as a loss of rights and powers, and if they believe the folklore of their society, an encouragement to marital infidelity and sexual freedom for women.
>
> *[Beck & Keddie 1978, p 28]*

Whatever the reasons, family laws have remained the battle ground between traditionalists, who want a strict application of the Shari'a in order to protect the family, seen as the most important social institution, and modernists who consider the Shari'a's family laws to be incompatible with a modern society. Both Tunisia and Morocco introduced new Family Codes soon after their independence from France. For Algeria, however, although a commission was set up to study the question as early as in 1963 (see section 14.2.2) it was not until 1984 that a Family Code was finally promulgated (see section 16.2). It is probable that the eight dreadful

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95 Except in Turkey where a civil code, based on the Swiss civil code, was introduced in 1926.

years of war the country had to endure to obtain its independence affected the way the new society saw its future. The backlash resulting from the colonial powers' systematic attempts at 'de-culturalisation' (which became so evident during the war) lead many Algerians to believe that returning to the 'ideal Muslim society' of the time of the Prophet was the only way to regain their cultural identity. Other factors also influenced the government. Charrad, in her comparative study of the Family Codes in Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia, emphasised the importance of the old kinship or tribal allegiances whose social organisation followed the Maliki Mathhab[96]. After independence, the new governments of the three Maghreb countries were influenced in their choice of Family Codes by the extent to which the old traditional ties had survived. In Tunisia's case, the tribal structures and their social organisation had been extremely weakened. It was, therefore, possible for the government, supported by a political elite already freed from its tribal solidarities, to establish a new social order. Hence, a Family Code which, as we will see, distanced itself quite considerably from the Maliki Mathhab. In Morocco, the situation was quite different. Traditional tribal communities, especially in rural areas, still had a considerable political influence at the time of independence. The new government needed their support and, consequently, could not afford to introduce important legal changes. The Moroccan Family Code, as will be shown, remained quite faithful to the Maliki precepts. In Algeria, by contrast, the situation at the end of the war was complex. The elite were split between traditionalists, strongly supported by the old local solidarities and modernists eager to establish a new social order. The government wavered for 20 years before taking a decision. By then, a third force had entered the political scene: the Islamic revivalists. They were to influence greatly the government's decision regarding Family Laws. This will explain the timid departures of the 1984 Family Code from the Maliki Mathhab. After independence, the three Maghreb countries chose different paths to redefine their family laws. These choices resulted from diverging political interests which either tried to strengthen old tribal solidarities or sought to replace them with a strong nation state. As Charrad concluded:

> ...le droit de la famille a servi d'instrument de changement social en Tunisie, ...a contribué à un équilibre politique au Maroc, et ...a été l'otage de clivages et divisions entre élites en Algérie pour être ensuite sacrifié à la menace islamique.
>
> *[Charrad 1996, p 28]*

> (...family laws have served as an instrument of social change in Tunisia, ...have contributed to a political equilibrium in Morocco, and ...have fallen hostage to the divisions between the elite in Algeria, only to be later sacrificed to the Islamic threat.)

In order to put into context the Algerian Family Code, it is important to outline the main features of the Tunisian and Moroccan Codes which had been promulgated in the late 1950s. Tunisia promulgated its Family Code on August 13th 1956. The main points of the new legislation were

96 The Sunni Muslim jurists created four Schools, each emphasising different aspects of the Shari'a. The Maliki Mathhab is one of the four Sunni Schools.

as follows: a minimum marrying age was stipulated: 18 for boys and 15 for girls. Polygamy was abolished since it was deemed impossible for the husband to treat all his wives equally (a condition prescribed in the Qur'an). Divorce pronounced by a judge was the only legal way of ending a marriage. Both husband and wife could start the legal procedure and damages could be awarded by the judge to compensate for the prejudice caused. Consequently, the right for the man to repudiate his wife without having to give any reason was abolished. A dowry was to be given by the husband to his future wife, but no maximum limit was specified. The wife was invited to contribute to the household expenses if she had her own income. Matrimonial constraint was removed and the girl had to give her consent in person. The question of the marriage between a Muslim woman and a non Muslim men (which is not allowed by Muslim law) was not dealt with, leaving it to the interpretation of the judge. According to Bormans, in practice it was illegal. A new law passed on March 4th 1958 made adoption legal *[Bormans 1977, pp 294-324]*. As we can see, the Tunisian Code distanced itself quite significantly from the Maliki Mathhab. The most controversial aspects being the abolition of matrimonial constraint for the girl, polygamy and repudiation. The legalisation of adoption came a few years later. These were total departures from the traditional Maliki Mathhab. The essence of the Tunisian Family Code was originally inspired by the controversial book 'Notre femme dans la loi et dans la société'[97] written by the Tunisian al-Tâhir al-Haddâd and published in 1930 *[Bormans 1977, p 323]*. By 1956, the Tunisian society had evolved. It was no longer dominated by the old community networks and a fairly large middle-class group was now in favour of change. Bourguiba was also seen as a charismatic figure and father of the anti-colonial revolution. His championing of the cause also helped to reduce the opposition to the new Family Code from the more tradional elements of society. As Borrmans concluded, the Tunisian Family Code was derived from a new vision:

> ... moins explicitement religieuse mais fidèle reflet d'une évolution des moeurs, où le souci primordial [était] de garantir à la femme tous les droits et tous les devoirs qu'elle reconnaît à l'homme, en même temps.
>
> *[Borrmans 1977, p 323]*
>
> (... less explicitly religious but mirroring a social evolution, in which the guiding principle was the recognition of the same rights and duties for women as for men.)

Bourguiba left certain 'grey areas' in the law, probably out of political astuteness, knowing that the Family Code had started a process of modernisation which could only move forward. In time, it would be completed by new legislation in response to the evolution of the society. Indeed, significant innovations were to be introduced in the years following the promulgation of the Family Code: as mentioned earlier, adoption was made legal in 1958; the sale of contraceptives became legal in 1961; a new minimum marrying age was set in 1964 (20 for boys and 17 for girls); 1965 saw the legalisation of abortion (within certain conditions); and a

97 Our women in law and society.

law introduced in 1968 brought equal treatment for both men and women adulterers (five year imprisonment and a 500 dinar fine for both partners in the adulterous relationship) *[Borrmans 1977, pp 356-359].*

By contrast, the Moroccan legislation was much less daring. The first part of the Moroccan Family Code was published on November 22nd 1957. By February 20th 1958, all aspects of family laws had been revised and the Family Code was completed. It is interesting that a definition of marriage was included (which did not appear in the Tunisian Code). Article 1 stipulated that:

> Le mariage est un contrat légal par lequel un homme et une femme s'unissent en vue d'une vie conjugale commune et durable. Il a pour but la vie dans la fidélité, la pureté et le désir de procréation par la fondation, sur des bases stables et sous la direction du mari, d'un foyer permettant aux époux de faire face à leurs obligations réciproques dans la sécurité, la paix, l'affection et le respect mutuel.
>
> *[Borrmans 1977, pp 197,198]*
>
> (Marriage is a legal contract between a man and a woman for the purpose of a common and durable marital life. Its aim is to create a stable relationship under the guidance of the husband, based on fidelity, purity and the desire to procreate. This secure relationship made up of affection and mutual respect will enable both spouses to face up to their reciprocal obligations.)

This definition was indeed very close to the traditional Muslim concept of marriage: a legal contract between a man and a woman in view of procreation, under the guidance of the husband. A compulsory dowry, also an essential element in Mulsim law, was included as part of the marriage contract but no maximum amount was specified. A minimum marrying age was introduced: 18 for boys and 15 for girls. The traditional husband's right to unilateral repudiation was maintained under certain conditions, but the husband had to give his wife 'un don de consolation' (a compensatory gift). Both husband and wife could initiate a divorce. The Moroccan Family Code departed from the Maliki tradition by abolishing the principle of matrimonial constraint for the girl, except if the girl had had a 'licentious behaviour', in which case the judge had the right to force her to marry. Polygamy was allowed as long as the husband could treat all his wives equitably. The Justice Minister commenting on polygamy declared:

> ... on sait que l'Islam ne la permet qu'à certaines conditions qu'il est difficile, voire impossible même, de réaliser pleinement... dès que l'on a simplement quelque crainte de ne pouvoir être équitable, la polygamie est interdite.
>
> *[Borrmans 1977, p 233]*
>
> (... as we know, Islam only allows it under certain conditions which are difficult, not to say impossible, to fully comply with... as soon as there is the slightest doubt as to the ability to be equitable, polygamy is forbidden.)

The Moroccan Code also allowed the first wife to include a clause in her marriage contract forbidding her husband from taking a second wife, made it compulsory for the second wife to be informed of her marital situation and allowed the first wife to take her case to court if she felt she had suffered a prejudice by her husband taking a second wife. As we can see, the Moroccan Code, although innovative in certain areas, had remained fairly close to the traditional Maliki Mathhab.

The study of the main aspects of the Tunisain and Moroccan Codes provides a useful backdrop to the debates on the Family Code which took place in Algeria in 1981 and 1984.

16.2.2 Analysis of the Algerian Codes of 1981 and 1984

After years of discussions and numerous abortive attempts at producing a Family Code, Chadli Benjedid's cabinet approved, on September 29th 1981, a draft project of Personal Status[98]. Its aim was to 'fill the judicial void' created since 1975 when it was decided that all previous colonial laws would be abrogated. The magazine Algérie Actualité welcomed this initiative as an attempt to bring legislation in line with the changes which had occurred in society. It declared that the Muslim Laws used to resolve legal cases relating to family matters, such as marriage, divorce and inheritance, were:

> ... dépassé, inopérant, voire même anachronique.
>
> *[Algérie Actualité no. 832 Sept 24th-30th 1981, p 4]*

(... outdated, ineffective or even anachronistic.)

The new legislation was, therefore, seen as a positive step, as long as:

> ... il se fonde sur les réalités nationales en proposant une solution juste, en conformité avec les textes fondamentaux du pays, aux grands problèmes actuels: divorce, garde des enfants, pension alimentaire, successions, adoption, travail de l'épouse, etc ...
>
> *[ibid]*

(... it [was] based on national realities, proposing adequate solutions, in compliance with the country's fundamental texts, to the present problems: divorce, children's custody, maintenance, inheritance, adoption, women's work, etc ...)

The draft Family Code of 1981 was withdrawn by President Chadli Benjedid on January 24th 1982, after months of protests by Algerian women (see section 16.3). The President declared, at the time, that the debate on the Family Code was going to be extended and a National

98 Although the government chose to name the document 'Personal Status project', it was in fact a Family Code, regulating all aspects of family life, from marriage to inheritance. It will, therefore, be referred to as the 1981 Family Code.

Commission was going to be formed with representatives from political, religious and judicial bodies, psychologists, sociologists and members of the women's organisation (UNFA). After years of speculations and unrest, the new version of the Family Code was adopted on June 9th1984.

It is important to compare the most significant articles in each of the two versions of the Family Code in order to analyse the changes in the government's thinking regarding family laws and to evaluate the impact, if any, of the women's protests of the early 1980s. This analysis will enable us to see if, by withdrawing the 1981 draft proposal, the government's intention was to take into account the women demonstrators' demands, or if it simply tried to defuse the situation by postponing the adoption of the new legislation.

Vandevelde, in her analysis of the 1981 and 1984 Family Codes *[Maghreb Machrek no. 97, July / September 1982, pp 39-54 and no. 107, January / March 1985, pp 52-64.]* described both texts as patriarchal, based on judicial inequality and inspired by the Muslim law. Knauss confirmed this interpretation and declared:

> The Code is patriarchal in content, tone and legal application.
>
> *[Knauss 1987, p 137]*

This will become evident in the analysis of the two documents[99]. Article 1 of the 1981 Code describes marriage as:

> ... un contrat passé entre un homme et une femme dans les formes légales, dans le but de procréer et de fonder une famille basée sur l'affection et la mansuétude.
>
> *[p 40]*
>
> (... a legal contract between a man and a woman intended for procreation and the creation of a family based on affection and understanding.)

In article 4 of the 1984 version, 'procreation' as the main purpose of marriage has been removed and instead, marriage is described as having amongst other aims:

> ... de fonder une famille basée sur l'affection, la mansuétude et l'entraide, de protéger moralement les deux conjoints et de préserver les liens de famille.
>
> *[p 4]*
>
> (... to create a family based on affection, understanding and mutual help in order to give moral support to the husband and wife and preserve family ties.)

99 The articles of the 1981 Family Code quoted are those studied by Vandevelde *[Maghreb Machrek no. 97 July / September 1982]*. The text of the 1984 Family Code used here is the one published in the newspaper El Moudjahid on June 20th-23rd 1984.

The addition of the principle of 'mutual help and support' is a positive step. The change of emphasis regarding procreation can be interpreted as a sign of the government's new stance on birth control. In view of the extremely high birth rate (in 1984, it was still 40 per thousand[100]), the government had decided to introduce a family planning programme as part of the 1980-1984 five year plan. The same interpretation may also apply to the change made to the legal marrying age. From 16 for girls and 18 for boys, in the 1981 Code, it was brought to18 and 21 respectively in the 1984 version. However, the judge could still grant a special dispensation (article 7).

Regrettably, the rest of the modifications between the two Family Codes, give a far less optimistic view of the future position of women within the Algerian society. In fact, the patriarchal nature of the Code is often reinforced in the 1984 version.

Regarding marriage regulations, both Codes state that the presence of the two future spouses is not necessary, a representative can act on their behalf, but more importantly the presence of the matrimonial guardian of the girl (usually her father) is one of the legal requirements without which the marriage will be declared null and void. Moreover, the responsibility of marrying a woman resides with her guardian (articles 6 & 8 1981, 9 & 11 1984). This implies that a woman is not considered an independent adult, even when she has reached the legal marrying age. Furthermore, the father or guardian can refuse to give his consent if he considers that the choice of prospective husband would not be beneficial to the girl or her family (article 10 1981, 12 1984). Although matrimonial constraint is theoretically abolished by the Codes, in practice, the woman is still very much under the tutelage of her father / guardian until she marries. She then becomes her husband's responsibility since he has to provide for her maintenance (article 32 1981, 37 1984). This position of minor is reinforced by the fact that children's maintenance is the responsibility of the father until the boys have reached their majority and the girls get married (article 64 1981, 75 1984). Not only has the father sole responsibility for the children, which puts the mother is an inferior position within the couple, but girls remain under his tutelage until they marry, which means that even when they have reached their legal majority, they still depend on their father. Messaoudi, in her book 'Une Algérienne debout'[101] concluded:

> Dans ce Code, les femmes algériennes n'existent désormais qu'en tant que "filles de", "mères de", "épouses de". Elles ne sont pas des individus à part entière.
>
> *[Messaoudi 1995, p 97]*

(According to this Family Code, Algerian women are only recognised as "daughters of", "mothers of", "wives of". They are not individuals in their own right.)

100 *[Office National des Statistiques Numéro Spécial 35 Rétrospective 1962-1991, p 2.]*

101 'An Algerian woman still standing up'

The dowry, which many people were hoping to see disappear or at least reduced to a token, is maintained as a legal condition of marriage (article 6 1981, 14 1984). The husband has to give the dowry to his wife who can then use it as she pleases. No maximum amount is prescribed which shows the total disregard for the UNFA's relentless campaign against exorbitant levels of dowry.

Both Codes make polygamy a legal right for the husband, with a maximum of four wives (as allowed by the Qur'an), but on the condition that the husband can treat all four wives equitably (article11 1981, 8 1984). Whereas in the 1981 version, the husband had to provide separate accommodation for his wives (article 32), this is no longer the case in the 1984 version. The woman can include a clause against polygamy in the marriage contract (article 5 1981, 19 1984), but, one can imagine that many girls would not be aware of this right. Furthermore, even if they include such a clause, their only recourse, if this clause is not respected by the husband, is to ask for divorce. The 1984 version extends the right to include a clause in the marriage contract for the husband. The intention behind this new clause is to give the husband equal rights.

In all the previous draft Family Codes, the question of polygamy had always been a major cause of disagreement between the traditionalists and the modernists. The argument was not due to the fact that polygamy was on the increase, quite the contrary: out of 1,000 married men, the percentages of polygamous marriages were 64% in 1911, 30% in 1948, 20% in 1954, 18% in 1966 and 13% in 1970 *[Khodja 1985, p 53]*. For the modernists and for many women, particularly those who demonstrated against the 1981 Family Code, polygamy was considered a degrading and outdated practice. The UNFA repeatedly demanded its abolition. However, for the traditionalists, it represented a symbol of the Islamic culture, to be defended at all costs. During the debates which took place in the preparatory commission of the Code, the group of *ulamas* declared:

> Prendre position en faveur de la polygamie, c'est choisir la voie du recouvrement de nos valeurs.
>
> *[Saadi 1991, p 54]*
>
> (In favouring polygamy, we are heading towards the reinforcing of our traditional values.)

This shows the attachment of the traditionalists to archaic principles, even when they had been virtually abandoned by society. Just as during colonial times the French authorities focussed their attacks on certain aspects of Muslim traditions (polygamy and the wearing of the veil were two of them), the traditionalists made polygamy a question of principle and continued to see its abolition as an incursion of Western culture into Algerian society. A view not shared by other Muslim countries, such as Tunisia which abolished polygamy in 1956.

The patriarchal foundation of both Codes is particularly explicit in the outline of the responsibilities and duties between husband and wife. It is the husband's duty to provide for the financial maintenance of his wife (article 32 1981). However, an important omission has been made in the 1984 version: the maintenance is to be provided within the limits of the husband's financial means, but no longer taking into account the wife's social background (article 32 1981, 37 1984). Article 33 of the 1981 version declares that the husband cannot forbid his wife from visiting and receiving her parents, managing freely her own property and working outside the home. However, certain conditions regulate the woman's right to work: she must have worked before her marriage or have obtained permission, from her husband, to work after the marriage, or have included a clause in the marriage contract giving her the right to take up work outside her home. The wording of the equivalent article (38) in the 1984 version is quite different:

> L'épouse a le droit de visiter ses parents prohibés et de les recevoir conformément aux usages et aux coutumes, disposer de ses biens en toute liberté.
>
> *[p 4]*
>
> (The wife has the right to visit her prohibited parents, receive them according to the usual practices and customs and dispose freely of her own property.)

Even though the wording was changed and the wife now has the *right* to visit and receive her family (whereas before the husband could not *forbid* her), this right is now limited to the *prohibited* family members (the immediate relatives whom she is prohibited from marrying[102]). This, in fact, reduces the woman's right to meet with her relatives. Furthermore, work is not mentioned, which leads to the conclusion that work is no longer a right for married women. Her only recourse is presumably to add a clause in the marriage contract.

Apart from the woman's duty to bring up her children, articles 34 (1981) and 39 (1984) state that she has to obey her husband and show him the respect owed to him as head of the household as well as to his parents and relatives. The articles relating to the relationship between husband and wife show that the authority of the husband over his wife is total. No mention is made of mutual respect between the two. The wife is completely dependent on her husband. Her status of minor until her marriage continues throughout her married life. The Family Codes of 1981 and 1984 make no allowance for the changes which had taken place in the social structure since independence. The customs which existed in the traditional extended patriarchal family have been kept, even though evidence showed that more and more couples, especially in urban areas, lived in a nuclear family structure and the wife often had to go out to

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102 The 'prohibited' family members are: maternal and paternal uncle, nephew, half brother and step father, mother's first husband, son in law, husband's son from a previous marriage... *[p 55]*

work to support her family. The fact that improvements in the educational provisions had given girls more opportunities to enter the job market is also ignored. Furthermore, the statement that 'all citizens are equal', present in both Constitution and National Charter is completely disregarded.

The Codes' regulations regarding divorce procedures reinforce the inequality between men and women. In the 1981 version, divorce by mutual consent is not recognised and article 43 states that:

> ... le divorce est de la faculté exclusive du mari.
>
> *[p 43]*

> (... the husband has exclusive right to divorce.)

This is, in fact, the right of repudiation (allowed by the Qur'an) which the UNFA had so vehemently opposed for years. Possibly to moderate this, the Code requires the divorce to be granted by a judge who can decide, if the husband has abused his right to divorce, to award damages to the wife and grant her the right to keep the marital home. As Vandevelde noted, it is very unlikely that the husband will be found guilty, which leaves the woman without resources and accommodation *[Maghreb Machrek no. 97, July / September 1982, p 43]*.

Article 45 of the 1981 Code lists the specific cases when a woman can ask for divorce. These are: if the husband does not provide maintenance for his wife, if he is absent from the marital home for more than a year, if there has been a legal condemnation pronounced against the husband or if he has some disability, if the husband refuses to share the marital bed for more than four months, if he denies his wife the right to visit her relatives and manage her own property. Although it is not explicitly mentioned, one can assume that another case which would allow a woman to ask for divorce is if her husband does not respect a clause included in the marriage contract. Article 46 gives the woman the right to 'buy back' her freedom, by relinquishing her right to the marital home and maintenance. This type of divorce by compensation had never been included in any of the previous draft Family Codes *[ibid, pp 43,44]*.

In the 1984 version (article 48), divorce occurs:

> ... par la volonté de l'époux, par consentement mutuel des deux époux ou à la demande de l'épouse dans la limite des cas prévus aux articles 53 et 54.
>
> *[p 4]*

> (... by the will of the husband, by mutual consent of the spouses or by request of the wife within the limits of the cases listed in articles 53 and 54.)

The reintroduction of divorce by mutual consent is a positive move, establishing husband and wife as equal partners capable of coming to a mutual agreement. However, the right of repudiation is still present and although a judge may grant damages to the wife (if it is established that the husband has abused his right to divorce), these damages do not include the marital home. This has serious consequences for women who could suddenly find themselves having to return to their parents' home, or find their own accommodation. In view of the terrible shortage of accommodation, women were more than likely going to find themselves without a home, reduced to live in a hostel or in the street. This constitutes a real threat for many women: according to El Moudjahid, in 1987-1988, the number of divorces by mutual consent was 10,762, whereas the number of divorces by repudiation was 18,652 *[in Daoud 1993, p 181]*. The 1984 Code, by not even granting the possibility for the woman of retaining her accommodation in case of repudiation, establishes a flagrant inequality between men and women and puts many women in real danger.

The special circumstances which allow a woman to ask for divorce are the same as in the 1981 Code, except that another case has been added (article 53):

> Pour toute faute immorale gravement répréhensible établic.
>
> *[p 4]*
>
> (For any established grave unacceptable moral misconduct.)

This is so vague that it will be up to the judge to decide what fits into this category. It does not give women sufficient protection against violence or adultery.

Finally, as in the 1981 version, the woman can 'buy back' her freedom, but this time, as well as losing her right to maintenance and accommodation, she also has to pay back a sum of money which can, at the most, be equivalent to the dowry she received (article 54).

In case of divorce, the mother has custody of the children and the father must provide accommodation and maintenance for his children (articles 52, 61 and 64 1981, 72 and 75 1984). If the husband dies, the mother has custody of her children as long as the father has not specified a legal guardian in his will. The judge may also decide that the mother is incapable of looking after her children (articles 76 and 81 1981, 87 and 92 1984). However, the father remains the legal guardian of his children in all cases. This means that his signature and approval are required for all official documents. This caused many problems for divorced women. Algérie Actualité reported the case of a divorcee who had been given custody of her children, but who could not take her daughter, who was still a minor, out of the country without her husband's authorisation. And yet, the husband had never shown any interest in his children or paid any maintenance. The article concluded that, in practice, the mother did not really have

custody of her children *[Algérie Actualité no. 1215 January 26th-February 1st 1989, p 3].* In other cases, mothers could not register their children in a new school because they could not trace their divorced husband and, therefore, could not obtain his signature.

The question of adoption also caused serious problems. Both Codes prohibited adoption (articles 42 1981, 46 1984), as prescribed in the Qur'an. Articles 105 of the 1981 Code and 116 of the 1984 version allow a person to look after an abandoned child, but the natural parents have the right to take away the child at any point, although the 1984 Code requires a judge's authorisation (articles 114 1981, 124 1984). Despite the large number of abandoned children, the determination to comply with the prescriptions of the Qur'an is an indication of the hold the conservatives had over the government. Most of these children were abandoned because their mothers, usually minors and unmarried, had nowhere to go and no means of subsistence. In the Algiers conurbation, there were 20 times more children born from single mothers in 1989 than in 1969 and 90% of these babies were abandoned *[Algérie Actualité no. 1242 August 3rd-9th 1989, p 17].* According to the Ministry of Health's estimations, there were 120,000 abandoned children in 1990 *[Saadi 1991, p 129].* The fact that potential adoptive couples had to live with the threat of seeing their child removed from them at any time would have dissuaded many from contemplating adoption. Furthermore, even when a child was 'looked after' by a family, he/she could not take the name of the couple and could not receive any inheritance. As Messaoudi noted, the government did not adhere so stringently to the Qur'an in all domains. Charging interest on loans (which is forbidden in the Qur'an) became legal after a fatwa was produced to this effect *[Messaoudi 1995, p 100].*

The inequality between men and women in the Family Codes is also apparent in the fact that a Muslim man can marry a non Muslim, but a Muslim woman is not allowed to marry a non Muslim (articles 27 1981, 31 1984). This follows the precepts of the Qur'an which also underwrite the inheritance regulations: a male heir is entitled to twice the amount a female heir can receive (articles 172 1981, 172 1984) and a widow is entitled to an eighth of her husband's inheritance, whereas a widower is entitled to a quarter (articles 136 1981, 146 1984). The Shari'a, Islamic law, has been one of the main bases of the Family Codes and article 222 of the 1984 version states that any circumstances not covered by the present law will be dealt with according to the Shari'a'.

After analysing the details of the 1981 and 1984 Family Codes, it is clear that the government did not take into account the demands of the women who demonstrated against the draft proposal of 1981 (a detailed study of the women' s demonstrations is done in section 16.3). In the 1984 version, polygamy and repudiation are maintained, the woman is still treated as a minor throughout her life and the inequality between men and women is perpetuated. Moreover, many of the changes made to the 1981 Family Code further reduce women's rights: no explicit protection of the right to work, loss of accommodation for the woman in case of divorce and limitations to the right of visits to her relatives. It is clear that the government

chose to appease the traditionalists by enacting a Family Code entirely based on a rigid interpretation of the Muslim law and the patriarchal family ethos with little regard for the pledge to equality between all citizens contained in both the Constitution and the National Charter. By doing so, the government was also disregarding the changes which had occurred in society: development of education for girls and rising expectations of women in terms of employment, changes within the family structure (where couples often lived in a nuclear family, particularly in urban centres). After nearly 20 years of hesitation, the government, once again, chose to sacrifice women.

16.2.3 Debates around the 1984 Family Code

One only has to look at the debates which took place around the 1981 Family Code to realise that the National Assembly (APN) included some members who were not prepared to allow any deviations from the Muslim law and were even following a very narrow interpretation of the scriptures. Deputy Abada, for instance, declared that the objection to polygamy on the ground that no husband could treat all his wives equitably (as prescribed in the Qur'an) was in fact contrary to the Prophet's own attitude towards his wives. He said:

> ... le Prophète lui-même ...reconnaissait sa préférence pour Aicha. Interdire la polygamie équivaut à s'opposer au comportement même du Prophète.
>
> *[Algérie Actualité no. 847 Jan 14th-20th 1982, p 9]*
>
> (... the Prophet himself ...admitted his preference for Aicha. To forbid polygamy would be equivalent to contradicting the Prophet's own behaviour.)

Another MP, Mr Cheurfi spoke in favour of a father having the right to impose his choice of husband on his daughter:

> Le père a des droits sur sa fille, donc son choix doit être respecté et la fille s'y soumettre.
>
> *[ibid]*
>
> (The father has certain rights over his daughter, therefore, his choice must be respected and his daughter must accept it.)

There was much resistance within the government to produce progressive family legislation. In fact, immediately after the withdrawal of the 1981 Family Code, the government was unrepentant, defending the text and explaining the reasons behind some of the more controversial aspects in an article in the magazine Révolution Africaine[103]. According to this article, only some elements of the proposed legislation were contested. Polygamy was one of

[103] Révolution Africaine was controlled by the government and aimed at spreading the government's views abroad.

them. It was pointed out that, as well as being allowed by the Muslim law, polygamy was necessitated by:

> ...des maladies spécifiques qui atteignent les femmes et la stérilité pour certaines.
>
> *[Révolution Africaine no. 936 January 29th-February 4th 1982, p 17]*
>
> (...specific illnesses which affect women and in the case of sterile women.)

Furthermore, it was stressed that the judge had to authorise each case of polygamy. Futhermore, since the conditions were very strict and difficult to achieve, in particular the requirement of providing separate accommodation for each wife, polygamy was made virtually impossible.

The marriage regulations were presented as perfectly acceptable since:

> ... seul le père peut interdire à sa fille de se marier s'il juge de son incompatibilité. (sic)
>
> *[ibid]*
>
> (... only the father can forbid his daughter from marrying (someone) he considers unsuitable.)

After all, the girl's rights were safe since in the last resort:

> ... si toutes les conditions sont réunies, le juge pourra trancher et consacrer l'union.
>
> *[ibid]*
>
> (... if all the conditions are met, the judge will be able to settle the dispute and perform the marriage.)

As far as divorce was concerned, the fact that it was described as 'the husband's right' was not really a problem since the judge had to pronounce the divorce and could grant the wife the right to keep the couple's accommodation. The article concluded that:

> Le statut, selon ce qui est écrit, tient compte des mutations intervenues dans la société en recourant à un important effort d'interprétation qui n'est pas contraire aux prescriptions du Coran ...
>
> *[ibid]*
>
> (The Personal Status (document), as it stands, takes into account the changes which have occurred in society, making a substantial effort of interpretation of the Qur'an without going against its prescriptions.)

These comments only serve to reinforce the impression that the government was not really prepared to take any radical action regarding family laws. However, one has to consider another factor which explains the fact that the Family Code, implemented in 1984, further

reduced women's rights. In the early 1980s the government had to contend with a serious challenge to its authority: the violent actions of Islamic revivalists (study of this movement is done in section 16.4.1). To avoid a confrontation with the Islamists, the government chose to appease them by enacting a regressive Family Code, disregarding its rhetoric in the Constitution, thereby, losing an opportunity to introduce within the law some of the changes which had taken place in society. As Knauss concluded:

> The government had shown itself to be resilient, clever, and co-optive by withdrawing the code and then revising it. The government had demonstrated that it was the final arbiter on family matters, depriving conservative religious leaders and feminists who would have seen the Family Code as their prerogative. Furthermore, by making the Family Code of 1984 the law of the land, the Benjedid government for a time appeased the growing Muslim movements with a code that was essentially traditionalist and patriarchal.
>
> *[Knauss 1992, p 166]*

16.3 Women's protests against the 1981 Family Code

16.3.1 The years of gestation of the independent women's movement (1977 - 1980)

The women's demonstrations which took place in 1981 against the draft Family Code were more than just a sudden reaction to the new legislation. They were the public vocalisation of years of debates and discussions which had taken place since 1977 amongst urban educated working women, particularly in the Higher Education sector. It is important to follow the path which led to these demonstrations in order to understand the profound changes which took place in the early 1980s amongst educated working women in urban Algeria. At the beginning, the movement was fragmented and sometimes divided, particularly on the question of whether to involve national organisations such as the UGTA[104] or the UNFA[105] or to act totally independently. Nevertheless, the crucial factor was that, for the first time, groups of Algerian women were opening a public debate - first on women's issues and on general political questions later on. This was a new development and a turning point in the history of Algerian women.

The first women's group was set up in October 1977 at the University of Oran. It was centred around a seminar for students preparing their Masters and resulted in the organisation of a two day open debate on the theme 'The situation of women in Algeria'. A year later, in November 1978, at Algiers University, groups of women lecturers circulated a petition demanding equal treatment with their male counterparts regarding accommodation. These women were

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104 Union Général des Travailleurs Algériens (the national workers' union)

105 Union Nationale des Femmes Algériennes (the national women's organisation)

objecting to the fact that single women lecturers were housed in shared rooms in halls of residence for students whereas single men were entitled to their own accommodation *[Sou'al no.4 November 1983, pp 128,129].*

In February 1979, the newspaper El Moudjahid announced that a government commission had been set up to prepare the draft of the new Family Code. As a response, discussion groups were set up amongst working women in various sectors and in particular at the University of Algiers. However, the UGTA tried to take control of the movement. The University branch of the UGTA rejected the principle that women should elect their own representatives on the University working party. Their main objection was that once elected, these representatives might start to question certain aspects of the Union policy *[Sou'al no.4 November 1983, p 130].* It seems that the UGTA also feared that the women's movement might become too powerful if it were allowed to gain public recognition. This became apparent on March 8th 1979 when the UGTA refused to let women use their congress room in Algiers for the meetings organised to celebrate International Women's day. This meant that only 200 women could attend the meeting whilst many were left standing outside *[Les temps modernes nos. 432,433 July / August 1982, p 153].* Nevertheless, a motion was passed during the meeting asking for women representatives to be included in the government commission working on the draft of the Family Code. This motion was later sent to the UGTA and the UNFA. There was no response from either of the two organisations. This lack of support confirmed some of the women in their belief that the only way to have women's views heard was to act outside of the recognised national organisations. Therefore, in December 1979, a two-day conference on the theme 'The situation of Algerian women' was organised by lecturers at the University of Algiers. It was attended by 500 women. At the same time, a student working party was set up by female students at the University. They also tried to start a public debate on women's issues by showing films and organising discussions in the University as well as in public places in town. The women at the University of Oran were also adopting a similar approach. From May 3rd to May 6th 1980, they organised conferences at the University.

16.3.2 The birth of the first independent women's movement (1981)

One particular incident which took place in 1981 was to provide a focal point to the multitude of isolated women's movements which had developed since 1977. In January of that year, the government decreed that Algerian women travelling without a man were to be refused the right to leave the country. This led to angry scenes at Algiers airport. This decree might seem anachronistic at the end of the 20th century, although one has to remember that, in France, the law forcing French women to obtain their husband's permission to work was repealed in 1965 and only in 1970 was the husband no longer legally referred to as 'head of the household'. In Algeria, a woman travelling without a man could be accused of compromising her reputation,

since she would be meeting other men. The traditional code of honour (described in detail in section 2.1) makes men (fathers and brothers) responsible for women's sexual behaviour. A man is, therefore, required to accompany a woman whenever she ventures outside of her home. Algeria was not the only country to impose such strict rules. Minai, in her study 'Women in Islam' gives the example of Egypt which, only in 1979, repealed its law forbidding women to take employment outside their home without their husband's permission *[Minai 1981, p 267]*.

For Algerian women, this event was the catalyst which spurred them into large scale public action. At a general assembly, on February 5th 1981, the first independent women's group was created at Algiers University. Here is what Rabia Abdelkrim Chikh, one of the women who participated in the events of the time, wrote about that day:

> Une date de naissance est difficile à fixer dans un mouvement politique: cependant, un jour, plus qu'un autre qui le précédait, peut constituer l'inscription d'une rupture avec le passé, d'un bon en avant. Pour nous, *femmes algériennes*, c'est le 5 février 1981 qui porte cette trace, car pour la première fois depuis l'indépendance du pays, des femmes se sont données une structure politique indépendante et non clandestine.
>
> *[Sou'al no. 4 November 1983, p 126]*
>
> (It is difficult to give the precise date of birth of a political movement: however, one day, more than another, can mark a break with the past, a surge forward. For us, Algerian women, February 5th bears this mark, because for the first time since the independence of the country, women gave themselves a political structure independent and non clandestine.)

This statement shows the historical importance of that day. The events which followed were unprecedented in the history of Algerian women. At the general assembly on February 5th, a petition was written and taken to the Home Office minister, demanding the right of free movement for all citizens. The minister agreed that, the events which had taken place at the airport were unconstitutional[106], however, he could not give a written refutation since no official document had been published denying women the right to travel without a man. Nevertheless, he promised that such actions would not happen again.

A second General Assembly was decided for March 8th. The purpose of the meeting was to report on the outcome of the petition and work on a common platform for future actions regarding the draft Family Code. Unfortunately, no consensus was reached due to the divisions between those women who wanted public demonstrations and those who wanted to adopt more moderate means of action.

[106] According to Article 39 of the 1976 Constitution, any discrimination based on sex was banned (see section 15.3.1).

It is interesting to note that, at the time when some women were fighting for the recognition of the fundamental right of freedom of movement, the UNFA was being praised in the press for an agreement passed with the Social Affairs minister for the development of crêches and kindergartens. Révolution Africaine's article concluded that:

> ...on peut affirmer effectivement que le 8 mars 1981 s'est fêté sous le signe de la solidarité.
>
> *[Révolution Africaine no. 890 March 13th-19th 1981, p 13]*

> (...one can indeed declare that March 8th 1981 was celebrated in a mood of solidarity.)

Indeed, women needed these infrastructures to enable them to take up employment, but the UNFA and the government should have been even more concerned with infringements to women's basic rights.

16.3.3 The fight against the Family Code

16.3.3.1 Attempts at involving the UNFA

In September 1981, the newspaper El Moudjahid announced that a draft of the Family Code had been accepted by the government and was going to be presented to the APN[107] for approval. The text of the draft document was never officially published. Several illegal copies of various drafts were circulating, which added to the confusion and the feeling of anger amongst women who felt deliberately excluded from the debate. Members of the Algiers University's women's group approached the UNFA's General Secretary. She replied:

> ... que le texte ne passera pas... qu'il n'y avait rien à craindre... qu'il [le document] passerait de toute façon dans les organes de masse...que l'UNFA restait mobilisée sur ces questions... S'il y avait un risque, est-ce que j'irais à la Mecque?
>
> *[Les Temps Modernes nos. 432, 433 July / August 1982, p 166]*

> (... that the text would not be approved... that there was no need to worry... that the document would in any case be sent to the national organisations... that the UNFA remained totally mobilised on these questions... [she added] If there was any risk, would I be going away to Mecca?)

This attempt at involving a government organisation by the independent women's group was a tactical move: firstly, the UNFA had the infrastructure to contact and mobilise large numbers of women; secondly, this could be used as a test of the UNFA's real commitment to women's rights. If the organisation did not take a lead at this crucial point and organise large scale

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107 Assemblée Populaire Nationale (equivalent of the House of Commons).

opposition to the draft Family Code, then it would lose any credibility amongst women. This, in turn, would establish the need for independent action which had been advocated by a large number of women in the University group but which had seen strong resistance from more moderate elements who felt that the UNFA should represent women's views.

Despite the lack of concern from the General Secretary of the UNFA, further consultations took place to obtain the support of the organisation for a letter of protest against the Family Code. This letter was to be sent to the government. The UNFA refused to sign the document using as a pretext the fact that all their members had not been consulted. From that moment on, the independent women's group felt it necessary to act totally outside of any government organisation.

16.3.3.2 The first public demonstration against the Family Code

Members of the independent women's group wrote a petition which demanded that the APN postpone any vote on the Family Code until the text had been made public and consultation with women had taken place.[108] They collected 7,000 signatures in one week and planned a public demonstration for October 28th 1981 outside the APN building where a delegation of women was to take the petition to the president of the National Assembly.

The demonstration consisted of about 100 women, not just University lecturers, but also working women from other sectors. Since the delegation was not allowed to have an audience with the president of the APN, the women demonstrators decided to march to the main post office and organise a sit-in outside the Mustapha hospital. It was decided that the group of women would continue gathering signatures for their petition and would have a second demonstration a fortnight later. In order to gain more public support, members of the women's group decided to ask ex-*Moudjahidate*[109] to join them on that occasion.

16.3.3.3 The widening of the movement.

New groups of women joined the second public demonstration, on November 16th. These included influential ex-*Moudjahidate* such as Mrs Bitat (known as Zohra Drif during the war, later wife of the President of the APN) and Djamila Bouhired. Myriem Benmihoub, a lawyer, was heading the group of female lawyers of the Algiers bar. There were also a few members of the UNJA[110] and a number of students. The magazine Algérie Actualité reported on the demonstration with an article entitled 'Femmes en marche' (Women on the move) in which it explained the women's demands for information and large scale consultation. It described the

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108 The petition was photocopied and sent to women's groups all around the country and to Algerian women in France.

109 Women fighters during the war of independence.

110 Union Nationale de la Jeunesse Algérienne (national youth organisation).

fear amongst the demonstrators that the text of the Family Code, discussed behind closed doors, would reduce women:

> ... au rôle d'une éternelle mineure incapable de s'assurer à tous les âges de sa vie.
>
> *[Algérie Actualité no. 840 November 11th-26th 1981, p 12]*
>
> (... to the role of eternal minors unable to take charge of their lives at any age.)

The police tried to intimidate the demonstrators by arresting four of them. However, a group of twenty women obtained an audience with the two vice presidents of the APN and the president of the commission which had worked on the draft of the Family Code. During the meeting, the government's representatives refused to enter into any dialogue, declaring that the APN was sovereign in terms of legislation and if women wanted to talk about the document, they should meet with the representatives of the UNFA who had participated in the discussions. The group of women delegates went to the Algiers Chamber of Commerce where the UNFA's National Council was meeting. After lengthy negotiations the group of women was allowed to meet the president of the organisation, Mrs Djeghroud. She suggested that the group should propose a number of amendments which the UNFA would present to the APN. This proposal resulted in a split of the women's movement: the core of women activists who had participated in all the meetings and demonstrations since the beginning of the campaign wanted to see the whole text rejected. Their views represented a minority amongst the women. The new comers to the movement (lawyers and ex-*Moudjahidate*) were satisfied with the UNFA's proposal for amendments to the text. Despite their differences, the women demonstrators agreed to organise another protest outside the building of the APN on December 14th. This time, the police brutality towards the demonstrators was such that no real gathering was possible. Nevertheless, yet another protest was planned for December 23rd outside the main post office. According to some of the participants, from that point on, the ex-*Moudjahidate* took control of the women's movement. If, at first, they were doubtful that public protests were the best means of action, the brutality of the police at the previous demonstration convinced them that the government was prepared to go to any length to stop the women's movement. They felt betrayed by their own comrades in arms now in the government. The principles for which they had fought during the war of independence (freeing the country from all forms of oppressions) seemed to have been forgotten. Yet, the Tripoli Programme of June 1962 (see section 12.3) was unequivocal about women's rights. One of its objectives was:

> ... [suivre] une politique sociale au profit des masses pour ... libérer la femme.
>
> *[Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord 1962, p 697]*
>
> (... [to follow] a social policy in favour of the masses in order to ... liberate women.)

Now that the country had freed itself from colonialism, men were quite prepared to forget their promises to women.

This is how one participant described the fundamental change in the ex-*Moudjahidate*'s position after the protest of December 14th:

> Elles ont franchi un pas... Lorsqu'elles ont posé le mot d'ordre "non à la trahison des ideaux du 1er novembre", c'était clairement dire [aux membres du gouvernement] "vous n'êtes plus les garants de ces idéaux".
>
> *[Les Temps Modernes nos. 432, 433 July / August 1982, p 182]*

> (They took a major step... When they wrote on the banners "no to the betrayal of the ideals of November 1st", they were clearly telling [the government]: "you are no longer the guardians of these ideals.)

During the month of January 1982, several meetings of the women's movement took place. The group of ex-*Moudjahidate* decided to write a letter to President Chadli Bendjedid asking him to reject the proposed text if it was in contradiction with the principles of the Constitution. El Moudjahid reported on the ex-*Moudjahidate*'s actions and their demands:

> La monogamie.
> Le droit inconditionnel au travail.
> La majorité de la femme au même âge que celui de l'homme.
> L'égalité de l'homme et de la femme devant la législation en matière de divorce.
> Le partage égal du patrimoine commun.
> Une protection efficace de l'enfance abandonnée.
>
> *[El Moudjahid no. 5143 January 8th-9th 1982, p 5]*

> (Monogamy.
> Unconditional right to work.
> Same legal age of majority for men and women.
> Equality between men and women in divorce legislation.
> Equal entitlement to common assets.
> Adequate protection for abandoned children.)

16.3.4 Significance of the women's movement

On January 24th 1982, during a cabinet meeting, President Chadli Benjedid announced that the vote on the text of the Family Code was going to be postponed and the document withdrawn to allow for further discussions. A National Commission was set up to this effect.

The women's movement had won an important battle, but not merely because of the withdrawal of the text of the Family Code. Women's voices, outside of carefully controlled government organisations, had been heard for the first time. They had taken such unprecedented action that they could no longer be ignored. Even the press reported on the events and led to some form of public debate. For Algerian women and the country as a whole, a major step had been

taken. Women had forced their way into the political sphere on their own terms and with their specific agenda. Even though their actions were not entirely successful in practical terms, since the Family Code promulgated in 1984 took no account of women's views, a major change had taken place on a social level. The traditional social structure based on a gender division between the public space reserved to men and the private space (the home) reserved to women had been broken. Women had independently made their presence felt in the public sphere. This was unique in the history of the country. During the war of independence, women had entered the public space but their goal was similar to that of men's: the liberation of the country from colonialism. Furthermore, at that time, they were still very much under the 'supervision' of men and were not involved in the decision-making processes. After independence, women's achievements in education and work, although creating more opportunities for women to enter the public sphere, were closely watched and controlled by men. As a consequence, very few women gained any real power. The position of women within education and work was never fully considered to be a right for them but more a 'privilege' granted to them by men out of economic necessity. Women's place was still in the home. The women's movement which started in the late 1970s opened a new era for Algerian women and the country as a whole. These women, for the first time, had the courage to step into uncharted territory, they were rewarded by the discovery that change was indeed possible and felt empowered to express their views without fear or restraint. This is how one of these pioneers who participated in the open debates of the late 1970s at the University of Algiers described her experience:

> Ces trois jours nous ont permis de savoir qu'on pouvait parler sans qu'on nous tabasse, sans qu'on nous ramasse. On faisait le test de ce qu'on avait en face - de l'environnement dans lequel on était. On était sorties de nos maisons, on commençait à tatonner entre nous.
>
> *[Les Temps Modernes nos.432, 433 July / August 1982, p 154]*
>
> (These three days gave us the opportunity to realise that we could talk without the threat of physical abuse and without the fear of being arrested. We were experiencing new surroundings - the environment in which we lived. We had come out of our houses, we were beginning to search for new approaches, amongst women.)

Whereas in the early days of the movement, women focussed on their specific agenda, which was the recognition of their rights, by 1981, the movement had matured and broadened its aims. It was addressing wider political issues such as human rights and in so doing became the voice of the many who had suffered in silence the violation of their rights. The demonstrations of December 1981 marked a turning point. One of the protesters explained the significance of those days:

> Elle [la manifestation] réalisa une réappropriation d'un espace "public", la place de la grande poste, et sa transformation en espace social, c'est-à-dire en un lieu où

> s'exprime un besoin essentiel de liberté des femmes, et d'information des citoyens. Elle permit donc une remise en cause d'un rapport social d'exclusion, de marginalisation des citoyens, et encore plus des citoyennes.
>
> *[Les Temps Modernes nos. 432, 433 July / August 1982, p 186]*

> ([The demonstration] resulted in the re-appropriation of a public space, the main post office square, and transformed it into a social space, where the basic need for freedom for women and information for all citizens could be expressed. It called into question the social exclusion and the marginalisation of all citizens, in particular women.)

The slogans on the banners of the protesters clearly expressed the wider political issues being addressed:

> Non au silence, oui à la démocratie.
> Non aux textes qui tournent le dos à la Charte et à la Constitution.
> Droit à l'information pour tous.
>
> *[Les Temps Modernes nos. 432, 433 July / August 1982, p 184]*

> (No to silence, yes to democracy.
> No to the texts which are in contradiction with the Charter and the Constitution.
> Right of information for all.)

These slogans demonstrate that women protesters were conscious that it was not merely women's rights they were defending, but basic principles of democracy: equality for all, freedom of information and respect of constitutional texts. Their determination to organise public demonstrations, when even their right to be seen out of their home was not accepted by all, needs to be recognised. They were expressing the frustrations of a large section of the population who had seen their rights eroded over the years, but who had not dared to protest.

Messaoudi, who participated in the women's movement and later became member of the first independent women's association in 1985,[111] reports that the crowd observing the demonstration was very sympathetic towards the women. This is a comment made by an old man at the time:

> Heureusement qu'il y a les femmes dans ce pays. Elles osent faire ce que les hommes ne font pas.
>
> *[Messaoudi 1995, p 93]*

> (We are lucky to have such women in this country. They dare to do what men cannot do.)

111 L'Association pour l'égalité devant la loi entre les femmes et les hommes (Association for the equality of men and women in law).

16.3.5 Limitations of the women's movement

Although the women's protest movement of the late 1970s and early 1980s constituted an important step, it remained limited and seemed powerless at the time of the promulgation of the final version of the Family Code in 1984. The majority of women who took part in the demonstrations were aged 30 to 40. They were part of the generation who had lived through the war of independence. Even if they had not participated in the war, they had been brought up with certain ideals and a tradition of resistance. The younger generation born after independence lived in a society totally controlled by the FLN. The government, while excluding any political dialogue, suppressed social dissent by creating national organisations which were merely intended as disseminators of its propaganda. Even education was heavily controlled by the government. This very restrictive context did not encourage the younger generations to question decisions or even express their opinions. They were brought up in the belief that the government was there to provide for their needs and they were mainly concerned with their own social promotion. This explains the lack of support from young girls for the women's protests. Messaoudi goes even further and claims that the whole population, men in particular, became victims of the dictatorial governments which followed independence. Men also were excluded from any political debate and, therefore, could not cope with the idea of women demonstrating and standing up to the government. Most Algerian men turned their frustration against the government into an attack on women who were showing them up as politically impotent. Messaoudi describes this behaviour as:

> ... l'infantilisme politique sécrété par la dictature.
>
> *[Messaoudi 1995, p 103]*
>
> (... a political lack of maturity fostered by dictatorship.)

One limitation of the women's movement was the fact that it confined itself mostly to educated urban working women. The UNFA which could have given the movement a broader base refused to support it. As F. Burgat and H. Michel concluded in their article in l'Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord:

> L'UNFA, complètement marginalisée par ce mouvement, était apparue une fois de plus dans toute son inconsistance et son incapacité à agir, dès lors qu'il devient nécessaire, pour défendre les intérêts féminins, de conquérir un tant soit peu d'autonomie à l'égard de l'environnement institutionnel. L'organisation n'avait été capable ni de canaliser l'action des militantes féministes ni même de prendre sur ce sujet tant débattu une position précise.
>
> *[Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord 1982, p 515]*
>
> (The UNFA, completely marginalised by this movement, had shown once more its impotence and its inability to act, when it was necessary, in order to defend women's interests and to gain some autonomy. The organisation had neither been

able to channel the action of the feminist activists, nor to even take a definite stance on this subject which had created so much debate.)

Without the support of the UNFA's national and regional structures, women activists were incapable of spreading their action to rural areas and uneducated women in urban centres. For the vast majority of Algerian women, especially those living in rural areas, protesting was a luxury they could not afford. Their lives were totally absorbed by the daily struggle to keep their family.

The limitations of the women's protests and, in particular, the lack of support from the younger generations explain, to some extent, why the 1984 Family Code was adopted by the government without any public protest. However, there were two other factors: a series of arrests of women activists and the rise of Islamic revivalism. Between 1983 and 1984, 385 people were arrested by the government for participating in activities endangering National Security. Amongst them were Trotskysts, ex-supporters of President Ben Bella and women belonging to the women's committee against the Family Code. Some of the women were imprisoned until after the new Family Code was passed and all the documents in their possession were destroyed *[Daoud 1993, p 179].* In fact, on February 9th 1984, a committee was created in Paris demanding the liberation of all political prisoners, including the women activists. Three of these women (Mrs Ouzegane, Hannoun and Souidi) started a hunger strike on March 14th. They were finally freed on May 13th 1984, along with other political prisoners amongst whom were Madani and Sahnoun who later became prominent figures in the Islamist movement *[Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord 1984, p 804].*

From 1982 onwards, the increase in the number of violent actions by Islamic revivalists (see section 16.4.1) created a climate of fear among the population and particularly among women who were often targeted by them. All these factors, combined with the fact that when it came to family laws, the majority of men, even educated men, were in favour of protecting their privileges, explain the adoption of the 1984 Family Code without any protests. This should not distract from the fact that the women's protests in the early 1980s constitute a milestone in the history of Algeria. It represented the first public challenge to the monolithic FLN political structure.

16.4 The end of the FLN monopoly on power

16.4.1 The rise of Islamic revivalism up to 1989

Before analysing the impact on women of the most aggressive and powerful Islamist group in the 1980s and 1990s in Algeria, namely the Front Islamique du Salut (FIS)[112], it is important to trace the development of this movement.

Fanny Colona traces back the start of Islamic revival,[113] to the mid-1960s in Algiers. At that time, they mostly offered social services such as Quranic schools, counselling services and the distribution of clothes in the poorest areas of the town. During the 1970s and 1980s, they extended their influence to factory workers, university students, school teachers in rural areas and small businessmen. As Knauss noted, the Islamists gave this heterogeneous group of 'underclass' citizens a sense of identity:

> Arabo-Islamicism is seen by many young Algerians as an attractive stable set of universal values that speaks to their need "to be somebody" in a society increasingly dominated by personal connections with individuals in the government.
>
> *[Knauss 1987, p 123]*

As well as giving these individuals a sense of belonging, the Islamists offered them a chance to express their grievances against the government. This was done in the many 'Independent Mosques' built and run by the Islamists and the 'People's Mosques' funded by local communities whose Imams were chosen by the people (as opposed to appointed by the government). Between 1971 and 1987, more than 11,000 illegal associations were created either to build mosques or stadiums *[Rouadjia 1990, p 86]*. These associations were illegal, because the government, in its desperate attempts to control all aspects of public life, had passed a decree in 1971 which made the creation of associations virtually impossible, due to the convoluted administrative process for registration. An authorisation for creating an association could only be obtained after agreement from the Home Office and from the relevant Ministries. In the case of a religious association, agreement had to be obtained from the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the regional and local authorities and, sometimes, the local town planning department *[Rouadjia 1990, pp 86,87]*. Nevertheless, and without these permissions, the Islamists felt quite safe building these illegal mosques, because they knew there would be public outrage if the government dared pull down a place of worship.

The Islamists used mosques as a forum for debates and indoctrination. In 1981, in the wake of the Iranian Revolution, Islamist groups started violent public actions. This was in line with their mission *to command that which is proper and forbid that which is reprehensible [Third World*

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112 Islamic Salvation Front

113 The Islamic movement at that time was known as the Muslim Brotherhood (Les Frères Musulmans).

Quarterly Vol. 10 no. 2 April 1988, p 577]. On May 10th 1981, National Students' day, several incidents took place in universities across the country. The most serious were in Annaba (a town in the North East of the country) where groups of Muslim activists assaulted staff and students and rampaged through the university buildings destroying files and records *[Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord 1981, p 718].*

Attacks in universities often targeted young girls who were not, according to the Islamists, suitably dressed.

> C'est à la cité universitaire de jeunes filles Ben Aknoun, sur les hauts d'Alger, qu'ont lieu les premières agressions: plusieurs jeunes y sont vitriolées.
>
> *[Germain-Robin 1996, p 53]*
>
> (The first acts of aggression against women were in Ben Aknoun halls of residence, on the hills over Algiers: several young girls were attacked with vitriolic acid.)

The Islamists saw themselves as the guardians of the nation's morals and they extended their attacks to brothels and to the destruction of stocks of alcohol *[Third World Quarterly Vol. 10 no. 2 April 1988, p 577].* Their control of the universities, particularly in Algiers, became more and more apparent: male and female students had to sit apart in lectures and rooms were requisitioned for prayers. The Islamists established a climate of intimidation and fear amongst students. The most violent incident occurred on November 2nd 1982 when a left wing student, Amzel Kamel, was stabbed in Algiers on the Ben Aknoun campus. This was a turning point for both the Islamists and the government.

16.4.2 The reaction of the government

In view of the political instability after the death of President Boumédienne, President Chadli Benjedid needed to gain the support of some of the opposition factions in order to strengthen his government. Faced with the choice of either supporting the traditionalists and their allies the Islamists, or listening to the demands of the left wing modernists, Chadli Benjedid chose to appease the traditionalists / Islamists and use them to weaken the left wing opposition. Messaoudi who was a student in the late 1970s and became a secondary school teacher in 1982 recalls in her book 'Une Algérienne Debout'[114] several incidents in schools and universities which confirm this. After the death of the left wing student Amzel Kamel, Islamist students, suspected of his murder, were arrested. In response, a demonstration was organised by the Islamists to protest against the imprisonment of the students. The government arrested the leaders of the demonstration (Madani, Sahnoun and Soltani) but later backed down and released them. On another occasion, when left wing students at the university of Algiers complained against the anti-democratic way in which the Islamists had seized the leadership of

[114] (An Algerian woman still standing up.)

all the student committees and demanded democratic elections, they faced violent attacks by the Islamists. The government turned a blind eye. Another incident which took place in the same university was the take-over by Islamist students of four work rooms to turn them into a prayer room. Once again, the authorities chose to support the Islamists and orders were given to allow the prayer room to remain. Messaoudi's analysis of the reasons behind the government's attitude were that:

> Le pouvoir,... considère de fait les intégristes comme beaucoup moins dangereux que les démocrates!...s'il les tolère, c'est qu'il croit pouvoir les gérer et les utiliser contre nous, les opposants démocrates, laiques, qui refusons cette identité arabo-musulmane exclusive et la dictature qu'il veut imposer à l'Algérie.
>
> *[Messaoudi 1995, pp 122, 124]*

> (The authorities,... consider the Islamists to be much less dangerous than the democrats!...if they tolerate them, it is because they believe they can control them and use them against us, the democratic secular opposition, who refuse this exclusive Arabo-Islamic identity and the dictatorship they want to impose on Algeria.)

Various measures aimed at gaining the favour of the traditionalists / Islamists were also introduced in the 1981-1984 economic plan: building of 160 mosques and as many Quranic schools, creation of three Institutes of Islamic study, 26 Centres of Islamic Culture and two National Islamic Academies *[Les Cahiers de l'Express no. 29 September 1994, p 73]*. The President himself went on two pilgrimages to Mecca. He introduced into his cabinet three personalities known for their affinity with the Islamists (into the Ministries of Religious Affairs, Justice and Interior).

Throughout the 1980s, Chadli Benjedid allowed the Islamists to gain increasing power, until it became too late for the government to exercise any control over them. The economic crisis which followed the collapse of the oil and gas prices, the main source of income for Algeria, tipped the balance and resulted in unprecedented riots across the country in October 1988. These were the antecedents of a radical change in the political and economic structure of the country.

16.4.3 The riots of October 1988 and the introduction of multi-party politics

On October 4th 1988, hundreds of youngsters took to the streets of Bab el Oued (an area of Algiers) and attacked, on their way, all public buildings which, in their eyes, symbolised the government and the FLN[115]. By October 8th, the riots had spread to all the major towns and lasted until October 10th. The government's response was fierce and hundreds of youngsters

[115] Front de Libération Nationale, single party since independence.

died in clashes with the army which had been called in to quash the insurrection.[116] The debate on who orchestrated the riots and for what purpose remains open. It has been suggested that members of the elite opposed to Chadli Benjedid took advantage of the dire economic situation and the eruption of protests to try and force the government to abandon its plans *[Stone 1997, p 67]*. These riots took place after years of social unrest. Street protests had started in November 1986 with student demonstrations in Constantine. In September 1988, several strikes started in various public sector companies (car plant workers, postal employees and railway workers) to denounce the government policy of a salary freeze. These strikes were organised by the government's own union, the UGTA.[117] All these incidents demonstrated the dissatisfaction of large sections of the population with the government's economic policies. Faced with such widespread public upheaval the government was forced to agree to turn a new chapter in the history of Algeria by promulgating a new Constitution adopted by referendum on February 23rd 1989. In one stroke, multi-party politics was introduced and socialism abandoned. This marked the end of 27 years of FLN monopoly. In the months which followed, several political parties were legalised, amongst them the FIS (Front Islamique du Salut), the main Islamist party. The support networks the Islamists had developed since the 1970s amongst large sections of the population were soon to be used. Faced with a government whose economic policy had been paralysed by corruption and nepotism, many people, especially the lowest social classes, the millions of young unemployed, but also some of the middle classes opposed to the socialist government policy, gave their open support to the Islamists. They were the first political group to offer an alternative to the failing economic and political programme of the FLN. The Islamists proposed tangible solutions to economic problems while providing the nation with a reconciliation with its Muslim identity. This explains why, in the first multi-party municipal and departmental elections of June 12th 1990, despite the violence which had been perpetrated by some Islamist armed groups, the FIS won the control of 863 local councils (the FLN won 487) and 32 departmental assemblies (14 went to the FLN) *[Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord 1990, pp 667-668]*. Samira Fellah and Nawal Zien, members of the PST (Parti Socialiste des Travailleurs) and supporters of the women's associations, give this explanation for the FIS victory:

> Les intégristes promettaient un logement pour tout le monde, un partage équitable de l'eau (dans beaucoup de villes, la distribution de l'eau [était] tout à fait aléatoire –une fois tous les quinze jours). Ils promettaient d'autre part un salaire pour les femmes au foyer. Comment voulez-vous que les femmes ne perçoivent pas cela comme positif pour elles? Pour la première fois, un parti prenait en compte leurs conditions de vie.
>
> *[Inprecor no. 325 March 1st-14th 1991, p 15]*

(The Islamists were promising accommodation for everybody and a fair distribution of water (in many towns, the distribution of water [was] totally erratic, sometimes

116 Reports in the press talked of between 500 and 600 deaths, the official government figures gave a death toll of 159 and 154 injured *[Lavenue 1993, p 12]*.

117 Union Générale des Travailleurs Algériens (National Workers' Union).

> once a fortnight). Furthermore, they were promising a salary for women who stayed at home. How could women not perceive this as a positive step for them? For the first time, a political Party was taking into account their living conditions.)

The FIS' success was to be repeated at the first round of the legislative elections of December 26th 1991. They won 188 seats. The FLN won 15, the FFS (Front des Forces Socialistes) 25 and the Independents 3 *[Le Monde Diplomatique Manière de voir no. 24 November 1994, p 13].* The government decided to cancel the second round of the elections and declared a state of emergency. President Chadli Benjedid resigned on January 11th 1992. These events plunged Algeria into chaos and virtual civil war from which the country has to emerge.

16.4.4 The Constitution of 1989

Major changes were introduced in the Constitution of 1989, the two most significant were that the country was no longer constitutionally a socialist state and the FLN was no longer the single party. Other important reforms included a redefinition of the roles of the executive and legislative powers and the creation of a new body the 'Conseil Constitutionnel' whose primary role was to check that all laws were in accordance with the Constitution. Although these modifications constituted a complete change of direction from a political and economic point of view, we will concentrate here on the articles of the Constitution[118] which have a direct impact on women and their rights as citizens. The motivations and directions of change will become apparent when we compare articles of the 1989 Constitution with the equivalent articles of the previous Constitution and National Charter of 1976. We will also consider the potential role of the 'Conseil Constitutionnel' regarding the Family Code.

Article 2 states:

> L'Islam est la religion de l'Etat
>
> *[p 7]*
>
> (Islam is the state religion.)

This important premise has been a permanent feature of all Algerian Constitutions since Independence. Whereas during the FLN monopoly it was undisputed, with the introduction of multi-party politics, it has become, for some parties, a bone of contention. The RCD (Rassemblement pour la Culture et la Démocratie), in particular, rejects this principle on the grounds that it limits individual rights and freedoms: to be eligible for the presidency, for instance, the candidate has to be a Muslim. The RCD also supports some of the women's associations[119], which consider this article of the Constitution to be in contradiction with the principle of equality of rights for women. If Islam is to be the state religion, women's rights

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118 The text of the Constitution used here is the official French text obtained from the Algerian Embassy in London.

119 The 'Association for the equality of men and women in front of the law' and the 'Independent association for the triumph of women's rights'.

have to be regulated according to the Shari'a, hence the introduction of the Family Code which is seen by many women's associations as the legalisation of an inferior status for women. A secular state would not require separate laws determining women's rights within the family. This is a key issue which is still being debated.

Article 28 states:

> Les citoyens sont égaux devant la loi, sans que puisse prévaloir aucune discrimination pour cause de naissance, de race, de sexe, d'opinion ou de toute autre condition ou circonstance personnelle ou sociale.
>
> *[p 13]*
>
> (Citizens are equal in front of the law, without any discrimination based on birth, race, sex, opinion or any other condition or circumstance whether personal or social.)

It is the role of the government's institutions to ensure the application of this principle (article 30) The Constitution of 1976 contained the same principle (article 39). However, it also included an article (42) which expressly reaffirmed women's rights.[120] This does not appear in the 1989 Constitution. In fact, all paragraphs, specifically referring to women have been removed in the new Constitution. In the case of work, for instance, article 52 merely states:

> Tous les citoyens ont droit au travail. Le droit à la protection, à la sécurité et à l'hygiène dans le travail est garanti par la loi.
>
> *[p 16]*
>
> (All citizens have the right to work. The rights of protection, safety and hygiene at work are guaranteed by the law.)

In 1976, both the Constitution and the National Charter, as well as establishing the right of all citizens to work, also included a specific paragraph, encouraging women to play an active role in the development of the country: article 81 of the 1976 Constitution urged women to participate fully in the establishment of socialism and in the development of the nation. The National Charter encouraged them to take up employment and guaranteed that socialism would ensure their promotion and participation in all aspects of political, economic, social and cultural life (see section 15.3.1). However, in 1989, the government decided to remove all specific references to women. One could argue that there was no need for special articles regarding women's rights, since the rights of all citizens were recognised. Nevertheless, the change is significant and gives some indication of the direction taken by the government, particularly since women were still vastly under-represented in both the economic and political spheres.

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120 All political, economic, social and cultural rights of Algerian women are guaranteed by the Constitution (see section 15.3.1)

Article 40 declares:

> Le droit de créer des associations à caractère politique est reconnu.
>
> *[p 14]*
>
> (The right to create political associations is recognised.)

This article had a considerable impact on the whole political structure of the nation. For the first time since independence, voices other than that of the FLN could be heard and multi-party elections could take place. More than 40 political parties and associations were created, amongst them the FIS, the main Islamist Party, which demonstrated the strength of its following in the local and national elections of 1990 and 1991. For women, it was an opportunity to create their own associations and express their opinions independently from the UNFA,[121] which had only ever represented the FLN's views. (A detailed study of the women's associations and the roles they played between 1989 and 1992 is in section 16.6)

Article 123 states:

> Les traités ratifiés par le Président de République, dans les conditions prévues par la Constitution, sont supérieurs à la loi.
>
> *[p 34]*
>
> (Treaties ratified by the President of the Republic, in accordance with the Constitution, are above the law.)

This article establishes a fundamental principle which could have far reaching consequences for women, since international treaties, such as United Nations Conventions, could prevail over national legislation, such as the Family Code. It is, therefore, essential to analyse the Algerian government's position regarding the main United Nations' treaties which have an impact on the status of women.

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121 Union Nationale des Femmes Algériennes.

16.5 Position of Algeria regarding UN and International Labour Organisation (ILO) Conventions

16.5.1 Overview of Treaties and Conventions

The following table gives an indication of the position of the Algerian government regarding the main UN and ILO international treaties as of June 2000. A detailed study will be made of the UN Convention on Consent to Marriage and the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), as they constitute core elements of the protection of women's rights. The essence of the government's reservations or possible reasons for not ratifying the other UN and ILO treaties will also be analysed.

Figure 26 Ratification of International treaties by Algerian government

Treaties	Date of entry into force	Ratification by Algeria	Reservations and declarations
ILO Convention no. 100 on the equality of remuneration	May 23rd 1953	Ratified	
ILO Convention no. 111 against discrimination at work	June 15th 1960	Ratified	
UNESCO Convention against discrimination in education	May 22nd 1962	Ratified	
UN Convention for the suppression of the traffic in persons and of the exploitation of the prostitution of others	July 25th 1951	Ratified	
ILO Convention no. 156 on the equality of opportunity and treatment of workers of both sexes with family responsibilities	Aug 11th 1983	Not Ratified	
UN Convention on consent to marriage, minimum age for marriage and registration of marriage	Dec 9th 1964	Not Ratified	
UN Convention on the political rights of women	July 7th 1954	Not Ratified	
UN Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (CEDAW)	Sept 3rd 1981	Jan 22nd 1996	Article 2, paragraph 2 of article 9, paragraph 4 of article 15, article 16, paragraph 1 of article 29.
UN Convention on torture	June 26th 1987	Sept 12th 1989	Declaration under articles 21 and 22.

[Saadi 1991, pp 31-33]
[www.hri.ca/fortherecord1999/vol2/algeriarr.htm]
[www.hri.ca/fortherecord1999/documentation /reservations/cedaw.htm]
[wwwl.umn.edu/humanrts/instree/auok.htm]

16.5.2 UN Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriage

This convention (see Appendix 1) is based on article 16 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which states that:

> (1) Men and women of full age, without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion. have the right to marry and to found a family. They are entitled to equal rights as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution.
> (2) Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses.

The marriage regulations of the Family Code (see section 16.2.1) are in contravention of article 16 on many points: a Muslim woman cannot marry a non Muslim, a woman has to have a legal guardian at her marriage who can refuse to give his consent to the marriage. The entitlement to equal rights during marriage and at its dissolution is not respected either, since polygamy is the husband's prerogative, the wife has to obey her husband and she can only ask for divorce in certain circumstances whereas he does not have any limitations.

16.5.3 UN Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)

The most important international treaty as far as women are concerned is the CEDAW (see Appendix 3). Although this convention[122] was opened for signature on March 1st 1980, it was only ratified by Algeria on January 22nd 1996. The Algerian government made reservations on the following articles:

- Article 2 which requires governments to take all steps, including amend any legislation which establishes discrimination against women.
- Article 16 which concerns equal rights in marriage and at its dissolution.

For both articles, the government declared that it was prepared to apply the provisions of the articles on condition that they did not conflict with the provisions of the Algerian Family Code. As was pointed out above, the Family Code institutionalises discrimination against women, particularly regarding marriage regulations.

- Article 9 paragraph 2 grants women equal rights with men with respect to the nationality of their children.

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122 See full text of the relevant articles in the appendices

The government pointed out that this article was incompatible with the provisions of the Algerian Nationality Code and the Family Code which normally grant a child the nationality of the father.

- Article 15 paragraph 4 gives men and women the freedom to choose their residence and domicile.

This contradicts article 37 of the Family Code which forces a woman to live with her husband until the court has pronounced their divorce. If a woman leaves her home to protect herself and her children from her husband's violence, she will be deemed guilty of abandoning the marital home, which will be held against her at the time of divorce.

- Article 29 paragraph 1 establishes the fact that if there is a disagreement, which is not settled by negotiations, regarding the interpretation or application of the Convention, the dispute will be settled by the International Court of Justice.

The Algerian government refused to abide by this rule.

It is important to note that the Fédération Internationale des Droits de l'Homme (FIDH) declared in its report to the Committee on the elimination of discrimination against women (January 19th-February 5th 1999) that the ratification of the CEDAW had not been published in the government's official publication (Journal Officiel). This means that no one can use the Convention to fight a case of discrimination in a court of law.[123] This contradicts the government's report to the same committee on September 1st 1998, which declared that:

> The provision of this international instrument entered into force for Algeria on 19 June 1996 and have since that date been part of national legislation.
>
> *[http:/www.hri.ca/fortherecord1999/vol2/]*

Furthermore, the reservations put forward by the government are in contravention of the purpose of the treaty. Algeria is not the only country to have been allowed to sign the CEDAW despite important reservations. Morocco (who acceded to the Convention on June 21st 1993) and Tunisia (who ratified the Convention on Sept 20th 1985) have made identical reservations *[ibid]*.

The question of discrimination against women is still being debated around the world. America, for instance, has not ratified CEDAW. Opponents to the Convention argue that it contradicts the laws of nature. Senator Sam Ervin, a conservative Southern Democrat declared that *it made men and women into identical human beings with the same rights and subject to the same responsibilities*, in other words, *it made men and women more equal than Nature intended them to be [Mayer in Afkhami 1995, p 119]*. Furthermore, opponents claim that the

123 Available on-line at http:/www.algeria-watch.de/fidh3.htm

Convention contravenes the US Constitution. As Mayer pointed out, just as Muslim countries hide behind the Shari'a, claiming it is above all other laws, so do the Americans using their Constitution as supreme law. It is also revealing that the Vatican adopted the same attitude, claiming that the Catholic Church had its own concept of equality between men and women. A Vatican report on the 1994 Cairo population conference declared:

> The Vatican disputes the suggestion by conference organizers that some proposals[124] would elevate the standing of women. Vatican officials say the church prefers to promote its own concept of women as deserving equality and special respect, but within the context of church tradition.
>
> *[ibid, p 124]*

As Mayer concluded, the world is entering a new era as far as women's rights are concerned. Very few countries would actually admit their opposition to fighting discrimination against women. However, the debate is now on what constitutes discrimination and therefore, on the definition of women's rights. The battle is not over, women, around the world now have *to fight the new world hypocrisy [ibid, p 129].*

16.5.4 UN Convention on the Political Rights of Women, ILO Convention 156 and UN Convention on Torture

The UN Convention on the Political Rights of Women (see Appendix 2) entitles them to equal rights to vote, be elected to and hold public office without any discrimination. Although Algerian women were granted the right to vote and be elected to public office in 1963, as we will see in section 16.6.1, men could legally vote on behalf of up to five people. This meant, in practice that a man could vote for his wife and other female members of his family if he did not want them to go out of the house. This could be the reason why the government did not ratify this treaty.

The ILO Convention 156 (see Appendix 5) requires the government to take all necessary measures to ensure effective equality of opportunity and treatment of men and women workers with family responsibilities. The latter being defined as *dependent children and other members of their immediate family who clearly need their care or support* (see Appendix 5). This clearly requires women to be considered legally responsible for their children and other dependants. However, article 37 of the Family Code places women under the responsibility of their husband who must provide maintenance for them and article 87 gives the father legal guardianship of the children until they reach the legal age of majority. The implications of these two articles are that legally, women cannot have dependants, in particular their children. This would explain the inability for the government to ratify the Convention.

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124 The proposals referred to concerned safe abortions and women's right to control their fertility.

By making declarations on articles 21 and 22 of the UN Convention on Torture (see Appendix 4), the Algerian government is refusing to accept the competence of the Committee to the Convention to consider another State Party's or individuals' claims that the obligations under the Convention have not been fulfilled. This greatly limits the value of the ratification of the Convention.

16.6 Resurgence of women on the political scene

16.6.1 Women's Associations

The publication of the Family Code in 1984 came as a shock to all the women who had participated in the demonstrations against the first draft in 1981. Having obtained the withdrawal of the document, they did not expect to find, a few years later, a new version which further curtailed their rights. After the adoption of the Family Code in June 1984, it took some months for the women activists to regroup[125]. However, the 'Association pour l'égalité devant la loi entre les femmes et les hommes'[126] was created on May 16th 1985 as a reaction to the Family Code. Messaoudi, who became a member from the outset, explains that about forty women from all over the country and from all political backgrounds met in Algiers and decided that, in order to fight the new Family Code effectively, they needed a proper structure. This is how the association came about. Messaoudi denies the allegation made in an article by Gadan and Harbi that the association was led by women belonging to the Trotskyist movement.[127] The members expressly wanted their organisation to be independent from other political groups to have the freedom to decide on a specific programme aimed at tackling women's issues in general and the Family Code in particular *[Messaoudi 1995, p 109]*. Despite the illegality of their action, they made an official request to the government for the recognition of the association. This was finally granted in July 1989 after years of wrangling with the authorities. The association, however, continued to exist during these four years, despite its illegal status.

Many other women's associations were created after 1989. By 1992, there were about 20. We will aim to give some general information about the main associations and focus on tracing the developments and achievements of the women's movement from 1989 to 1992.

The only association to have developed a national presence was the AEMWFL. The others had a regional basis. All associations were located in urban centres in the North and Central

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125 The women's associations created after 1984 tend to have long names with no official acronyms. We will refer to them by the acronym of the English translation of their names.

126 Association for the equality of men and women in front of the law (AEMWFL).

127 The allegation was made in an article published in January 1995 in the journal Esprit *[Messaoudi 1995, p 109]*.

regions. These associations had a 'women only' membership policy. They did not want men to interfere in the discussions and influence the decisions of the group. The associations also feared that some women, who were not used to speaking in public and meeting with male strangers, would be dissuaded from attending meetings if men were present. The membership of the women's associations ranged from 200 to 600 but thousands of women who were not registered members supported the demonstrations organised by the women's associations. As could be expected, the most active members were educated urban working women aged between 30 and 40 *[Autrement no. 60 1992, p 159]*.

The women's associations can be divided into four strands: the first one included those organisations which only wanted amendments to the Family Code. They tended to focus on social activities such as the opening of crèches, training centres for women and co-operatives. A large proportion of these women had previously been members of the national government organisation UNFA.[128] They included two main associations: the 'Association pour la défense et la promotion des droits de la femme'[129] based in Algiers and the 'Association pour la promotion de la femme'[130] based in Mostaganem and Annaba. Mrs Ouared, president of the ADPWR explained her association's position on the Family Code in an interview with Algérie Actualité:

> Si on demande l'abrogation du Code tout de suite, est-ce qu'on sera suivies par les masses?
>
> *[Algérie Actualité no. 1221 March 9th-15th 1989, p 9]*
>
> (If we were to ask for the immediate abrogation of the Family Code, would we have the support of the population?)

At a meeting organised in Algiers on November 23rd 1989, members of the association said:

> Si on abroge le Code, avec la montée de l'intégrisme, ... nous risquons de nous retrouver avec l'application pure et simple de la Charia.
>
> *[Marchés Tropicaux et Méditerranéens February 2nd 1990, p 318]*
>
> (If the Family Code was abrogated, we might find that, with the rise of fundamentalism, we would be faced with the basic application of the Shari'a.)

The UNFA could be included in this first group. One of its leaders, Mrs Belhadj, declared about the Family Code:

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128 Union Nationale des Femmes Algériennes.

129 Association for the defence and promotion of women's rights (ADPWR)

130 Association for the promotion of women (APW)

> Au départ, ce Code est un acquis parce qu'il y avait un vide juridique...Nous voulons trouver des solutions pour les femmes et pour la société. Sans nous éloigner de la chariaa. Le Code doit s'en inspirer.
>
> *[Algérie Actualité no. 1221 March 9th-15th 1989, p 9]*
>
> (In the first instance, this Family Code constitutes progress since there was a lack of legislation in this domain...We must find solutions for women and for the society within the Shari'a. The Code must be derived from it.)

The second group of women's associations, apart from fighting for the abrogation of the Family Code, concentrated their efforts on cultural activities such as clubs, exhibition of art work and social meetings. The main associations in this group were the 'Association pour l'émancipation de la femme'[131] based in Algiers and the association 'Israr' based in Constantine. The president of the AEW declared that apart from fighting for the abrogation of the Family Code, the association wanted *to work towards changing the mentality in society [Algérie Actualité no. 1221 March 9th-15th 1989, p 8].*

The third group wanted the abrogation of all discriminatory laws including the Family Code. It consisted of three main associations: the AEMWFL, with its headquarters in Algiers, the group 'Voix de femmes'[132] in Boumerdès and 'Tighri net mettout' in Tizi Ouzou. Louisa Hanoun, member of the AEMWFL considered that the main problem stemmed from the fact that Islam was established as a state religion in the Constitution. She declared:

> Nous n'avons pas besoin de Code du tout. Les lois doivent être civiles.
>
> *[Algérie Actualité no. 1221 March 9th-15th 1989, p 9]*
>
> (We don't need a Family code. We must have civil laws.)

Separate from the other three groups was the 'Association indépendente pour le triomphe des droits de la femme'[133] whose members previously belonged to the AEMWL. They split from this group in 1990 because they felt that their organisation should be totally independent from other political parties. This is how the new association explained its strategy:

> Un parti, étant l'expression politique d'un groupe d'intérêts, ne peut que soumettre la question "femmes" aux besoins de son programme, de sa propre stratégie d'alliances.
>
> *[Algérie Actualité no. 1271 February 22nd-28th 1990, p 10]*
>
> (A party being the political expression of an interest group, can only subject women's issues to the needs of its programme and strategies of its own alliance.)

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131 Association for the emancipation of women (AEW)

132 Women's voice (WV)

133 Independent association for the triumph of women's rights (IATWR)

At the time, a rift had emerged between Trotskyist women and other members of the AEMWFL, including the president of the association, Khalida Messaoudi. The Trotskyist women were not opposed to the Islamists who, in their opinion, represented a revolutionary movement fighting the corrupt bourgeois state *[Messaoudi 1995, p 162]*. However, the two associations remained in total agreement regarding their programmes. They both demanded the abrogation of the Family Code and the introduction of civil laws.

The fact that, after 1989, there was a mushrooming of women's associations can be explained by two factors. The first was the political awakening of women in the late 1970s and early 1980s symbolised by their fight against the 1981 Family Code. The second factor was the increasing violence perpetrated against women by the Islamists. The president of the association 'Israr' made this comment in an interview with the newspaper El Moudjahid:

> C'est d'abord et avant tout la montée de la violence qui a fait que beaucoup de femmes sont venues rejoindre notre combat.
>
> *[El Moudjahid December 4th 1989, in Saadi 1991, pp 141,142]*
>
> (It is first and foremost the rise of violence which made women join our fight.)

Saadi describes the development of women's organisations after 1989 as a reaction by a social group whose survival was threatened:

> Tout se passe comme si, sous l'effet de la violence sociale, un "groupe social" se sentant menacé dans sa dignité et son existence, est conduit à produire sa propre identité politique, à l'assumer par sa propre organisation en occupant l'espace public dont on veut le chasser.
>
> [Saadi *1991, p 142]*
>
> (It is as if, under the effect of social violence, a social group feeling its dignity and existence threatened, is made to create its own political identity and take control of it through its own organisation, by occupying the public space from which some would like to banish it.)

This basic need to fight for the survival of the group's identity which spurred many women into political action is the reason why, despite their divergence of opinion on certain points, several women's associations came together on a number of occasions between 1989 and 1992 and joined forces on specific current issues.

On March 8th 1989, International Women's Day, 4,000 women demonstrated outside the APN[134] in Algiers, demanding the abrogation of all discriminatory laws and the recognition of their rights. Throughout 1989, a major concern for women was the disturbing developments in education where the position of women teachers and female students was constantly under

[134] Assemblée Populaire Nationale (equivalent to the House of Commons)

attack. One of the topics of controversy was the question of sports activities for girls. The Islamists objected to girls taking part in sports wearing shorts. On February 14th 1989, Parliament actually debated a proposal aimed at banning sports for girls in schools. After a long and acrimonious debate, the law which was passed made sports for girls a non compulsory subject *[Daoud 1993, p 196]*. This enabled the government to avoid having to take a clear stance on the question. The decision was left to heads of schools, who, in many cases, found it easier to remove the subject from the girls' curriculum. The same year, a government committee on educational reform declared in its report that the three main causes for the decline in educational standards were: bi-linguialism, mixed classes and women teachers:

> ... l'échec de l'école est aussi dû: "au taux élevé d'absentéisme des enseignants et tout spécialement du personnel féminin".
>
> *[Algérie Actualité no. 1252 October 12th-18th 1989, pp 18,19]*
>
> (... the failure of the educational system is also due to: "the high levels of absenteeism of teachers and particularly that of female employees.)

The committee's suggestion was to encourage women to stay at home by increasing the family's social security benefit. In a common public declaration on June 20th 1989, the women's associations denounced the discriminatory practices which had been allowed to develop in the educational system over the past few years such as:

> ...les tentatives de l'APN de suppression du sport féminin, les pratiques discriminatoires pour le passage en classe supérieure (moyenne plus élevée exigée pour les filles) et la transformation de l'école en un lieu de matraquage idéologique.
>
> *[Nouvelles Questions Féministes nos. 16, 17, 18 April-June 1991, p 24]*
>
> (...the attempts by Parliament to stop sports activities for girls, the discriminatory practices requiring higher marks for girls to allow them to move into the next class and the fact that schools have become an ideological ground for brainwashing.)

This declaration was followed by a demonstration outside the APN on July 2nd 1989. The government, however, denied that any discrimination existed in education.

The increasing number of attacks on women by Islamists was another issue which brought a number of women's associations together. On November 23rd 1989, they organised demonstrations in Algiers, Oran and Annaba to denounce the violence directed at women by the Islamists. Several incidents had taken place in the previous weeks and months which provoked the women's action. Here are three examples which were reported in the press: female students in the town of Blida (with a strong Islamist group) had been forbidden from going out at night and attacked if they disobeyed this rule. This caused a serious problem for a female diabetic student who was not allowed to go to the chemist's to get some medicines. Another dramatic incident occurred in Mascara. A female nurse was killed by her brother because she refused to stop working. Her brother considered that her job was unsuitable

because it brought her into contact with too many men. Finally, in Annaba, the house of a female teacher was burnt down because she belonged to the AEW *[Libération November 25th 1989 p 12].*

A major gathering of 1,000 representatives from 16 women's associations took place in Algiers on November 30th and December 1st 1989. At the end of the two day conference, the participants agreed to publicise a common programme of action. The main points of the programme addressed women's rights at work, in education and in law. The co-ordination of associations later organised a demonstration in Algiers on March 8th 1990. According to Algérie Actualité, it was attended by about 6,000 women. The purpose of this demonstration was, once again, to express women's opposition to the Family Code, but some of the placards also attacked the voting system. One of the women's slogan was:

> Pour la démocratie, votons nous-mêmes.
>
> *[Algérie Actualité no. 1274 March 15th –21st 1990, p 7]*
>
> (For democracy, we must vote ourselves.)

To fully understand the meaning of this slogan, it is important to study the developments which occurred over the years regarding the voting system. The decree of February 21st 1969 allowed nationals living abroad to vote by proxy under very strict conditions. However, this decree was used for another purpose: the introduction of the concept of the 'family vote' whereby the head of the household could vote on behalf of members of his family. As Sai concluded, in her chapter 'Algerian women: citizens, *Moudjahidates*, sisters':

> Ce type de vote permet l'utilisation des voix des femmes tout en les excluant de l'espace public, respectant ainsi les "règles ancestrales". Leurs suffrages seront exprimés par les hommes, en leur qualité de chefs de famille...
>
> *[Sai in Bourqia, Charrad & Gallagher 1996, p 88]*
>
> (This type of voting system makes use of women's votes while excluding them from the public sphere, thus keeping the "ancestral rules". Their votes are expressed by men in their capacity as heads of household.)

After the introduction of multi-party politics the vote by proxy was restricted to close parents (first degree) and could only be performed with an official consent form. The number of votes by proxy was limited to five by the electoral law of 1989. However, this law allowed another type of vote by proxy, the 'vote conjugal' which enabled either of the spouses to vote on behalf of the other without having to present a consent form, but merely a proof of marriage. Although, in principle, the law did not discriminate against women, since the term used (conjoint) refers to either husband or wife, in practice, women's votes were 'confiscated' by their husband without their consent. This question of women's vote became a major issue for the women's associations especially with the coming municipal elections, due to take place in June

1990. They felt that if the law could be changed to stop men from voting on behalf of their wives and other female members of their family, women would gain political power and it would give many women an incentive to become much more politically involved. On March 27th 1990, an amendment to the existing law reduced the number of 'family votes' by proxy to three, but the husband could still vote on behalf of his wife without her written consent. The Coordination of women's associations continued to fight this injustice. Having organised a meeting in Boumerdès on May 17th and 18th 1990, the Coordination decided to launch a national campaign demanding that the vote by proxy should be limited to one person, in special circumstances, and always with an official consent form. The Coordination created a national committee made up of representatives of women's associations and political Parties fighting for the recognition of human rights for all *[Nouvelles Questions Féministes nos. 16,17,18 April - June 1991, p 25].*

It was only in October 1991 that the electoral law was changed after president Chadli Benjedid had consulted the newly established 'Conseil Constitutionnel'[135] which declared the previous law to be unconstitutional. The debate in the National Assembly had been very acrimonious, with a deputy declaring that if his wife went to vote, he would divorce her. According to the new law, the husband was no longer allowed to vote on behalf of his wife without her consent and the vote by proxy was limited to one *[Mouvement des Femmes Algériennes pour la Démocratie, Réflexions et Informations, p 3].*

The women's associations were very active during the 1989-1991 period. Their presence on the political scene and the question of women's rights in society became an issue that no one could ignore. Many women put their lives at risk and many died during the struggle. However, in real terms, their achievements were limited. Their main victory was to force the government to change the electoral law. Unfortunately, despite their constant attacks on the Family Code, they did not succeed in having it either amended or withdrawn. By March 1991, the women's movement had lost its momentum. Only between 200 and 400 women demonstrated on International Women's Day, on March 8th 1991 *[Daoud 1993, p 205].* The Coordination of associations only counted six organisations in 1991. Several reasons can explain the collapse of the movement. Practical difficulties encountered by the organisations, such as the lack of financial support and the lack of facilities, made their work very time consuming and frustrating. Women also had to cope with an extremely difficult economic situation with food shortages and irregular water supplies, which meant that their everyday life became a constant struggle. By 1991, they were totally exhausted and disillusioned.

135 The Conseil Constitutionnel was created in 1989. Its purpose was to ensure that no law was contrary to the Constitution.

Although a large number of women's associations managed to agree to act together on certain issues, something the male dominated Parties never achieved, they suffered from internal power struggles, ideological clashes and lack of focus. According to Daoud members of the associations declared:

> [La co-ordination] a devié de sa mission originelle et au lieu de favoriser les démarches unitaires, elle s'est épuisée en discussions stériles...elle a surtout failli par manque de stratégie...
>
> *[Daoud, 1993, p 210]*

> ([The co-ordination] moved away from its original mission and instead of concentrating on uniting issues, it wasted its energies in sterile discussions...but mostly, it failed due to a lack of strategy...)

Another serious criticism levelled at women's organisations was that they did not represent the concerns of the majority of Algerian women. Daoud related the following comment from a journalist:

> Les féministes ne sont pas efficaces, c'est une petite élite qui se vit d'ailleurs comme une contre-élite et n'arrive pas à franchir la barrière du peuple. Elles parlent en français, viennent de la petite bourgeoisie, ne mettent pas les pieds dans les quartiers populaires, que souvent elles ne connaissent pas.
>
> *[Daoud 1993, p 211]*

> (The feminists are not effective, they constitute a small elite which live in another world like a counter-elite, incapable of breaking through the social barriers. They speak French, belong to the 'petit bourgeois' and never venture into the poor quarters which they don't know.)

Although this generalisation might not apply to all women activists, Messaoudi, for instance, was MP for a very poor area of Algiers, it is, nevertheless, a valid criticism. The Family Code and the electoral laws, on which the women's associations centred their actions, were of little concern to the majority of women who had many more pressing daily problems to deal with. The women's associations pitched their fight at a level which was totally inaccessible to the majority of Algerian women. The FIS[136], on the other hand, was tackling everyday problems: housing shortages, salary for women staying at home, reduction of the number of crimes due to alcohol and drugs. In principle, the women's associations were right to tackle the institutionalised legal discriminations, in practice, they failed to develop a network of local associations listening and responding to women's everyday basic problems. They did not have the infrastructure nor the financial backing to establish such a network. All these associations had only just emerged into the political scene. They suffered from the ebullience of a movement in its infancy and lacked the wisdom which comes with experience.

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136 Front Islamique du Salut (the main Islamist Party).

After 1991, some women's organisations started to do more 'ground work' and the response from local women was very encouraging. In Constantine, the association 'Israr' worked on the issue of the high prices of basic commodities. Women from the poorest quarters of the town did a sit-in outside the regional assembly. In Hussein Dey, an area of Algiers, actions on water supply and hygiene had immediate effect. In rural areas, women's associations focussed their work according to the local needs such as literacy classes, legal advice and family planning workshops. Another encouraging sign was the development of women support groups in different professions such as nurses and sports women *[Daoud 1993, pp 211,212,223,224]*. It is impossible to gauge the long term impact of the actions of the women's associations. They certainly established their presence on the political scene and learned from the experience. The issues they raised will remain on the political agenda for many years to come.

16.6.2 Women's levels of participation in elections and committees of political Parties

The following table shows how the main political Parties[137] which emerged after 1988 integrated women into their organisations:

Figure 27 Participation of Women in Political Parties after 1988

Political Parties	Percentage of women members	Women representation in the Political Bureau	Women representation in the Central Committee	Number of women candidates in the 1991 legislative election
PAGS[138]	17 %	1 out of 11[139] (9%)	6 out of 67 (9%)	
PT[140]			(A woman, Louisa Hanoune is the leader of the Party)	19
PST[141]	12 %		6 out of 29 (21%)	20 (of whom 9 were top of the list)
FFS[142]		5 out of 30 (17%)		9[143]
RCD[144]		4 out of 18 (22%)		6

[Table created from information in Autrement no. 60 1992, pp 156,157]

137 The main Islamist Party, the FIS, is treated separately in section 16.6.3

138 Parti de l'Avant Garde Socialiste

139 Daoud reckoned there were 11 women in the PAGS' Political Bureau *[Daoud 1993, p 206]*.

140 Parti des Travailleurs

141 Parti Socialiste des Travailleurs

142 Front des Forces Socialistes

143 According to Sai, the FFS had 11 candidates of whom 6 were top of the list *[in Bourqia, Charrad & Gallagher 1996, p 90]*.

144 Rassemblement pour la Culture et la Démocratie

Despite the resurgence of women on the political scene through their activism during the late 1980s and early 1990s, their representation in the different political Parties remained small. For the 1991 election, members of the women's organisations found it virtually impossible to stand as independent candidates. The law stipulated that any independent candidate had to obtain 500 signatures which had to be validated in person with the authorities. This meant that the only way women could become candidates was by obtaining the support of a political party. Only two Parties agreed to give their unconditional support to independent women candidates: the PST and the PT.

In terms of female representation in local and national assemblies, the situation seems to have worsened over the years. Whereas the National Assembly (APN) had eight women in 1977, there were only four in 1982, seven in 1987 and none in 1991. Although many doors had opened for women over the last twenty years, it seems that those of politics remained firmly shut. However, this is not too surprising, since even in most Western democracies, the world of politics is still a predominantly male bastion. In 1997, in the United Kingdom, there were only 121 women MPs, representing 18.4%, while in France in the same year, the figures were respectively 63 and 10.9% *[Inter-Parliamentary Union November 10th 1999, p 2]*[145]

16.6.3 Women and the Islamist movement

16.6.3.1 Position of women in publications of the FIS

We will concentrate our study on the FIS' declarations and programme since this Party was the most influential in the 1980s and 1990s. The FIS' political programme was published on March 7th 1989[146]. The role of women is defined in the sixth chapter dedicated to Social Policy. The backbone of this policy is the protection of the individual's right to life and care in the community through the creation of an adequate educational environment and the reform of the family.

According to the FIS, the role of education is to inculcate the principles of the Shari'a in all children:

> La politique éducationnelle [que le FIS] préconise doit véhiculer les préceptes de la charia'a et en tout premier lieu la nécessité d'assurer le droit à l'éducation à tous les enfants de la patrie sans distinction de race, de clan, de religion ou autre.
>
> *[p25]*

145 Available on-line at www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm

146 The complete text used here was published and analysed in a brochure by the 'Mouvement des Femmes Algériennes pour la Démocratie' - (Algerian Women's Movement for Democracy). This document has not been formally published and is not widely available. A copy is held by the library of the Institut du Monde Arabe in Paris and is available on request.

> (The educational policy advocated [by the FIS] must promote the teachings of the Shari'a and firstly, the right to education for all the children of the nation without discrimination based on race, clan, religion or any other distinction).

One of the axioms of this education is the separation of the sexes, a concept which was advocated by the FIS throughout their campaigns. In an interview with Algérie Actualité, Benazouz Zebda (one of the founding members of the FIS) declared:

> La consommation du vin, la mixité dans les écoles, les lycées et les universités, a eu pour conséquence la prolifération des bâtards.
>
> *[Algérie Actualité no 1219 Feb 23rd-March 1st 1989, p 8]*

> (The legalisation of the consumption of alcohol and the mixing of the sexes in schools, colleges and universities, has resulted in the proliferation of bastards.)

The Quranic basis for the segregation of the sexes in educational establishments (as well as in other public places) is given in an article in the FIS' publication El-Mounquid:

> L'interdiction de la mixité rentre dans le chapitre "Sadd al-dbara'i", qui est un principe original de la charia: les dbara'i', est ce qui conduit à une chose licite ou illicite, ...Ce qui conduit à l'illicite est illicite; ...l'autorisation de la mixité dans les sociétés musulmanes est le premier pas sur la voie de ce que sont devenues les sociétés occidentales actuelles, en matière de débauche et de dévergondage (sic).
>
> *[El-Mounquid no.3 in Ahnaf, Botiveau, Frégosi 1991, pp 247, 249]*

> (The prohibition of the mixing of the sexes is part of the chapter "Sadd al-dbara'i", which is a founding principle of the Shari'a: dbara'i, ...is what makes something licit or illicit; ...What leads to an illicit action is itself illicit...by allowing the mixing of the sexes, Muslim societies are taking the first step towards what has led present Western societies to debauchery and loose morals.)

The segregation of the sexes in educational establishments and in all public places might have a long term negative impact on women's education. Examples already exist which support this contention. As early as 1989, parents in the Theniet El Hadjar area of Médéa were complaining that the local primary school had been turned into a boys' only school by the FIS, forcing parents to send their daughters to a girls' only school three kilometres away *[Algérie Actualité no. 1241 July 27th-Aug 2nd 1989, p 3]*. One can imagine that, for some parents, the inconvenience and the possible added travelling expenses would be a deterrent to sending their daughters to school. Furthermore, as the AWMD pointed out, the countrywide implementation of a single sex policy in education would force the government to build hundreds of new educational establishments. It is difficult to imagine how the government would raise such funds and, if a choice had to be made between educating boys or girls, girls' education would suffer *[p 11]*.

The second pillar of the FIS' Social Policy was the reform of the family. A series of measures concerning women were proposed:

Garantir le travail au père de famille ...
Prendre soin de la mère qui élève les enfants. Il faut qu'elle soit soutenue – en cas de nécessité – par une aide adéquate, et qu'on lui donne une pension de maternité, car son travail à la maison doit être légitimement considéré comme une fonction sociale et éducative lui donnant droit à une pension au même titre que l'ouvrier ...
Renforcer la foi et les bonnes moeurs de la femme.
Elever le niveau de conscience politique, éducative et civilisationnelle chez elle.

[pp 27, 28]

(To guarantee employment for the father of the family ...
To take care of the mother who brings up her children. If need be, she must be supported by adequate help and receive a maternity pension, because her work at home must be legitimately recognised as a social and educational function giving her right to a pension just as any other worker ...
To reinforce faith and good moral standards in women.
To raise women's political, educational and cultural awareness.)

The role of women for the FIS is clearly identified as that of mothers. Indeed, in the introduction to the chapter on social policy, it is specified that this role is a duty for women *[p 25]*. One can deduce that women's sole economic contribution to society is to bring up children, the father's role being that of provider, hence the guarantee of work for him. It is worth noting that on the question of women's work outside the home, the two main leaders of the FIS, Ali Belhadj[147] and Abbassi Madani have expressed diverging views. Ali Belhadj was totally opposed to it:

Le lieu naturel de la femme est le foyer...La femme est une productrice d'hommes, elle ne produit pas de biens matériels, mais cette chose essentielle qu'est le musulman. Scientifiquement, il est admis qu'il est impossible à une femme de concilier son travail et ses obligations familiales, et de nombreux cas de divorce sont le résultat de ce constat...

[Horizons Feb 23rd 1989 in Algérie Actualité no. 1264 Jan 4th-10th 1990, p 9]

(The natural place for a woman is her home...Women are procreators of men, they do not produce material goods, but they produce Muslim men. It is scientifically admitted that it is impossible for a woman to cope with both her work and her family duties, this has resulted in many divorces ...)

Abbassi Madani, on the other hand, has expressed a less stringent view on women's work. He is not opposed to it, as long as:

... son honneur et sa religion restent saufs. La question n'est pas tant le travail féminin en soi que la situation de la femme au travail. Pourquoi ne pas lui réserver des moyens de transport à part? Pourquoi ne pas prévoir des bureaux spécialement conçus pour un échange entre femmes?

[La Tribune d'Octobre March 15th-31st 1989 in Peuples Méditerranéens nos. 52-53 July / Dec 1990 p 75]

147 The leader's name has also been spelt 'Benhadj' in various publications.

> (... her honour and her religion are safe. The question is not so much women's work as the condition of women at work. Why not create separate means of transport? Why not plan offices especially for women?)

The conclusion one can draw from these statements is that work is not considered to be a right for women and even if they were allowed to work, for economic reasons, they would have to be segregated from men. The main reason for this is the fact that women are deemed to be the cause of all social ills and discord, referred to as '*fitna*'. While at home, out of sight of men, they can be kept under control. Once they step into the 'public space', they become a danger to men (who can't resist their seductive powers) and to society as a whole (since their behaviour endangers the entire social equilibrium) (see section 2.1). Since life in a modern society forces women out of their home (for visits to places such as hospitals, schools and various public offices), their presence has to be regulated and controlled. Hence the necessity for women to wear a suitable dress, the hidjab,[148] and the introduction of the regime of the *Hisba* with its 'law enforcers', the *Muhtasib*.

The wearing of the hidjab is, according to the FIS, an absolute necessity for women. In a document published by El-Mounquid about Islam and women's rights, we can find the following statement:

> La question du hidjab
> Nous ne pensons pas qu'il soit permis d'en discuter, dès lors que Dieu s'est prononcé là-dessus, lorsqu'il dit: "Dis aux croyants de baisser leur regard, de préserver leur chasteté et de ne montrer de leurs atours (charmes) que ce qui en est apparent..."... on doit entendre le visage et les mains.
>
> *[El-Mounquid nos. 25, 27, 28 in Ahnaf, Botiveau, Frégosi 1991, p 257]*
>
> (On the question of the hidjab
> We do not think that there is any need to discuss this, since God has already pronounced on this matter when he says: "Tell the believers to lower their eyes, to preserve their chastity and to only reveal of their charms what is already visible..."... in other words, their face and their hands.)

As Rouadjia notes, the hidjab constitutes the first wall separating the sexes, it is complemented by a second wall which is the segregation of the sexes in all public places *[Peuples Méditerranéens nos. 52-53 July/December 1990, p 176]*. This is necessitated, according to the FIS, by the very nature of women, perceived as the cause of the collapse of moral values. We will see, in section 16.6.3 how some Islamist women are using the veil to enter the 'public space' and gain access to areas so far reserved to men.

However, for the FIS, it is not sufficient to define strict rules of social conduct. A system of control has to be set up. It is known as the *Hisba*.

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148 The Islamists have introduced this dress for women in Algeria. It consists of a long robe, usually in a dark colour, covering the whole body. Women also wear a cloth covering their hair.

The system of the *Hisba* is not mentioned in the Qur'an or the Sunna. According to the AWMD, it appears in judicial Arabic texts in the eleventh century and represents the idea of each individual 'being accountable for his/her actions'. In practice, it is the duty for every Muslim to do what is good and fight what is evil. One aspect of this duty is the right for any Muslim to take on the role of *Muhtasib*, a sort of law enforcer, to ensure that every member of society is complying with the principle of the *Hisba*. The various Islamic governments which implemented this regime realised that, if uncontrolled, the *Hisba* could become a threat to the government, since anyone could criticise other members of society for their 'bad' social behaviour. These attacks could be directed against the ruling body. It was, therefore, decided to make the *Muhtasib* a government chosen representative, charged with the maintenance of good social behaviour in the streets and markets. The *Muhtasib* had the power to intervene on the spot, using his own judgement and without further inquiry. He could impose immediate sanctions, ranging from reprimand, flogging, public display of the guilty person, confiscation of the merchant's goods and banning from the profession. Over the centuries, the function of the *Muhtasib* has varied. In recent history, Iran reintroduced a similar system with 'vice squads' asking children to act as informers against their parents. Women were often the targets of these 'law enforcers' *[AWMD, pp 7,8]*. It is therefore disturbing to find the system of the *Hisba* to be one of the prime elements of the FIS' social organisation. In the economic section of the FIS' programme, the *Hisba*, described as *market police*, is briefly mentioned as a means of controlling prices. However, in the last paragraph of the social policy document, the introduction of the *Hisba* is seen as part of the global social reform. This is how it is supposed to operate:

> En Islam, la méthode de "Hisba" est considérée comme le meilleur moyen légal pour organiser les rapports entre les gens dans les domaines suivants
> 1 la rue
> 2 le marché
> 3 l'usine
> 4 le champ
> 5 l'administration
> 6 la mosquée.
>
> *[AWMD, p 28]*

> (According to Islam, the method of the "Hisba" is thought to be the best legal way to organise relations between people in the following areas:
> 1 the street
> 2 the market place
> 3 the factory
> 4 the field
> 5 the civil service
> 6 the mosque)

No further details are given in the FIS' programme regarding how the *Hisba* would be implemented. However, Ali Belhadj gave some indication of his vision of the concept of the *Hisba* in an article in El-Mounquid, in which he defended the perpetrators of acts of violence in certain circumstances. He wrote:

> Est-ce de la violence que d'exiger l'instauration du gouvernement de Dieu sur sa terre, ... ? Que de commander le bien et d'interdire le mal ...? [Que] d'exiger que la femme demeure chez elle, dans une atmosphère de chasteté, de réserve et d'humilité, et qu'elle n'en sorte que dans les cas de nécessité définis par le Législateur?
>
> *[El-Mounquid no. 9 in Ahnaf, Botiveau, Frégosi 1991, p 135]*
>
> (Is it an act of violence to demand the establishment of God's government on his land, ...? To support what is good and forbid what is evil ... ? To demand that women stay at home, in an atmosphere of chastity, self-effacement and humility, and that they should only go out in certain cases of absolute necessity defined by the Law?)

The conclusion is that violence would be allowed against women who defied the FIS' code of conduct. Despite the reassurances given in the FIS' programme regarding the right to education for all and the equality of men and women, it is obvious that women's rights would be those granted by male members of the Party and which correspond to the image they have of the role of women in society. It is men's interpretation of the principles of Islam, and one that would keep women under their control. It is interesting, though, that some women subscribed to these views. We will now analyse how the 'Muslim Sisters' (as the FIS' women supporters are known) have come to accept the doctrines of the FIS and how they justify their position.

16.6.3.2 The role of women within the FIS

The FIS, officially recognised on March 10th 1989, was originally directed by a single Executive Bureau which did not have any women representatives. Under pressure from the female members, another Executive Bureau was created for female members only. The decision-making powers, however, remained with the original male group, which apart from making policy decisions, nominated the members of the regional organisations (Bureaux Exécutifs de *Wilayas*) and chose the candidates for the various elections. In turn, the regional organisations chose the representatives for the local council organisations (Bureaux Exécutifs communaux) *[Peuples Méditerranéens nos. 52-53 July-December 1990, p 158]*. Although the FIS estimated that out of its two million members, 800,000 were women, it is interesting to note that no female candidates were selected for the local and legislative elections of 1990 and 1991, the reason given was that *women would be too fragile to govern [Autrement no. 60 1992, p 157]*. Yet, on December 21st 1989, thousands of women wearing the hidjab demonstrated in Algiers escorted by male FIS members, demanding the implementation of the Shari'a. It seems that the FIS was very keen to portray the image of a Party supported by a large number of women in order to refute the allegations, from other parties and the Western press, that it intended to further reduce women's rights (the same tactics were used during the Iranian revolution, see section 13). However, the FIS' media campaigns stopped short of giving women real power.

According to Ali Belhadj, one of the leaders of the FIS, giving political power to women has devastating effects. He declared in a sermon:

> Regardez la Grande-Bretagne qui est entrée en décadence du jour où une femme – Thatcher- a pris les rênes du pouvoir.
>
> *[Le Nouvel Observateur May 31st-June 6th 1990, p 9]*
>
> (Look at the decline of Great Britain since a woman -Thatcher- took over the reigns of power.)

In fact, the FIS were so keen to keep women out of politics that they played down the role of Algerian women in the war of independence. As Moghadam explained, the devaluing of the *Moudjahidate's* status which started in the early years of independence turned into an attack on their image as war heroines by the Islamist organisations of the 1980s and 1990s. Because the *Moudjahidate* joined the women's street protests against the regressive Family Code of 1981, they were branded 'hawks of neo-colonialism', in an attempt at discrediting them politically. Their participation in these demonstrations gave a new meaning to their image, *they emerged as a group which embodied the woman's projection of society [Moghadam 1994, p 54].* Their actions, aimed at demanding the recognition of women's rights were also de-legitimised by the Islamists as the consequence of Western influence and deemed 'anti-religious' since the Qur'an had granted women all their rights *[ibid, p 54].* The only women fighters legitimised in the Islamic projection of society were the women proselytisers, symbolised by the Afghan *Moudjahidate* whose aim was to establish an Islamic society.

The FIS' preferred role for their women activists was centred around social activities. The FIS had established a whole network of support for the underprivileged. Their activities ranged from the distribution of food, for example after the floods which affected the west of the country in 1989, to the collection of rubbish from the streets of Algiers during the dustmen strike in 1990. On a daily basis, women supporters of the FIS helped out in the distribution of milk for babies, clothes (in particular, free hidjabs) and food for poor families. They visited hospitals, organised literacy classes in mosques, but they also played an important role in counselling abandoned women and young girls. They even arranged marriages among FIS members. They encouraged women to attend talks on the Shari'a in mosques. Books and brochures were distributed free of charge *[Daoud 1993, pp 224-225].* Without the support of women, it is undeniable that the FIS would never have gained such a following amongst the lower social groups.

16.6.3.3 Women supporters of Islamist movements

On December 21st 1989 and April 10th 1990, thousands of Algerian women demonstrated in the streets of Algiers in support of the FIS. These women represented a cross-section of the population belonging to all age groups and different social classes. Whilst they were not all

members of the FIS or any other Islamist Party, they supported the idea of a society governed according to the Shari'a (Islamic law). In an attempt to understand their conception of an Islamic society we will look at what some women members of Islamist Parties had to say in various interviews documented by Bessis and Belhassen in their book "Femmes du Maghreb: L'enjeu". In their eyes, such a society would enhance their status and would increase their influence over the future of Algeria. The differences between the sexes, they explained, and the differing rights and duties between men and women are defined in the Shari'a. Women are procreators of Muslims. Their role in society is to educate their children according to the Islamic faith. Men, on the other hand, are providers and protectors: they support their family financially and defend the honour of the family. If society's social organisation was to follow these precepts, everyone would benefit. As an Islamist woman explained, the first step is to establish an Islamic state:

> L'équilibre social passe donc par le respect des textes sacrés.
>
> *[Bessis, Belhassen 1992, p 205]*
>
> (A balanced society will emerge if the sacred text is respected.)

It seems that, according to these women, their future was dependent on, and second to, a higher political aim. When reminded of the position of women in Iran after the Islamic revolution of 1979, their only response was that Algeria is different *[Bessis, Belhassen 1992, p 215]*.

In the ideal Islamic state, the question of the segregation of the sexes was considered to be an absolute necessity. The Islamist women interviewed did not see this as a barrier to their freedom but, on the contrary, they considered separation of the sexes to be an advantage for women. Instead of being sex objects under the lustful eyes of men, they gained a sense of respect. This is what Habiba, one of the representatives of the FIS for the Algiers region, declared:

> Dans mon collège,[149] les hommes me traitaient comme une femme et non comme une collègue. Cela faussait non seulement les relations sociales mais les critères auxquels était soumise la promotion professionnelle. Seule une société non mixte peut garantir à la femme qu'on la considèrera comme un individu et qu'à ce titre elle aura droit au respect.
>
> *[Bessis, Belhassen 1992, p 206]*
>
> (In my college, men used to treat me as a woman and not as a colleague. This, not only distorted our social relations, but also the criteria used for promotion. It is only through the segregation of the sexes in society that women will be considered as individuals in their own right and, therefore, will be treated with respect.)

149 Habiba used to teach Mathematics in a college. She left her job to spend more time working for the Islamist movement. She then started giving lessons in Mathematics and Religious Education in a mosque.

The same reasoning applies to the wearing of the hidjab. It forces men to accept women's presence outside of the home and to treat them with respect:

> Le port du hidjab est en effet le moyen d'échapper aux regards de l'homme. En se voilant, la femme cesse d'être objet de séduction, en affichant ses convictions religieuses, elle impose le respect.
>
> *[Maghreb Machrek no. 144 April-June 1994, p 107]*
>
> (The wearing of the hidjab is a means of escaping from men's gaze. By wearing a veil, a woman is no longer an object of seduction, by displaying her religious convictions, she imposes respect.)

The hidjab has a different meaning for each person, but some women supporters of the FIS, explained that the hidjab symbolised their religious commitment. It corresponded to their understanding of the Quranic prescriptions regarding women's dress[150] and they wore it with pride. They did not see it as a rule imposed by men but as a personal choice, enabling them to show their commitment to Islam. The participation in the creation of an Islamic society gave these women a sense of worth and self-confidence. Their submission to the Prophet's rules made them responsible and answerable to him only. They did not rely on men to interpret the scriptures, but on themselves and their personal judgement. This is the reason why some Islamist women felt that they could demand the abrogation of certain articles of the Family Code which were not based on the Shari'a. Habiba, one of the FIS' representatives in the Algiers region stated:

> Si j'approuve l'essentiel des dispositions du Code de la famille, je suis contre l'institution du tutorat qui est purement traditionnelle et ne relève pas de la Charia. Celle-ci spécifie que les femmes sont libres de choisir leur mari. La soumission à Dieu libère totalement la femme du pouvoir des hommes. Mes références sont le Coran et la Charia et non la loi humaine, ni celle de mon mari, ni celle d'un quelconque tuteur.
>
> *[Bessis, Belhassen 1992, p 207]*
>
> (If I agree with most of the clauses of the Family Code, I am opposed to the introduction of the principle of the matrimonial guardian which is a mere tradition and does not originate from the Shari'a. The latter specifies that women are free to choose their husband. My terms of reference are the Qur'an and the Shari'a, they are neither human laws, nor my husband's or any other guardian's rules.)

Attacks on the present Family Code were quite common amongst Islamist women. Some female Islamist students from the University of Algiers pointed out that the divorce laws allowing the husband to keep the family accommodation were contrary to the Shari'a[151]

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150 The Qur'an states:

- *O Prophet, tell your wives and daughters and the wives of the believers, to draw their outer garments closer. That is more conducive to their being known, and not being injured (33 : 59) [Translated by Majid Fakhry 1997, p 266].*
- *And tell believing women to cast down their eyes and guard their private parts and not show their finery, except the outward part of it (24 : 31) [ibid, p 218].*

151 On the matter of divorce, we find in the Qur'an:

[Maghreb Machrek no.144 April-June 1994]. Women representatives of the Islamist Party 'al Irchad wa al Islah' also asked for amendments to the Family Code at their first meeting in Algiers on December 7th 1989 *[Marchés Tropicaux et Méditerranéens February 2nd 1990, p 317].*

Some Islamist women, because of their knowledge of the scriptures, acquired a sense of power and authority. This was frequently seen in the new type of relationships between Islamist young girls and their parents. Quite often, girls decided to wear the hidjab against their parents' wishes. Bucaille gives the example of a diplomat who objected to his daughter's decision to wear a hidjab as it could be detrimental to his carrier. She simply pointed out that she was following the precepts of the Qur'an while he was only concerned with material considerations *[Maghreb Machrek no. 144, p 109].* But the conflict was not just with parents. Some of the educated female Islamists went as far as criticising the male members of the Islamist Parties for marginalising them and giving a false image of the role of women in an Islamic society. One of them declared:

> Au nom de l'Islam, on ensevelit psychiquement la femme en tuant son ambition, en étouffant ses dons et en réduisant à néant son effort pour se construire la forte personnalité islamique qu'elle doit posséder... [il faut] rouvrir la voie de l'*ijtihad*[152] fermée depuis tant de siècles.
>
> *[Bessis, Belhassen 1992, p 211]*
>
> (In the name of Islam, women have been psychologically stunted, their ambitions killed, their talents smothered and their attempts at forging the strong Islamic personality they need have been destroyed... [we must] re-open the door of *ijtihad* which has been closed for so many centuries.)

16.6.3.4 Feminism in an Islamist context

If, by the early 1990s, Algerian Islamist women had not yet been fully integrated at the highest echelons of the Islamist Parties, they intended to continue their fight to play a full part in all domains, including in the decision making process. They saw themselves as a key element in the creation of an Islamic society. Their strength and confidence stemmed from their knowledge of the scriptures. However, sceptics may argue that there is no hope to see Islamist women fully integrated in the life of the country, especially at the political level. Developments in other Muslim countries may provide a partial answer to this question. According to Najib Ghadbian's paper 'Islamists and Women in the Arab World: From Reaction to Reform', the Islamist movement entered a reformist period in the late 1980s. In 1989, the publication of a

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Divorce may be pronounced twice. Then they [women] are to be retained in a rightful manner or released with kindness (2 : 228) *[ibid, pp 26,27].*

152 The *ijtihad* is the Islamic concept of reinterpretation of the scriptures to reflect societal changes. For example slavery, which was allowed by the Qur'an centuries ago, is no longer accepted as a Quranic practice.

book[153] by Muhammad Al Ghazali, renowned Islamic scholar, in which he denounced conservative interpretations of parts of the Qur'an and Hadiths referring to women and political participation, created quite a stir in the Arab world. In 1990, the Egyptian scholar Yusuf al Qaradawi produced a fatwa in which he declared that women could be judges, seek parliamentary offices and issue fatwas. Islamist women in Egypt are also beginning to assert themselves. In an article entitled 'Veiled Activism', Fadwa El Guindi describes the recent developments in the women Islamist movement. In the 1970s, more and more young students started wearing the veil. As we saw with Algerian Islamist women, this enabled them to move freely in the 'public space', to gain respect from men and to acquire more self-confidence. At the same time, female students' enrolment at university started increasing faster than male student's. The ratio of male to female students went from 13.2:1 in 1952/1953 to 1.8:1 in 1975/1976 *[Peuples Méditerranéens nos. 22-23 Jan-June 1983, p 84]*. Furthermore, female students started opting for the normally male dominated sections such as Medicine, Dentistry, Engineering and Veterinary Medicine. Only the best students are accepted in these sections which open the door to some of the most valued and prestigious professions in Egypt. As Fadwa El Guindi concluded:

> ... a woman in public has a choice: either looking secular, modern, feminine and passive (hence very vulnerable to indignities), or becoming a 'religieuse' (a Muslim sister), hence formidable, untouchable and silently threatening. The young women who are now in public, and because of social change will remain there, made the choice to carve legitimate public space for themselves.
>
> *[Peuples Méditerranéens nos. 22-23 Jan-June 1983, p 87]*

It seems that throughout the Middle East, Islamist women are redefining their role in society and are becoming active agents in the creation of a modern Islamic community. Education and knowledge of the scriptures are at the root of their newly acquired strength. From being a symbol of their exclusion, the veil has become the key to their established presence in the public space.

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153 The book was entitled: 'al Sunnah al Nabawiyah bayn Ahl al Fiqh wa Ahl al Hadith'

17 Socio-economic Developments: 1979 - 1992

17.1 Education

17.1.1 Statistical study

17.1.1.1 Compulsory education

Compulsory education which used to be from 6 to 13 was extended to 15 in 1987. The govemment terminology for this period of study was 'enseignement fondamental'. It was divided into two sections: 'enseignement élémentaire', for ages 6-11 and 'enseignement moyen' for ages 12-15. Secondary education 'enseignement secondaire' was from 16 to 18 with at the end of this period the national examination 'Baccalauréat', equivalent to A levels. For greater clarity and simplicity, we will use the terms 'compulsory education' for the 6-13/15 age group and 'secondary education' for the 12-18 age group (which is the age band normally covered by the term 'secondary').

Successive governments since independence have made education, particularly primary education, one of their main priorities and the Chadli Benjedid govemment was no exception. Despite the economic difficulties following the collapse of the oil revenues, the education budget still represented a large and increasing proportion of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP): from 6.3% in 1975, it went up to 9% in 1985 *[Notes et Etudes Documentaires no. 4878 1989, p 88]*. The part of the budget allocated to education was on average 12% during the period 1979-1985 *[Office National des Statistiques no. 7 April / June 1985, p 6]*. As a result, substantial progress was made as can be seen in the following table:

Figure 28 Educational rates in compulsory education, by sex for children aged 6 to 13/15: 1977-1992

Year	Boys(%)	Girls(%)	Total(%)
1977-1978	88.7	64.2	76.7
1978-1979	88.4	65.6	77.2
1979-1980	88.4	65.7	77.3
1980-1981	88.4	67.3	78
1981-1982	88.4	67.3	78
1982-1983	88.8	68.3	78.7
1983-1984	89.98	71.15	80.8
1984-1985	90.92	72.01	81.7
1985-1986	92.33	72.25	82.2
1986-1987	93.06	73.55	83.35
1987-1988*	93.78	76.03	84.80
1988-1989*	93.43	76.56	85.10
1989-1990*	93.80	77.20	85.83
1990-1991*	93.65	77.87	85.98
1991-1992*	94.16	79.52	86.99

* Figures relating to children aged 6 to 15 (new compulsory education period)

[Office National des Statistiques Numéro Spécial 35, p 24]

The overall increase of 10% of children receiving compulsory education between 1977-1978 and 1991-1992 is significant, especially when one takes into account the high birth rate and the constant battle the government had to fight to accommodate the ever increasing number of school-aged children. Between 1975 and 1985, the average annual rate of increase of children aged 6-11 was 2.6% whereas the increase of the annual rate of educated children of that age was 2.7% *[Notes et Etudes Documentaires no. 4878 1989, p 58]*. Despite the enormous efforts of the government, 13% of children were still not receiving compulsory education in 1991-1992. Although, during the Chadli Benjedid government, the rate of increase of girls' education was greater than the boys', by 1992, there were still 20.5% of girls not attending school (5.4% of boys). Furthermore, the tendency to remove girls from school at puberty was still present. The following table shows the sharp decrease, from the age of 12, in the proportion of girls attending school during the academic year 1986-1987.

Figure 29 Percentage of girls in schools according to age: 1986-1987

Age	% of girls
5	43.60
6	45.16
7	45.60
8	45.18
9	44.36
10	43.98
11	42.98
12	37.81
13	29.41
14	22.25
15	18.72
Total	43.99

[Percentages derived from figures in Saadi 1991, p 109]

As always, the distance between the child's home and the school would play a major part, disadvantaging children in rural areas where schools were more scattered. The following table demonstrates how this factor had a significant effect on girls' education:

Figure 30 Attendance by sex and distance from school for children aged 6-13: 1984

Distance from the school	Boys (%)	Girls (%)
less than 1 km	96	84
between 1 and 5 km	90	58
more than 5 km	66	25

[Office National des Statistiques no. 33 1992, p 2]

As we can see, although the percentage of girls attending schools in the compulsory education age band increased, sociological factors were still influencing parents. Once girls had reached puberty, many parents were reluctant to continue sending them to school, especially if the girls had to travel some distance unaccompanied.

17.1.1.2 Secondary education

The number of pupils receiving secondary education, also greatly increased during the Chadli Benjedid government. The following table gives an indication of this evolution:

Figure 31 Boys and girls aged 12-18 in secondary schools: 1978-1992

Year	Total number of pupils (000s)	Boys (%)	Girls (%)
1978-1979	849.2	63.0	37.0
1979-1980	921.1	62.1	37.9
1980-1981	1,016.5	62.0	38.0
1981-1982	1,140.4	61.5	38.5
1982-1983	1,280.7	60.1	39.9
1983-1984	1,452.8	59.4	40.6
1884-1985	1,611.7	59.0	41.0
1985-1986	1,823.4	58.5	41.5
1986-1987	1,976.0	58.6	41.4
1987-1988	2,083.0	58.4	41.6
1988-1989	2,111.0	57.9	42.1
1989-1990	2,163.0	57.4	42.6
1990-1991	2,175.0	56.7	43.3
1991-1992	2,233.0	56.1	43.9

[Office National des Statistiques Numéro Spécial 35, p 23]

The overall progress in the number of children receiving secondary education (in relation to the total number of children of that age group) is quite substantial: from 29.2% in 1978-1979 to 51.6% in 1991-1992. The fact that 50% of youngsters aged 12 to 18 were in education in 1992 is significant. However, one has to note that a proportion of these pupils were taking more than six years to complete their secondary education[154] and only a small percentage would end up with a qualification. (The detailed analysis of these factors will be done in the next section, in the evaluation of the quality of the educational provision). The education rates also point to an appreciable increase in the number of girls receiving secondary education. Although there were still in 1991-1992 12% more boys than girls in the secondary sector, the percentage of girls in schools, in relation to the total number of girls of that age group, more than doubled between 1978-1979 and 1991-1992. The rate of increase for boys was much less spectacular and went from 36.1% to 56.5% during the same period. Clearly, educational opportunities for girls aged 12 to 18 improved during the Chadli Benjedid era.

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154 Just as in the French education system, if a pupil had not reached a sufficient level at the end of an academic year, he/she would have to repeat that year. This could happen several times during the pupil's education.

17.1.1.3 Higher education

In the Higher Education sector too, the overall number of students progressed steadily as shown in the following table:

Figure 32 Students in Higher Education, by sex: 1978-1992

Year	Total number of students (000s)(2)	Boys (%)	Girls (%)
1978-1979	53.8	76.4 (1)	23.6 (1)
1979-1980	61.4		
1980-1981	71.3		
1981-1982	78.0		
1982-1983	95.9		
1983-1984	104.3		
1984-1985	111.9		
1985-1986	132.1		
1986-1987	154.7	67.6	32.4 (3)
1987-1988	173.8	66.8	33.2 (3)
1988-1989	180.8	66.5	33.5 (3)
1989-1990	195.3	66.8	33.2 (3)
1990-1991	207.8	62.5	37.5 (4)
1991-1992	236.2	62.4	37.6 (4)

[(1)Direction des Statistiques et de la Comptabilité Nationale 1980, p 10]
[(2)Office National des Statistiques Numéro Spécial 35, p 23]
[(3)derived from Annuaire Statistique de L'Algérie no.15 1991, p109]
[(4)derived from Annuaire Statistique de L'Algérie no.16 1994, p107]

The total number of students quadrupled between 1978 and 1992 and by the end of this period, girls represented more than a third of the student population.

From a statistical point of view, undeniable progress was made during the Chadli Benjedid government in terms of educational opportunities and, although girls were still lagging behind, their presence at all levels was much more evident. However, the government, faced with limited resources and an ever increasing number of school-aged children due to the decades of uncontrolled population growth, had to make a choice between quantitative and qualitative improvements. It opted for the democratisation of education but had to compromise on the quality of provision. The next section will look at the deficiencies in this domain.

17.1.2 Qualitative evaluation

17.1.2.1 The educational environment

The government devoted most of its educational budget to running costs: between 1978 and 1985, they represented on average 84.7% of the total budget with a peak of more than 90% between 1978 and 1982 *[Office National des Statistiques no. 7 April- June 1985, p 6]*. Most of the budget was spent employing new staff, but unfortunately in order to cope with the ever increasing demands on education, the 'Instituts Technologiques d'Enseignement' (ITE), teacher training colleges, lowered their standards, accepting some students who did not even have a Baccalauréat (A level qualification) and reducing the length of the training programmes. In 1986, Algérie Actualité produced a special dossier on education. It said:

> .... au sein des instituts technologiques (ITE), on peut rencontrer tous les profils et toutes les vocations. Un amalgame, en quelque sorte, de candidats à l'enseignement fait de bacheliers avec mention jusqu'au recalé à tous les examens possibles... Mais ce n'est pas la seule anomalie ... La formation jugée insuffisante (une année pour les instituteurs et deux ans pour les professeurs deuxième cycle)...
>
> *[Algérie Actualité no. 1099 Nov 6th –12th 1986, p 14]*
>
> (... in the teacher training colleges, one can find all profiles of students and all vocations. Amongst the future teachers, there is a mixture of students with top A level grades and students who have failed every single exam ... But this is not the only problem ... The training is judged insufficient (one year for primary level and two years for secondary level)...)

The recruitment of staff with a lower level of education and minimum training resulted in a decline in the educational standards. Another factor also affected the teaching conditions: since most of the budget was dedicated to running costs, not enough funds were allocated for capital expenditure. As a result, and because there were not enough schools, pupils (often in classes of forty or fifty) had to be taught in two or three shifts per day which reduced the number of contact hours with each class. Specialist equipment was often inadequate and out of date but could not be replaced. It is no surprise, therefore, that many pupils dropped out of education.

17.1.2.2 Consequences of the 'Arabisation' programme

The political decision to use classical Arabic as teaching medium[155] at all levels created numerous practical difficulties and had serious consequences from an economic and

[155] The decision to replace French with Arabic as teaching medium was used as a way for the government to show its anti-colonial stance and its attachment to the 'Arabo-Islamic' culture. The implementation of this decision started in 1965. By 1974, all teaching in the primary and secondary sectors was done in Arabic, except for the last year of secondary education which still had French sections. In Higher Education, Arabisation only affected Social Sciences and Law

sociological point of view. From the educational authorities' point of view, it added to the problem of recruitment and training of staff since most teachers had been educated in French. It created further costs for the publication of new teaching materials and textbooks. From the pupils' point of view, it often meant that the teaching was done in a language which was foreign to them: classical Arabic being different from the Arabic spoken in everyday life and certainly a new language for the Berberophone pupils. With the reduced number of teaching hours, and if no extra help from parents was forthcoming, a pupil had very little chance of success. The following table shows the drop out rates for pupils aged 11 to 18 between 1986 and 1988:

Figure 33 Drop-out rates in Secondary Education: 1986 - 1988

Year	Drop out rates in the 11-15 age group (%)	Drop out rate in the 15-18 age group (%)	Total (%)
1986-1987	5.42	17.81	6.53
1987-1988	6.99	20.92	8.39

[Office National des Statistiques no.33 1992, p 3]

These figures only give an incomplete picture of the real situation. The constant demographic pressure forced the authorities to be much less rigid in the requirements for progression from one class to the next. Whereas in the past, pupils who did not obtain high enough marks would repeat the year, the norm became to allow virtually all pupils to move up into the next class, regardless of their performance, to make room for the new recruits. This was particularly true at the lower levels of education. It resulted in an overall decline of the educational standards throughout the primary and secondary sector. The Baccalauréat, which marked the end of secondary education and had always been seen, in the past, as the passport to Higher Education, no longer represented a definite level of educational achievement. With the lowering of the Baccalauréat standards, in 1989, the government decided to award an un-graded Baccalauréat which, effectively, threw students out of the education system and into the streets. Since they had technically passed their Baccalauréat, they could not repeat the last year of secondary education, but their qualification was not sufficient to allow them entry into Higher Education. In 1989, out of 54,000 students who passed their Baccalauréat, only 400 obtained high enough grades to be admitted into University (0.74%) *[Rouadjia 1990, p 137]*.

The arabisation at all levels of education, in keeping with the general policy of rejection of Western influence, also enabled the government to have a tighter control over the content of the programmes. Religion became a major part of education. Messaoudi, who taught in the Lycée Descartes in Algiers, one of the last secondary schools to still have a bilingual stream in

(although Law still had some French sections) while scientific sections remained entirely French *[Les Cahiers de l'Orient July-September 1991, p 175]*

the late 1980s[156], was able to see the differences between the bilingual programmes and the Arabic programmes. In the non-bilingual stream, in a secondary level Arabic literature textbook, nearly all the texts studied were religious and none of the modern Arabic poets were included. Messaoudi's comment about the philosophy class was:

> On a tué la philo, on a tué Darwin, on a éliminé tous les textes qui aiguisent le sens critique.
>
> *[Messaoudi 1995, p 131]*
>
> (They have killed philosophy, they have killed Darwin, they have eliminated all the texts which encourage the development of a critical mind.)

Rather than an opening of the mind, education became a means of proselytising. Messaoudi gives an example of this: in a primary school, pupils were asked to bring a bottle cork to do some experiments the next day. Instead of using the cork for a science lesson, as had been suggested, the primary school teacher chastised those pupils who had brought a cork. The possession of this object was the proof that their parents were drinking wine (which is forbidden in the Muslim religion). These children were told that their parents were not living according to the Islamic Law and it was up to the children to bring their parents back to the truth or they would, themselves, bum in hell *[Messaoudi 1995, p 132].* This sort of brain-washing is reminiscent of Hitler's Youth and had the same sinister effects, completely distorting the mind of some children who later became Islamist agents, spying on their own family. As Messaoudi concluded:

> ... l'arabisation est un moyen de contrôle social absolu, un instrument d'aliénation des foules ...
>
> *[Messaoudi 1995, p 131]*
>
> (... arabisation is a means of total social control, a means of alienation of the population ...)

The government thought that completing the 'arabisation' programme, would serve two purposes: gain the support of the traditionalists and mould the minds of the future generations. However, it was also playing into the hands of the Islamists. The government could not have been unaware of the dangers.

The 'arabisation' of education, apart from creating problems in the education sector, also lead to a mismatch between the requirements of the job market and the aptitudes of the job seekers. Whilst in industry, most of the written documentation used was in French, students were coming out of education with a very poor knowledge of the language. French was treated as a foreign language and as a subject of low importance. A teacher interviewed by Algérie Actualité said:

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156 It was not until 1989 that all classes were taught in Arabic in this school.

> Les élèves passent de classe en classe sans savoir ni lire ni écrire en français. Un 2 ou un 3 en français n'a jamais fait redoubler personne.
>
> *[Algérie Actualité no. 1099 Nov 6th –12th 1986, p 14]*
>
> (Pupils move up from one class to the next without being able to read or write in French. A mark of 2 or 3 [out of 20] has never forced anyone to repeat the year.)

Yet, employers refused to take on staff, at managerial level, who could not operate in both French and Arabic. Sometimes even at the lower echelons, the knowledge of both languages was considered indispensable as explained by the Recruitment Manager of a car manufacturing plant in Rouiba in the west of Algiers. This is what he had to say about young arabophones employed on the assembly line or in the car maintenance department:

> Ils ont des difficultés à utiliser ce qui est fondamental à ce poste, les gammes d'usinage qui décrivent minutieusement les processus de fabrication, ainsi que les autres documents techniques ...qui sont actuellement rédigés en français...
>
> *[Algérie Actualité January 3rd-9th 1985, p 33, in Rouadjia 1990, p 132]*
>
> (They have difficulty using, what is essential in this job, the detailed manufacturing process documentation and other technical documents ...which are presently written in French...)

Talking about young arabophone students coming out of Higher Education, he added:

> Tous les secteurs techniques travaillent en langue française. Si nous devions recevoir demain, par exemple un électronicien formé en langue nationale, il aurait sans doute des difficultés à s'adapter.
>
> *[ibid]*
>
> (All technical sectors operate in French. If we were to take on, for instance, an electronics engineer educated in Arabic only, he would, no doubt, experience difficulties adapting.)

The inadequacy of the educational provision in relation to the job market needs created great resentment and disillusionment amongst the young arabophone graduates.

Another consequence of the 'arabisation' of education was the deepening of social inequalities and in turn the growing antagonism between the arabophones and the francophones. When the programme of 'arabisation' was introduced, the francophone elite who held most of the positions of power in the economy accepted this development, knowing that the existing status quo would be preserved. They knew that they would still be able to educate their children in French, sending them to private French schools and to the francophone sections in Universities. This way, the hierarchy of power between arabophones and francophones would be maintained. As Aissa Kadri, sociologist at Algiers University, stated:

> Le dualisme linguistique ... répondait alors aux intérêts d'une élite dirigeante prête à partager sans concéder l'essentiel: le pouvoir économique.
>
> *[Les Cahiers de l'Orient July-September 1991, p 180]*
>
> (Bilingualism ... corresponded to the needs of a ruling elite prepared to share without giving away the essential: economic power.)

However, the development of 'arabisation' in all sectors of education and, in particular, in Higher Education was to have unforeseen consequences. The number of arabophone students in Universities increased by a factor of four between 1973-1974 and 1977-1978. These students were becoming increasingly dissatisfied as the years passed. They had experienced the social inequalities resulting from a system of education which denied them access to certain courses in Universities and consequently narrowed their career options. The discontent among arabophone students resulted, in 1980, in series of strikes in Universities, demanding the full 'arabisation' of the civil service and of all University courses. The move from 'arabisation' to 'Islamisation' was inevitable in the context of an increasingly powerful Islamist movement. The antagonism between arabophones and francophones grew deeper. As Kadri concluded:

> A un mouvement qui s'était développé à partir de l'Etat, ... répondait au début des années 80 un mouvement qui s'affirmait contre l'Etat.
>
> *[Les Cahiers de l'Orient July-Sptember 1991, p 184]*
>
> (A movement which had originated from within the state, ... evolved into a movement which stood against the state in the early 1980s.)

17.1.3 Literacy rates

Another measure of the success of the education provision is literacy rates. In a survey published in 1986, the Algerian government declared that:

> ... en moyenne 22% de la population scolarisable, échappent annuellement à l'action éducative et augmentent le cortège déjà long des illettrés. Par ailleurs, près de 80.000 enfants abandonnent chaque année l'école sans qu'ils aient accomplis (sic) plus de quatre années de leur cursus scolaire. Ce sont de quasi-analphabètes ...
>
> *[Office National des Statistiques no. 12 July-September 1986, p 65]*
>
> (... on average 22% of the school age population fall through the net each year and add to the already large scores of illiterates. Furthermore, nearly 80,000 children abandon school each year before they have completed more than four years of schooling. They are virtually illiterate ...)

In 1992, another government survey admitted that even if, in relative terms, illiteracy rates were decreasing (from 74.6% in 1966 to 42.7% in 1989 amongst the population aged 10 +), the

total number of illiterates was constantly increasing due to the demographic pressure: there were 5,600,000 illiterates in 1962 and 7,411,000 in 1989 *[Office National des Statistiques no. 33 1992, p 2].* As always, these figures hide regional discrepancies: in 1977, the illiteracy rate for Algiers was 34.2% and 82.7% in Djelfa (near the Ouled Nail mountains) *[Office National des Statistiques no. 12 July-September 1986, p 48].* In 1987, there were 36.36% of illiterates in urban areas and 63.53% in rural areas *[Office National des Statistiques Données Statistiques no. 88, p 1].* Another permanent feature regarding illiteracy was the fact that it affected women much more than men. The following table shows the evolution of illiteracy rates by sex:

Figure 34 Illiteracy rates in the population aged 10+ by sex: 1977-1996

Year	Male	Female	Total
1977 (1)	48.2	74.3	61.5
1984 (1)	30.9	57.4	44.4
1987 (2)	30.75	56.66	43.6
1989 (4)	31.8	53.8	42.7
1996 (3)	17.4 (aged 6+)	33.4 (aged 6+)	

[(1)Office National des Statistiques no. 12 Juillet / Septembre, pp 46, 52]
[(2)Office National des Statistiques Données Statistiques no. 88, p 1]
[(3)Office National des Statistiques Données Statistiques no. 250 Mars 1996, p 3]
[(4)Office National des Statistiques no. 33 1992, p3]

As we can see, although the female illiteracy rates were declining, more than half of the female population was still illiterate in 1989. An important factor is that the discrepancy between men and women's illiteracy rates existed even amongst the young generations. Whereas in 1989, only 4.57% of boys aged 10-14 were illiterate, the figure was 18.75% for girls of that age. In the category 15-19, the figures were respectively 7.23% and 25.30% *[Office National des Statistiques no. 33 1992, p3].*

17.1.4 Overall achievements

The overall conclusion one can draw is that despite the enormous efforts of the government to provide education for all school aged children, the results were somewhat disappointing. In order to accommodate the new generations, shortcuts had to be taken in terms of quality. Consequently, many children who did not receive parental support fell through the net and found themselves thrown on to the streets, without any qualifications and without much hope of finding a job. The other deficiency of the educational system was that it did not equip youngsters for the job market. This was the result of the political decision to introduce classical Arabic as teaching medium. While trying to appease the more traditionalist elements of society by emphasising certain aspects of the 'arbo-islamic' culture through education, the government was sacrificing scores of young people who were unable to cope when confronted with a modern economy where bilingualism was the norm. It is no surprise, therefore, that many of

these disaffected young people fell into the arms of the Islamists. Girls benefited from the overall increase in educational opportunities, but social pressure to keep them at home after puberty still played a determining role, particularly in rural areas. With the rise of the Islamist movement, the concept of mixed schools was challenged and in those areas where single sex schools were introduced, girls' education often suffered because parents were reluctant to send them to a school which was frequently far away from their home.

17.2 Employment Opportunities

Before looking at the female employment rates during the Chadli Benjedid government, it is important to reiterate certain facts (already mentioned in the study of the Boumédienne era) about official government statistics: the government's definition of the 'active population' was 'men and women working or seeking employment'. However, housewives, who formed a large proportion of the population and who, in rural areas, took part in most of the farm activities, were not counted. In fact, whereas an unemployed person was defined as: *anybody who during the period of reference is not working (not occupied), seeking employment, is of working age (16 to 60)*[157] *and is available for work [Données Statistiques no. 162 1992, p 1]*, a survey on women's employment conducted in 1996 stated that: *72.74% of the female population aged 16 plus are housewives, 9.03% are students and school girls, 7.56% are working women and 4.39% only*[158] *are seeking employment [Données Statistiques no. 254 Jan / March 1996, p 1].* This leaves housewives, clearly out of the category of active and unemployed population. By not including the millions of housewives in the calculations of the female active population, the government was reducing the unemployment rates for women and denying these women any recognition of their role in the economy. Despite the rhetoric of the official government documents about equality between men and women, the assumption was still that women's real role was to procreate. This was clearly stated in a survey[159] attempting to project the employment rates for women up to the year 2010. The document stated:

> Les femmes représentent 50.3% de la population algérienne. La femme consacre la plupart de sa vie à la reproduction et à l'éducation de ses enfants. Le rôle principal qui lui est reconnu est celui d'épouse et de mère de famille d'où une faible participation de la femme dans les secteurs économiques.
>
> *[Office National des Statistiques no. 34, (year n/a) p 33]*

(Women represent 50.3% of the Algerian population. Women dedicate most of their life to procreation and the upbringing of their children. Their recognised role

157 From 1991 onwards, with the change in working age legislation, the active population was deemed to consist of people between the ages of 15 and 60, whereas before, it also included the 60 to 64 age group.

158 My emphasis.

159 The exact year is not specified but the data used includes 1989. We can, therefore, assume that the survey was conducted in 1989.

> being mainly that of wife and mother, their participation in the economic activity of the country is, therefore, minimal.)

This statement may describe the reality of the perception of the role of women in large sections of the society, but there is no indication in the text that the government disagreed with this image of women, or intended to work towards a change of attitudes regarding women's status. Evidently, the government did not want to instigate change in this domain. In fact, as we will see, the situation of women in terms of employment did not improve drastically during the Chadli Benjedid government.

The following table looks at the evolution of employment for men and women from 1977 to 1991. In order to give a realistic picture, the employment rates have been calculated and shown as a proportion of the male and female population of working age (15 to 64).

Figure 35 Employment rates for men & women: 1977-1991

	Population figures (000s)		Numbers employed (including partially employed)				
YEAR	Male 15-64	Female 15-64	Male	Female	Male emp rate as a % of male working age pop	Female emp rate as a % of female working age pop.	Female emp rate as a % of total employed
1977	4028	4274	2198738	180387	54.6	4.2	7.6
1979	4345	4577					
1982	4852	5072	3229115	244787	66.6	4.8	7.0
1985	5344	5601	3555003	326225	66.5	5.8	8.4
1987	6014	5977	3772642	427182	62.7	7.1	10.2
1989	6525	6448	4119450	457290	63.1	7.1	10.0
1990	6800	6703	4186775	511045	61.6	7.6	10.9
1991	7092	6970	4179370	517840	58.9	7.4	11.0

[calculated from data in Office National des Statistiques Numéro Spécial 35, pp 14-18]

Although there is an increase in the proportion of working women out of the total number of women of working age (from 4.2% to 7.4% between 1977 and 1991), the overall percentage is still minimal. The picture is even more startling for the actual number of women in employment: just over 500,000 women for over 4,000,000 men in 1991. Furthermore, these figures include an ever increasing number of women working from home: whereas in 1977,

these were 42,153, this figure had more than trebled to 140,660 in 1989 and increased to 157,460 in 1991[160] *[Office National des Statistiques Numéro Spécial 35, pp 14-18].*

The Women's International Democratic Federation's (WIDF) figures show that for 1990, Algeria stood far behind Morocco and Tunisia in terms of female economic activity.

Figure 36 Women's economic activity in the Maghreb: 1970, 1990

Countries	Women economically active (000s)		Estimated economic activity rate %		Average annual growth	Women as % of total
	1970	1990	1970	1990	1970-1990 (%)	1990
Algeria	168	543	4	8	6	9
Morocco	482	1480	12	19	5.8	20
Tunisia	154	635	11	26	7.3	25

[Women's International Democratic Federation January 1992, pp 11,12]

The comparison with the two neighbouring Maghreb countries is very unfavourable to Algeria. In 1990, Algeria's female employment rate was still less than half of that of Morocco and almost a third of that of Tunisia.

The statistical distribution of women's employment in Algeria remained virtually unchanged during the 1970s and 1980s. Women continued to be employed mostly in the public sector, in the offices of the large national administrations and in the education and health services. Just as in the 1960s and 1970s, the teaching and medical professions were considered the most suitable for women. In 1989, 31% of working women were teachers in schools for pupils aged 6 to 15 *[Office National des Statistiques Collections Statistiques no. 36 1990, p 8].* By contrast, the number of women employed in agriculture continued to dwindle: from 1.2% of the total population employed in this sector in 1977 to 0.74% in 1991. The very small percentage of women working in industry, 10.06% in 1977, was reduced further to 6.43% in 1991[161]. This emphasises the fact that the relatively unskilled jobs requiring little qualifications such as agricultural and shop-floor factory work were given to men in preference to women.

The following table looks at the female employment rates according to socio-economic categories:

160 Up to 1987, the government's statistics showed the number of 'housewives working part time'. From 1989 onwards, this category disappeared and instead the category 'work done from home' was introduced.

161 The percentages have been calculated from the total employment figures by sex and socio-economic sectors provided in the *Office National des Statistiques Numéro Spécial 35, pp 14-18.*

Figure 37 Employment rates by socio-economic categories and by gender: 1985-1992

		Employers	Other independent workers	Managers	Middle Managers	Employees	Shop floor workers	Low grade workers / Seasonal workers	Temporarily employed personnel*	Unspecified	*Total*
1985	Male	50,319	746,173	110,428	189,575	490,951	1,025,916	658,895	244,731	38,015	**3,555,003**
	Female	992	6,530	19,540	41,744	163,647	29,641	55,717	6,280	2,134	**326,225**
	Total	51,311	752,703	129,968	231,319	654,598	1,055,557	714,612	251,011	40,149	**3,881,228**
	Female %	***1.9***	***0.9***	***15.0***	***18.0***	***25.0***	***2.8***	***7.8***	***2.5***	***5.3***	***8.4***
1987	Male	73,001	763,948	123,023	449,541	442,388	893,896	614,632	334,176	78,036	**3,772,641**
	Female	2,352	9,240	26,282	144,044	81,979	24,715	61,991	8,042	6,448	**366,093**
	Total	75,353	773,188	149,305	593,585	524,367	918,611	676,623	342,218	84,484	**4,137,734**
	Female %	***3.1***	***1.2***	***17.6***	***24.3***	***15.6***	***2.7***	***9.2***	***2.3***	***7.6***	***8.8***
1990	Male	62,006	1,013,078	141,730	456,377	731,067	411,860	714,598	241,965	178,106	**3,950,787**
	Female	1,292	11,332	23,950	133,723	72,551	25,881	51,995	5,688	7,087	**333,499**
	Total	63,298	1,024,410	165,680	590,100	803,618	437,741	766,593	247,653	185,193	**4,284,286**
	Female %	***2.0***	***1.1***	***14.5***	***22.7***	***9.0***	***5.9***	***6.8***	***2.3***	***3.8***	***7.8***
1991	Male	68,900	1,098,300	158,700	432,400	488,900	639,500	663,500	122,060	3,980	**3,676,240**
	Female	1,800	10,200	37,000	143,600	87,800	23,000	51,300	4,390	520	**359,610**
	Total	70,700	1,108,500	195,700	576,000	576,700	662,500	714,800	126,450	4,500	**4,035,850**
	Female %	***2.5***	***0.9***	***18.9***	***24.9***	***15.2***	***3.5***	***7.2***	***3.5***	***11.6***	***8.9***
1992	Male	119,700	940,200	213,500	481,200	473,800	741,700	760,200	250,600	37,100	**4,018,000**
	Female	3,500	9,900	48,900	133,600	78,400	19,400	55,200	10,400	2,600	**361,900**
	Total	123,200	950,100	262,400	614,800	552,200	761,100	815,400	261,000	39,700	**4,379,900**
	Female %	***2.8***	***1.0***	***18.6***	***21.7***	***14.2***	***2.5***	***6.8***	***4.0***	***6.5***	***8.3***

(* these include: apprentices, home help, men doing their military service, part-time women employees.)

[calculated from data in Annuaire Statistique de l'Algérie no. 15 1991, p 58 and no. 17 1992, p 51]

(Displayed graphically on the following page)

Women represented an insignificant proportion of shop floor workers with an average of 3.48% between 1985 and 1992 and their numbers declined in real terms from 29,641 to 19,400 in the same period. Although there was a general reduction of the number of people employed in this category of workers, the number of men started increasing again from 1991 onwards whereas the number of women continued to decline. By contrast, the number of women employed as temporary workers increased in real terms and as a percentage of this category of workers: from 6,280 (representing 2.5%) in 1985 to 10,400 representing 4% in 1992. The economic difficulties of the 1980s resulted in an overall decrease of the number of workers in the public

sector. However, it is clear that women were much more affected by the cuts than men. Between 1985 and 1992, the total number of employees went down from 654,598 to 552,200 but, during the same period, the number of female employees decreased from 163,647 to 78,400. In percentage terms, whereas in 1985 women constituted 25% of the employees, by 1992, they only represented 14.2% of the workforce in this category.

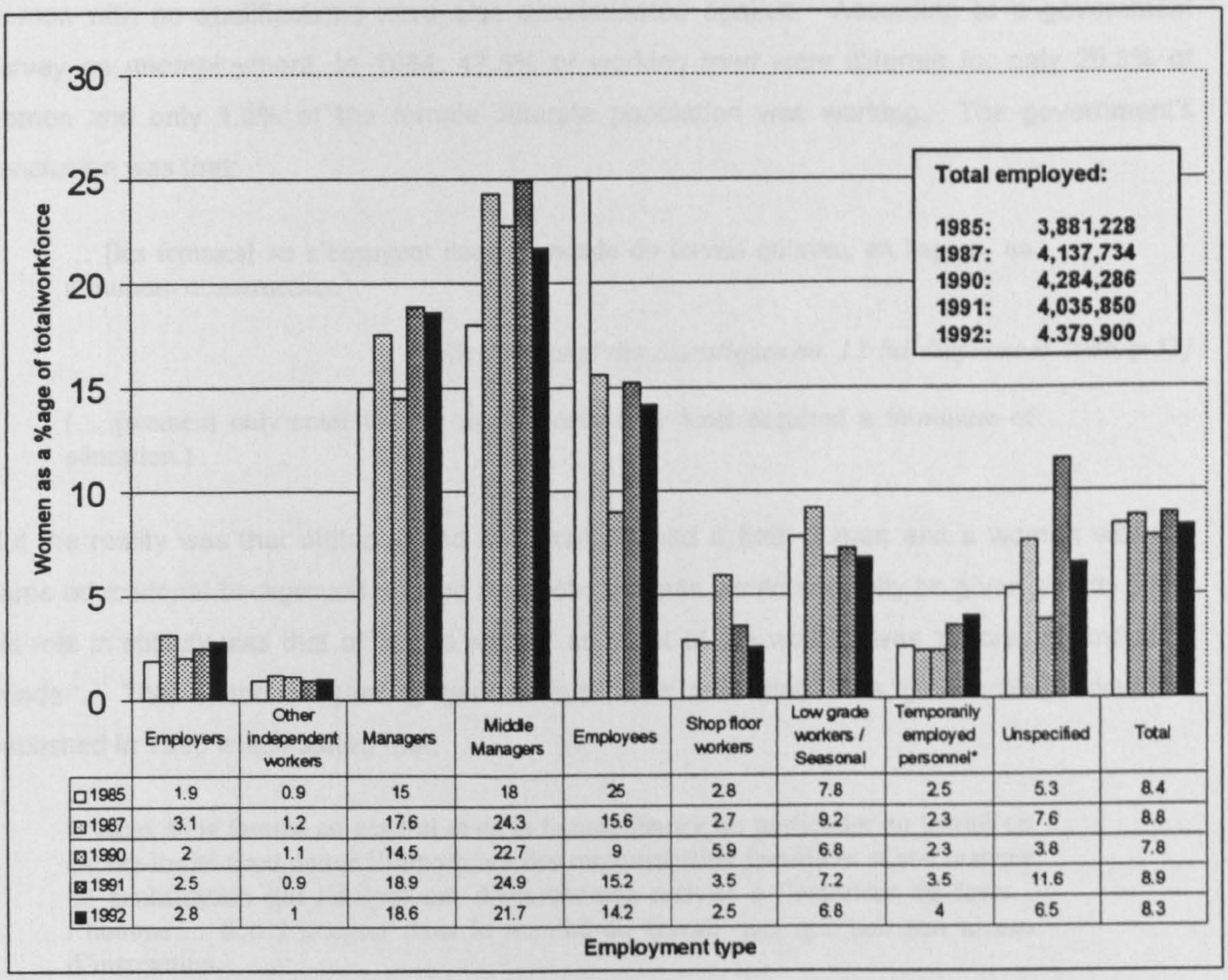


Figure 38 Graphical representation of employment rates by socio-economic categories and by gender: 1985-1992

[produced from data in Figure 37]

An interesting fact is that women had the highest representation amongst the middle managers and managers. In fact, the number of women at the higher managerial levels constantly increased in real terms (from 19,540 in 1985 to 48,900 in 1992) and they represented a constant average of about 17% of that group. The number of women employed at the middle management level remained constant, representing an average of 22%, which constituted the highest percentage of female workers in any socio-economic category. This was the direct result of the development of educational opportunities for girls. The fact that amongst the working population, women were usually better qualified than men, has already been noted during the study of President Boumédienne presidency. Under the Chadli Benjedid

government, a greater proportion of girls who had been educated in the late 1960s was coming on to the job market. They had a better chance of finding a job, since there was a shortage of highly qualified personnel, but their education did not guarantee employment. In 1992 the government published a survey on unemployment which showed that in 1991, 52% of women with a secondary level of education were seeking employment whereas for men the figure was only 23%. Amongst those with a higher education background, the percentages were respectively: 18.8% and 4.6% *[Données Statistiques no. 162 1992, p 3]*. As we saw earlier, women with no qualifications were also discriminated against. According to a government survey on unemployment, in 1984, 47.5% of working men were illiterate for only 20.3% of women and only 1.3% of the female illiterate population was working. The government's conclusion was that:

> ... [les femmes] ne s'engagent dans le monde du travail qu'avec, en bagage, un minimum d'instruction.
>
> *[Office National des Statistiques no. 12 July/September 1986, p 57]*
>
> (... [women] only enter the job market once they have acquired a minimum of education.)

But the reality was that attitudes had not changed and if both a man and a woman with the same educational background applied for a job, the man would normally be given priority since his role in society was that of 'bread winner' and that of the woman was 'procreator and child minder'. This attitude regarding gender roles was reiterated in a government document published in 1996 which stated that:

> L'accès de la femme en général et de la femme mariée en particulier au travail est encore limité étant donné l'importance des responsabilités familiales et son manque de qualification qui l'empèchent d'exercer une activité à l'extérieur du foyer... l'homme ... doit s'intégrer dans le marché du travail quel que soit son niveau d'instruction.
>
> *[Données Statistiques no. 254 1996, p 3]*
>
> (Women's and, in particular, married women's access to work, is still limited due to their important family responsibilities and their lack of qualifications which prevent them from engaging in activities outside their home ... [whereas] men have to fit into the job market, whatever their level of education.)

Because of society's views on women's role, working women were often discriminated against when it came to the allocation of council flats, since they were not considered to be 'heads of household', even when several people depended on their salary. Women were also more likely to be made redundant. The redundancy law of September 1982 specified an order of priority for redundancies: first, older workers and the least productive, then workers with fewer dependants and, finally, workers with priority status. Women fell into the second category because they were not deemed to have dependants. If they were single, their father was supposed to provide for them and, if they were married, their husband was there to perform this

duty *[Alternative Report of the FIDH in response to the Algerian Government's report to the CEDAW January 19th - February 5th 1999, p 10]*[162].

Social pressure still constituted a barrier for married women who wished to work. The distribution by age of the female working population shows the same characteristics for the 1980s as it did during the 1970s: the majority of working women were between the ages of 20 and 29, corresponding to the period following school and before marriage. A large number of women stopped working with the birth of their first child. The social pressure[163] and the lack of child care facilities often forced them to abandon their job. According to a survey conducted in the town of Sétif, 80% of working women wanted to keep their job after marriage and 40% of divorced women said that their ex-husband had not accepted the fact that they were working outside their home *[Bulletin Collectif Femmes de Sétif in Saadi 1991, p 101]*. Another survey, conducted by the government in 1985, made similar findings: more than a fifth of fully and partially employed women worked out of economic necessity (mostly divorcees, widows and abandoned women); of those who had worked before, but did not want to return to work, 45.3% said it was because of family objections and 47.2% said that they could not cope with working and looking after their house and children; of the students aged 16 and over, who did not wish to work after their studies, 90.6% said it was due to family objections *[ONS Statistiques no. 11 April / June 1986, pp 1-7]*.[164]

Since most uneducated women could not enter the 'official job market', all they could hope for was to find work they could do from home, such as embroidery and sewing or work as housemaids, usually with a wealthy family who did not declare this work. These women, ignorant of their rights, were often exploited by their employers. Algérie Actualité in an article entitled 'Today's housemaids' gives the example of a young illiterate woman who had been told by the family who employed her that her salary was going into a bank account. After three years, the girl discovered that no account had been opened. All she had received for three years of hard work was food and lodging. The article concluded:

> La femme de ménage n'est-elle pas tout simplement la caricature de la condition féminine chez nous?
>
> *[Algérie Actualité no. 1246 September 7th – 13th 1989, p 18]*
>
> (Isn't it the case that housemaids are the caricature of women's condition in our country?)

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162 Available on line at: http:/www.algeria-watch.de/fidh3.htm

163 We must remember that working after marriage was not an automatic right for women according to the 1984 Family Code.

164 The survey in Arabic was translated by AL-Sharafi A G, student at the Centre for Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies, Durham University.

Although working conditions for women were on the whole difficult, some interesting new developments were beginning to take place in the early 1990s. The number of women entrepreneurs was increasing quite substantially: from 1,000 in 1987, it rose to 13,400 in 1992 representing 3.7% of working women (not counting single women who are not classified as 'heads of household' and therefore, not included). These women entrepreneurs could be found in all sectors of the economy, but a large proportion of them created their companies in areas which required traditionally acquired skills such as clothes manufacturing and food preparation. They usually worked from home for a clientele of neighbours and relatives but also sometimes for wholesalers. Other women opened shops and Limited Companies in which they invested their own capital. This new trend can be explained by the fact that the Public Services, having had to cut down their workforce, no longer represented an outlet for women with a secondary education level *[Maghreb Machrek no. 162 Oct-Dec 1998, p 65]*. The way these women adapted to the new economic conditions underlines their determination to maintain their presence in the public sphere.

While some women were discovering new employment opportunities others found their jobs threatened as the Islamist movement gathered pace in the 1980s and 1990s. The study of the FIS' attitude towards women and work is done in section 16.6.3.1, but it is important to note that the effects of the FIS' views on working women started to influence men's attitude towards female workers all over the country. Women's associations reported several cases of women losing their jobs simply because men refused to work with them. This was the case, for instance, of a member of the Tourist Board in Constantine who lost her job when a new director was appointed. The reason given was that he refused to work directly with women. After the 1990 election, the local councils where the FIS had a majority started a campaign to remove women from their administrative posts with the councils. The general secretary of the council of Annaba lost her job this way in August 1990. In some councils offices, wearing of the hidjab became compulsory for women and a policy of sex segregation was implemented *[Saadi 1991, pp 97,98]*. The FIS also started a campaign against women in education blaming absenteeism amongst female staff for the poor educational standards. They proposed, as a solution, to increase the government allowance for women who stayed at home looking after their children.

Progress in the area of female employment during the Chadli Benjedid government was minimal. The country's economic difficulties, resulting in a high unemployment rate and a worsening of work opportunities for women, were compounded by the arrival on the political scene of the Islamist movement. Whilst in the past, many men would have preferred women in general and their wife, in particular, to stay at home, they did not feel comfortable stating these views openly. With the influence of the Islamists, it became perfectly acceptable to express such views publicly. The following is an extract from a reader's letter published in El Moudjahid in 1982. This letter is a typical example of the reactionary and anti-colonial views held by some men regarding working women. The letter takes the example of working women in the West,

claiming that these women were forced to work. The letter then goes on to show how detrimental this was both for the women themselves and the country as a whole:

> Cette femme 'active' gagne, certes, son bout de pain à la sueur de son front, dans l'angoisse, l'isolement, la solitude, l'humiliation et l'asservissement, mais elle a surtout perdu la notion de foyer, de famille et, partant, sa personnalité. Ce qui a entraîné de graves fléaux sociaux et de grands maux éthiques et moraux.
>
> *[El Moudjahid January 17th 1982, p 2]*
>
> (These so called 'active' women indeed earned a living, which, small as it was, required a lot of hard work, caused anguish, solitude, humiliation and subservience. However, in the mean time, women lost their sense of home, family and their whole personality. This, in turn, caused serious social ills, ethical and moral turmoil.)

Despite the socio-economic changes which have taken place since independence and the greater work opportunities for women, the influence of the Islamists will probably have a lasting effect on the population. They provided simple and comforting solutions. Blaming women's economic activity for the high unemployment rates is not reserved to the Islamists. It is an old reaction recurring in patriarchal societies at times of economic difficulties. In the case of the Islamists, however, this was not merely presented as the solution to an economic problem, but as an unquestionable religious edict. It was one of the ways to transform society into an Islamic state.

17.3 Family Planning

17.3.1 Government's programme

The government started taking a much more proactive role regarding birth control in the early 1980s. The 1980-1984 five year plan contains the following statement:

> The first aspect of the demographic policy during the plan concerns birth control in the medium and long term. The action for an active reduction of the birth rate has become a necessity for a better efficiency in the construction of our economy and for the satisfaction of the social needs of the population.
>
> *[Algerian Five year plan 1980-1984, p 56]*

This statement denotes a drastic departure from the government's stance in the 1960s and early 1970s. Until then, family planning was largely seen as one of the measures to improve the health of mothers and children (see section 15.2.2). A large population was considered to be an asset providing the support for the country's economic development. With a better standard of living, there would be, in turn, a reduction of the number of children per family. However, in the 1980's, the government's attitude to birth control changed and a national

programme of control of demographic growth was established on February 20th 1983[165]. Its main aims were to develop the infrastructure for the implementation of the programme of 'spacing out of births', set up a campaign of information and education and carry out research on population growth and its effects on social and economic development. Part of the information campaign consisted in spreading the message about the need for birth control via the sermons given in the government controlled mosques *[Maghreb Machrek no. 129 July / September 1990, pp 40-41].* The government's programme was reactivated on December 12th 1984, with the specific objectives of improving the existing infrastructures and intensifying the awareness campaigns. A document produced in 1985 by the Ministry of Social Affairs, entitled 'The control of demographic growth, why?' spelt out in no uncertain terms the need *to reduce the rate of population growth by reducing the birth rate [Ministère de la Protection Sociale February 1985, p 8].* After explaining the devastating effects of uncontrolled demographic growth, both for the economy and the welfare of the citizens, the document specified the ideal family size: three children per family (the average was 8.8 children per family in 1983). The document concluded that:

> ... à l'heure actuelle, il apparaît plus juste de dire que "la pilule contribue au développement", la maîtrise de la croissance démographique devient une conduite essentielle, si nous voulons voir se réaliser l'essor économique et social de l'Algérie.
>
> *[Ministère de la Protection Sociale February 1985, p 19]*
>
> (... at this moment in time, it seems more appropriate to say that "the pill contributes to economic development", the control of population growth becomes an essential strategy, if we want to see our economic and social plans realised.)

This is a total U-turn in government policy. In 1974, at the World Conference on Population in Bucharest, the government had made the following statement:

> ... le meilleur contraceptif à proposer aux populations du Tiers Monde est le développement.
>
> *[Les Cahiers du Monde Arabe nos. 99-100 1993, p 3]*
>
> (... development is the best contraceptive for Third World populations.)

Since the government now realised the importance of birth control, the second five year plan (1985-1989) showed a renewed determination to tackle the question of demography. In chapter one of the document, population growth was said to be *'a constraint for the government'* [which] *'risk[ed] impeding development' [Ministère de la Planification et de l'Aménagement du Territoire 1989, p 13].* Consequently, the second five year plan considered the control of demography to be an important question which would require:

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[165] The birth rate in 1983 was 40.4 per thousand and the population growth rate was 31.6 per thousand.

> ... de dégager les moyens humains, matériels et financiers nécessaires à la mise en oeuvre d'un programme national d'espacement des naissances fondé sur le libre choix des familles.
>
> ... le développement dans les campagnes, d'infrastructures sanitaires pourvues d'un encadrement adéquat, la disponibilité permanente de contraceptifs, la sensibilisation et l'information des parents sur les implications de l'espacement des naissances sur la qualité de la vie des familles et l'épanouissement des enfants...
>
> *[Ministère de la Planification et de l'Aménagement du Territoire 1989, p 13]*
>
> (... the release of human, material and financial means necessary for the implementation of a national programme of spacing out of births based on the free choice of families.
>
> ... the development in rural areas of health infrastructure adequately staffed, the consistent availability of contraceptives, an information campaign aimed at making parents aware of the implications of spacing out of births for their families' quality of life and their children's' development...)

As well as the usual methods of information, such as posters in public places and advertisements in the press, the government started a television campaign. The programme of training and retraining of medical staff was extended. Between 1980 and 1987, more than 5,000 staff and students in the medical sector received intensive training in Family Planning *[Maghreb Machrek no. 129 July / September 1990, p 43]*. A serious effort to develop the infrastructure was also made. The following table shows the development of medical centres offering Family Planning between 1981 and 1988:

Figure 39 Number of medical centres offering Family Planning: 1981 - 1988

Year	Medical centres offering Family Planning
1981(1)	260
1983(2)	400
1984(3)	745
1986(3)	1400
1988(3)	2000

[(1) Algérie Actualité no. 809 16th-22nd April 1981, p 11]
[(2) Ministère de la Protection Sociale February 1985, p 7]
[(3) Maghreb Machrek no. 129 July / September 1990, p 43]

The number of centres nearly trebled between 1984 and 1988 and although there were regional discrepancies, access to contraceptive methods significantly improved during the two five year plans (1980-1984, 1985-1989). In 1989, Algeria benefited from a US$ 8 million programme from the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA). The fund was used to promote maternal and child health care, help create a centre for the production of oral contraceptives and develop information and education on contraceptives *[Library of Congress Country File Family Planning December 1993, p 2]*[166]. All these initiatives contributed to a

166 Available on-line at: http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/dztoc.html#dz0071 section on "Family Planning"

substantial increase in the number of women using contraceptives as shown in the following table:

Figure 40 Percentage of married women of child bearing age using contraception: 1970-1992

Year	Prevalence of contraception (%)	In urban areas	In rural areas
1970	8	17.5	4
1984	25		
1986	35.5	38.6	29.6
1990	40.6		
1992	50.6	57.5	44.1

[Initial Report from the Algerian Government to the CEDAW Committee Sept 1st 1998][167]

These figures show a significant increase in the number of women using contraceptives, but despite these efforts, Algeria only caught up with Morocco's contraceptive prevalence rate in 1986/87 and with Tunisia in 1992. This should come as no surprise since Tunisia, under the influence of President Bourguiba, was the first Arab country to adopt a national family planning programme in 1964. The country received the United Nations prize for population control in 1987. The following table shows the development of the use of contraceptives in Tunisia and Morocco in the late 1970s and 1980s:

Figure 41 Percentage of women using a contraceptive method in Tunisia and Morocco

Morocco		Tunisia	
Year	% women using contraception	% women using contraception	Year
1979-1980	19	31	1978
1983-1984	26	41	1983
1987	36	50	1988

[Les Cahiers du Monde Arabe nos. 99 / 100 1993, p 12]

167 Available on-line at: http://www.hri.ca/fortherecord1999/documentation/tbodies/cedaw-c-dza-1.htm

17.3.2 Evolution of the Algerian population: 1979-1995

To evaluate the effectiveness of the 'spacing-out of births' programmes, we need to study the evolution of the population growth during the two five year plans 1980-1984, 1985-1989.

Figure 42 Algerian resident population - birth rate and growth rate: 1979-1995

Year	Total resident population	Birth rate per thousand	Population growth rate per thousand
1979(1)	18,119,000	44.0	31.3
1980(1)	18,666,000	43.8	32.1
1981(1)	19,260,000	41.0	31.6
1982(1)	19,878,000	40.6	31.5
1983(1)	20,516,000	40.4	31.6
1984(1)	21,175,000	40.1	31.6
1985(1)	21,850,000	39.5	31.1
1986(1)	22,499,000	34.7	27.4
1987(1)	23,074,000*	34.6	27.6
1988(1)	23,696,000*	33.9	27.3
1989(1)	24,349,000*	31.0	25.0
1990(2)	24,700,000	31.0	25.0
1991(2)	25,324,000	30.1	24.1
1992(2)	25,943,000	30.4	24.3
1995	27,794,000(3)	25.33(5)	18.9(5)

* Projected figures

[(1) Office National des Statistiques Numéro Spécial 35, pp 2,3]
[(2) Office National des Statistiques L'Algérie en Chiffres 1994 p 6]
[(3) Courbage 1998, p 20]
[(4) Les Cahiers du Monde Arabe nos. 99-100 1993, p 4]
[(5) Office National des Statistiques no. 28 1998, p 1]

The figures covering the first two five year plans show that the government's programmes to tackle population growth were quite successful. The birth rate, in particular, decreased substantially from 43.8 per thousand to 31 per thousand. The population growth did not see such a sharp fall due to the improvements in health care which lowered the mortality rate[168]. Nevertheless, the population growth rate still fell from 32.1 per thousand to 25 per thousand. The encouraging factor is that this downward trend seems to have continued after 1989 and reached levels below the average United Nations projections for the period 1990-1995. The UN estimated that the population growth rate for Algeria for the period 1990-1995 would reach 30 per thousand and the birth rate 37 per thousand *[La documentation Française Notes et*

168 In 1980, the mortality rate was 11.77 per thousand and in 1989, it had fallen to 6 per thousand *[Office National des Statistiques Numéro Spécial 35 1991, p 2]*.

Etudes Documentaires no. 4878 1989, p 21]. The Algerian government's figures for 1995 are respectively 18.9 and 25.33 per thousand. However, family planning programmes are never the sole factor influencing population growth. It is important, at this point, to consider the other factors which affected the evolution of the population, some working alongside the government's programme, others hindering its progress.

17.3.3 Socio-economic factors in population growth

One of the recognised and most significant socio-economic factors reducing the number of children per family is the increase of the average age at first marriage. The following table shows the evolution of this determinant between 1970 and 1992:

Figure 43 Average age of women at first marriage: 1970-1992

Year	Age
1970	19.3(1)
1977	20.9(2)
1979	20.9(1)
1983	21.8(1)
1984	22.1(2)
1985	22.2(2)
1987	23.7(1)
1992	25.8(2)*

* Urban areas: 26.9, rural areas: 24.6

[(1) Office National des Statistiques no. 34, (year n/a), p 6]
[(2) Annuaire Statistique de L'Algérie no. 16 1994, p 21]

Although, one can expect significant differences between rural and urban areas, the figures show an overall trend towards a much higher marrying age. The figures for men show the same tendency: from an average marrying age of 23.8 in 1966, to 27.6 in 1987 *[Les Cahiers du Monde Arabe nos. 99-100 1993, p 8].* Furthermore, the serious housing shortage in Algerian towns resulted in couples delaying their marriage. Rather than having to share the husband's parents' house, prospective couples delayed their marriage. Another factor which affected the age of marriage for women was the lengthening of their education period and the increase of work opportunities for women. These factors denote an important change in attitudes is studied in detail in sections 18.1.1 and 18.1.3

Another important element affecting population growth is the level of education and standard of living of the couples. The higher the education levels and the standards of living, the lower the number of children per family. The following table shows the reduction in the number of children per family between 1979 and 1995:

Figure 44 Number of children per family: 1979-1995

Year	Average number of children per family
1979	7.05(1)
1984	5.50(1)
1987	4.80(1)
1995	3.57(2)

[(1) Les Cahiers du Monde Arabe nos. 99-100 1993, p 4]
[(2) Courbage 1998, p 20]

As always, the changes were much more significant in towns than in rural areas: for the period 1981-1985, whereas the average figure for urban areas was 4.4, it was still 7.1 in rural areas. Similar discrepancies occurred between educated and non educated women: for the same period, illiterate mothers had on average 7.3 children, those with a primary education level 4.9 and those with a secondary or higher level of education 3.4 children *[Les Cahiers du Monde Arabe nos. 99-100 1993, p 5]*. Women's economic activity also influenced the number of children per family. According to a survey conducted in 1990 the fecundity levels amongst women teachers in the Oran region, were 2.1, a figure which was even lower than the average figure for urban areas *[ibid, p 6]*.

17.3.4 Impediments to the government's programme

In its first report to the CEDAW Committee, the Algerian Government declared:

> One of the most important reasons for not using contraception is opposition on the part of the husband.

[Initial Report from the Algerian Government to the CEDAW Committee Sept 1st 1998][169]

The following table shows how the reasons for not using contraception changed over the years:

Figure 45 Reasons for not using contraception: 1970-1995

	1970	1986	1992	1995
Desire for children	-	1	1	1
Health problems	-	-	-	2
Fear of secondary effects	2	-	3	3
Husband opposition	-	4	2	5
Religious prohibition	1	6	4	6
Lack of information	-	5	5	-
Sterility	-	3	-	4

[Initial Report from the Algerian Government to the CEDAW Committee Sept 1st 1998][170]

169 Available on-line at: http://www.hri.ca/fortherecord1999/documentation/tbodies/cedaw-c-dza-1.htm

The government's survey seems to show that apart from the husband's opposition, the other two main reasons were the lack of information and religious prohibition. The other factor affecting women's attitude to contraception, which does not appear in the table, was the lack of adequate infrastructure, particularly when it came to following the patients' health over a period of time. Unfortunately, a large proportion of women abandoned their contraception programme after a few years. According to Djilali Sari, researcher at the University of Algiers, 30% of women stopped using contraceptive methods after one year, 50% after two and 37% after four *[Maghreb Machrek no. 129 July / September 1990, pp 43,44]*. The reasons for this were clearly identified by a midwife, member of the Family Planning Association (Association Algérienne pour la Planification Familiale, AAPF). She declared at an inter-Arab conference organised by the association:

> ... comment voulez-vous suivre des femmes lorsque les pilules changent à longueur d'année et que pour un rendez-vous de bilan, ces femmes sont obligées de patienter deux à trois mois.
>
> *[Révolution Africaine no. 1352 January 27th-February 2nd 1990, p 48]*
>
> (... how can we give women the necessary follow up when the contraceptive pills change constantly and women have to wait two to three months for a reassessment appointment.)

The influence of religion, or the perception women had of the position of Islam regarding contraception also had a definite impact. Despite the numerous fatwas produced by the High Islamic Council in (1962, 1968, 1988), recognising the fact that the use of contraceptive methods was allowed by the Qur'an, as long as it was not forced on individuals, a large proportion of women were still confused (see section 15.2.2.2). According to Annick Tayeb, from the Algiers' National Centre for Research on Planning, in 1986, 54% of women thought that contraception was not allowed by the Qur'an. What is interesting, however, is the fact that amongst these women, 48% nevertheless used some form of contraception and 51% said that they had used contraceptives in the past *[Nations Solidaires October-December 1994, p 25]*. This seems to indicate that a significant number of women had decided to take control of their fecundity regardless of cultural or religious barriers. This is a notable change in women's perception of their position and role in society and will be studied in detail in sections 18.1 and 18.2.

Although progress had been made and attitudes among some women were changing, the rise of the Islamist movement constituted a serious threat to the development of the birth control programme. In 1990, pro-natalist sermons had already started in mosques controlled by Islamist groups. The Islamists, not only considered women's role to be that of mothers, but they also wanted women to stay at home, to avoid contacts with other men. A large family was

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170 Available on-line at: http://www.hri.ca/fortherecord1999/documentation/tbodies/cedaw-c-dza-1.htm

the best way to keep women indoors. The influence of the Islamists could cause a reversal of attitudes towards contraception among some sections of the population, especially since there was still some confusion about the position of Islam regarding contraception.

The question of family planning is closely linked to the status of women in society, in the sense that it will not become totally effective until a new definition of the role of women has been established in law as well as in practice. As long as women continue to be valued and to value themselves according to the number of children they have, they will not fully support the government initiatives in terms of contraception. However, educational developments are changing women's self image and aspirations. This is a slow but irreversible process.

18 Women's new attitudes

The 1970's and 1980's have been a turbulent period for Algeria, both politically and economically. This had inevitable sociological repercussions. We will study three main aspects of these sociological developments: changes which occurred within the family, new attitudes of and towards working women and the increasingly violent environment women have had to live in.

18.1 Evolution within the family

18.1.1 New attitudes towards marriage

The magazine Parcours Maghrébins published a government survey conducted in June 1988 on 'Family life'. One thousand married people (500 men and 500 women) of all educational levels, representing a cross-section of the population living in Algiers, aged between 25 and 44 were selected for the survey. The first set of questions was related to marriage. From the answers given, it seems that traditions in this domain were changing: 71% of marriages had been organised with the consent of the young people, 47% knew their future partner before marriage but 53% of marriages were arranged by the family. However, it seems that endogamous marriages were no longer the norm: only 22% of marriages were between people from the same family. Regarding living conditions, it is no surprise to find that only half of the couples lived alone. The housing shortage in Algeria was so acute that young people often postponed their wedding until they had found their own accommodation. In a third of couples, both husband and wife worked. For the remainder the main reasons given for the wife not working were lack of qualifications (43%) and children's education (40%). Only 6.6% said that it was because the husband did not allow it *[Parcours Maghrébins no. 20 September 1988, pp 30-33]*. Of course, this survey only concerned an urban population, but it still denotes certain changes, particularly regarding the choice of future partner.

18.1.2 Redistribution of roles within the patriarchal family

Other developments were also taking place within the family structure. According to the sociologist Lahouari Addi, although the patriarchal family structure was still prevalent, the traditional role of 'patriarch' was often assumed by the son rather than the father of the family. This was a consequence of the high unemployment rates which meant that very often, the son was the sole 'bread winner'. Because of his income and his network of acquaintances outside of the family circle, he became the 'head of household'. His position of authority not only allowed him to take the main decisions regarding the family budget, but he also took the responsibility of the patriarch in terms of protecting and guarding the women of the household

and defending the honour of the family. This, according to Addi, resulted in a strengthening of the mother's authority. Since the mother-son relationship was always very strong, as we saw in section 2.1, the mother gained in power by being close to the 'real' head of household. Her influence extended to having her say in the management of the family budget, which heightened the rivalry between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law. As Addi concluded:

Le système social fabrique des belles-mères triomphantes avec des jeunes filles timides et des brus opprimées.

[Addi 1999, p 73]

(The social system produces dominant mother-in-laws, timid young girls and oppressed daughter-in-laws.)

The fact that many couples preferred to live in their own apartment did not make the mother-in-law daughter-in-law relationship any easier. Mothers felt even more frustrated and sons more indebted to their mother. As Lacoste-Dujardin noted:

La relation mère-fils en sort renforcée voire même un peu plus exacerbée.

[Lacoste-Dujardin 1985, p 242]

(The mother-son relationship is consequently reinforced or even further exacerbated.)

18.1.3 Women's new self-image

Despite this seemingly immutable cyclic pattern, the fact that education was becoming much more accessible to girls was a positive factor which was beginning to effect changes. In this domain, mothers played a contradictory role. While supporting the patriarchal ethos as far as their sons were concerned, by choosing a docile and well-trained housekeeper as future daughter-in-law, mothers went against the patriarchal order when it came to their daughters' future. A good education was seen as essential for a girl in case she was later abandoned by her husband and had to work to support her family. Mothers also often insisted on a separate flat for their newly married daughter. This way, the girl's mother-in-law would have less influence. The conclusion one can draw is that mothers were themselves breaking the patriarchal tradition. They wanted their daughters to be self-reliant and no longer dependent on men which was a serious departure from traditions. The first signs of the effects of this new attitude towards girls were already noticeable in 1992. According to Fatima-Zohra Oufreha, social-economist at Algiers University, a 'silent revolution' was taking place in Algeria in the late 1980s and early 1990s. A government survey conducted in August 1992 showed that not only young women (regardless of their social background or educational level) had started taking control of their fecundity but they had also changed their attitudes towards their children. The

'desire for baby girls' had been expressed by 92% of women interviewed *[Maghreb Machrek no. 162 Oct-Dec 1998, p 58].* This, concluded Oufreha,

> ... reflète les nouveaux rôles et les nouveaux statuts que [les femmes] assument et qu'elles ont acquis récemment. La perception de soi devient positive.
>
> *[Maghreb Machrek no. 162 Oct-Dec 1998, p 59]*
>
> (... reflects the new roles and status women hold and have recently acquired. Their self-image is becoming positive.)

Being able to plan the number of children a woman wants indicates the recognition of her right and ability to control her life. For Algerian women, it meant a different perception of their role in society. They did not see themselves as powerless individuals whose sole function was to procreate but as part of a society in which they had a role to play and which they could influence.

Another factor linked to the development of education for girls is the increase of the marrying age. In 1992, this figure was 25.9 compared to 18.4 in 1966 and 23.8 in 1987 *[Maghreb Machrek no. 162 Oct-Dec 1998, p 59 & Les Cahiers du Monde Arabe no. 99-100 1993, p 8].* Furthermore, a survey conducted among working women with a Higher Education background showed that 47% of the sample group had never been married and, amongst them, 74% were above the average marrying age *[Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord 1991, p 252].* This shows a change of attitudes. Investing in education and work rather than marriage indicates a desire to establish financial autonomy and a degree of independence in a society which, traditionally, considered celibacy for women as a stigma.

18.2 Position of working women within society

18.2.1 Significance of work for low paid workers

This brings us to the question of working women and how the increased work opportunities, albeit limited, changed their lives and men's attitudes towards them. At the level of factory workers, it did not give women a sense of liberation. Most of them worked out of necessity, to prepare their trousseau, help their family financially or if they were divorced, simply earn a living. The decision to work was not the woman's choice, but was imposed by circumstances. As Addi pointed out, these women were exploited in three ways: in their workplace, at home where they were still expected to do all the housework and by the fact that part or all of their salary was taken by the family. It is no surprise, therefore, that a survey conducted in an electronics state run company in Sidi Bel Abbes showed that the majority of unmarried girls did not wish to continue working after their marriage: 55% said they would not continue working

and 33% said that they would leave the decision up to their husband *[Addi 1999, p 143].* Another survey conducted by Hallouma Chérif, emphasised the fact that the attitude of female factory workers was rather ambivalent. On one hand, working outside provided a relief from the oppressive home environment, on the other, work was not considered to be a liberating factor *[ibid].*

18.2.2 Effect of female employment on men's authority

For salaried married women, the situation was slightly different. Although they were still subjected to the 'double day', the fact that they were contributing to the family's income gave them greater authority within the family, as shown in the following table:

Figure 46 Correlation between salaried employment and women's participation in family decisions

		Children's education	Large expenses
Salaried Women	Equal participation or more than husband	80.6%	73.3%
	Less participation than husband	17.2%	15.5%
	No participation	2.6%	11.2%
Unsalaried Women	Equal participation or more than husband	61.4%	44.4%
	Less participation than husband	22.7%	22.2%
	No participation	15.9%	33.3%

[Rebzani 1997, p103]

Although a large proportion of both salaried and, to a lesser extent, unsalaried women were equally or more involved than their husband in decisions regarding children's education, unsalaried women had much less influence when it came to decisions on large expenses. This would indicate that the woman's salary was used for the family expenses and not for herself. This was a new phenomenon which went against the traditions by depriving the husband from his status of head of household, responsible for the welfare of the entire family. With the increasingly difficult economic situation, men had no option but to accept their wife's salary and thus, relinquish some of their authority. It is interesting to note, though, that in certain domains the male's authority remained unchallenged, despite the fact that the wife was working. Rebzani's study showed that when it came to women's visits to relatives or friends, 53,9% of salaried women had to seek their husband's permission and only 9.6% did not (the figures for unsalaried women were respectively 62.2% and 6.7%) *[Rebzani 1997, p 103].* In this domain, the husband continued playing his role as guardian of the honour of the family. Salaried single women living at home, regardless of their age, complained that despite their financial independence, their father or brother was still checking on their movements. In fact, the

question of honour was still underwriting the social interaction between men and women and was exacerbated by the increasing presence of working women in the public sphere. Dahbia Abrous' PhD analysed the concept of honour in relation to salaried Algerian women.[171] Her conclusion was:

La référence obsessionnelle à l'honneur est générale.

[Peuples Méditerranéens no. 44-45 July-December 1988, p 64]

(The obsessional reference to honour is all pervasive.)

In Abrous' study, all the groups interviewed, men and women of varying ages and socio-economic backgrounds, expressed a feeling of anxiety due to the loss of the traditional points of reference, differentiation of the sex roles and kinship solidarities. The following statement, which sums up the dislocation of the old social structure, was expressed repeatedly:

Une vraie *femme* doit être un homme et une femme en même temps.

[Peuples Méditerranéens no. 44-45 July-December 1988, p 53]

(A true *woman* must be a man and a woman at the same time.)

Different groups gave divergent interpretations to this statement. For the young female students, it meant breaking all barriers, doing all the things that men do. For older women, it implied that, since women were entering the public sphere, where their honour could not be guarded by men, they had to take on this role and defend their honour like men would do. Education was valued as an 'honourable activity', giving a woman the status of 'sister', in other words, untouchable by men. Work was perceived differently according to the social group women belonged to. Women who had had to work out of economic necessity blamed the dislocation of kinship solidarities for this situation and hoped their daughters would not have to work. For middle class families, work for a woman was acceptable as long as it was an 'honourable profession' (teacher, doctor, nurse). Even young students (of both sexes) declared that a good profession for a woman was one which was compatible with her role as mother. A 20 year old female student declared:

Le métier que j'aime c'est l'enseignement car c'est un travail propre... et aussi je préfère l'enseignement car c'est un métier respecté, surtout dans notre société.

[Peuples Méditerranéens no. 44-45 July-December 1988, p 58]

(I like teaching because it is 'a clean' [an honourable] profession...and also I prefer teaching because it is a well respected profession, especially in our society.)

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171 *[L'honneur face au travail des femmes en Algérie, PhD Université de Provence, December 1985]*

It seemed that, despite or because of the profound changes (such as industrialisation, urbanisation and wider educational opportunities) which affected the social structure of the Algerian society, the question of honour remained a permanent feature which constituted the basis of all interactions between the sexes.

18.3 Violence against women

18.3.1 Violence and the concept of honour

Violence against women is not a new phenomenon and is not reserved to Muslim countries. However, as we saw in section 2.1 because of men's traditional role as protectors of the honour of the family, which resides in women's chastity and honourable behaviour, they considered that they could take any measures they saw fit to punish a female member of the family who had not, in their opinion, complied with the code of honour. Domestic violence, according to the Algerian sociologist Dalila Djerbal-Lamarène, was widespread and touched all ages and all social classes. Most incidents went unreported because they were considered 'normal'. Djerbal-lamarène also noted that brothers, due to their newly acquired authority within the family, took on the role of defenders of the social order *[FIDH alternative report to the CEDAW committee Jan 19th - Feb 5th 1999, p 11].*[172] Furthermore, with the increased presence of women in the public sphere (due to greater educational and work opportunities), men, who perceived this presence as threatening, extended their traditional 'right' to control the women of their family to all women.

> Avec la désintégration des cadres communautaires, les valeurs de respect de l'intégrité de la fille ou de la mère de l'Autre que les hommes se doivent entre eux et non envers les femmes, perdent toute pertinence.
>
> *[FIDH alternative report to the CEDAW committee Jan 19th-Feb 5th 1999, p 13]*
>
> (With the disintegration of community structures, the values of respect of the dignity of the daughter or mother of the Other which men owe to each other, but not to women, lose all their pertinence.)

This resulted in a mushrooming of aggressive behaviour towards women, from sexual harassment in the street and at work to physical attacks and rape. With the rise of the Islamist movement, vigilante groups started watching the movements of female students outside halls of residence. An article published by Algérie Actualité in 1990, reported various forms of intimidation and aggression in five universities, an attack on a tea room run by a woman, pressure on the manager of a leisure centre and a concert hall. The article also mentioned that young boys, following the example of their older brothers or father, often started throwing

172 Available on-line at *http://www.algeria-watch.de/fidh3.htm*

stones at passing women without any passer-by intervening *[Algérie Actualité no. 1278 April 12th -18th 1990, p 13].*

18.3.2 Victims of rape

On the question of rapes, the official figures do not give a true picture of the reality. The reluctance of rape victims to report the crime, for fear of being accused of 'provoking' the man (an attitude which prevails in the West as well) was compounded by the pressure from the victim's parents to keep the rape secret. Here again, the honour of the family was more important than the girl's feelings, a fact confirmed by many rape victims interviewed by the magazine Parcours Maghrébins. This is what a 28 year old rape victim had to say:

> Qu'importe ce que j'éprouvais moi. L'important pour [ma famille] est que 'l'affaire' ne s'ébruite pas, les voisins ne doivent surtout rien suspecter.
>
> *[Parcours Maghrébins no. 35 December 1989, p 54]*
>
> (My feelings did not count. The important thing, for [my family], was that 'the story' did not get out, neighbours should not suspect anything.)

The article concluded:

> ... quelles que soient les circonstances pour la famille de la victime, le viol est vécu surtout comme une 'souillure', une atteinte à son 'honneur'.
>
> *[ibid, p 55]*
>
> (... whatever the circumstances, for the victim's family, rape is principally perceived as a stain on the family's honour.)

As a result of this attitude, victims of rape received no support, even more so if the girl found herself pregnant. There were very few centres for single mothers and abandoned women (the association 'SOS femmes en détresse'[173] created one such centre in 1992, which brought the total number of centres for the whole of Algiers to five). Consequently, many children born as a result of a rape were abandoned. In the late 1980s, there were 4,000 children abandoned each year *[FIDH alternative report to the CEDAW Committee Jan 19th-Feb 5th 1999, p 13].* The early 1990s saw the development of gang rapes perpetrated by groups of youths claiming to be members of Islamist groups. According to a dossier published by Le Nouvel Observateur in collaboration with the Algerian newspaper El Watan, these acts of violence against women were legitimised by a fatwa pronounced by Ali Belhadj[174] in 1991, which declared that those fighting the holy war could confiscate anything belonging to the infidels as their spoils of war. This was interpreted to mean women. There were numerous reports of young girls taken away

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173 (SOS, women in distress)

174 One of the leaders of the FIS, the main Islamist Party in Algeria.

from their family, gang raped and then murdered or released, especially when they fell pregnant *[Le Nouvel Observateur no. 1576 January 19th -25th 1995, p 31].*

18.3.3 Political use of violence

The spiral of violence which spread throughout Algeria in the 1990s affected the whole population regardless of age, sex or social class. Islamist women or women related to prominent FIS members were not spared by the government in its clampdown on Islamists. In fact, according to the 1999 FIDH report, women were 'used' to pressurise their Islamist relatives to make a confession to the police. Sometimes, they were arrested themselves and forced to watch their relatives being tortured *[FIDH alternative report to the CEDAW Committee Jan 19th - Feb 5th 1999, p 16].* Acts of violence against women were also often used by the government as a political instrument, in an attempt at discrediting the FIS in Algeria and on the international scene, thus justifying the repression against members of the organisation. The best documented example is the case of Ouargla. In this small town, in the south of the country, a four year old boy died in the arson of his mother's house during the night of June 22nd 1989. The crime was reported in the press as the act of Islamist terrorists who wanted to punish the woman for being a prostitute. It became the symbol of the barbarity of the FIS, quoted in numerous articles and even books. The outcome of the trial of the perpetrators of the crime, however, was not widely publicised. The Algerian freelance reporter, Rabha Attaf, went to Ouargla to find out the truth. She met Saléha, the woman who lost her youngest boy in the house fire and heard her side of the story. Saléha had divorced her husband after he abandoned her with their seven children to marry another woman. The judge had granted Saléha the family house and a small maintenance to be paid by the husband. This was seen by the husband as an affront to his honour and that of his family, which happened to be one of the most influential families in the town. From then on, Saléha and her children suffered all kinds of harassment from the local population. Attaf discovered that during the trial, it had become clear that the 12 men who had been arrested for the arson attack were not members of the FIS, but local men all belonging to the same family as Saléha's husband. When they set fire to the house, thinking Saléha was inside, they were acting to restore the family's honour and yet, according to Saléha, two of the men had used her services as a prostitute *[http://www.userpage.fu-berlin.de/~yusuf/algeria-watch/attaf.htm April 1995, pp 1-7].* This was not an isolated case.

18.3.4 Lack of government support

Violence against women was widespread and, when it was reported in the press, it was for the purpose of scoring political points against the FIS. However, very little was done by the government to help the thousands of women victim of violence. We will look at two types of situations where women should have been given help and support but where, in fact, they were

left to fend for themselves. The first one is the case of pregnancies resulting from rape. According to a law dating back to 1985, a woman victim of a sexual aggression such as rape or incest was entitled to have an abortion if:

... l'équilibre physiologique ou mental de la mère est en danger.

[La Documentation française Revue de Presse May 1st 1998 (source Marchés Tropicaux)]

(...the physical or mental state of the mother was in danger.)

Pregnancies due to rapes should have automatically entitled women to an abortion. However, doctors refused to perform these operations on religious grounds. In April 1998, the High Islamic Council made a statement in which it declared that a woman who had been raped remained:

... une femme honorable et chaste, qui n'est ni à blâmer ni à chatier.

[ibid]

(...an honourable and chaste woman, who should neither be blamed nor punished.)

However, the High Islamic Council seemed to blur the issue by limiting abortions to *cases of absolute necessity [ibid].* Furthermore, the Ministry of Health specified that women wishing to have an abortion would require a formal identification as victims of armed groups. This document would only be provided after preparation of a dossier including statements from the police and other witnesses, report from a psychiatrist and, for minor girls, an authorisation from the girl's father or legal guardian *[FIDH alternative report to the CEDAW committee Jan 19th-Feb 5th 1999, p 21].* Despite these very strict regulations, the director of a hospital declared in an interview:

Je vais diffuser l'instruction du ministre en tant que premier responsable de l'hôpital, mais je ne peux en aucun cas obliger un gynécologue à pratiquer l'avortement thérapeutique, car cela peut heurter ses convictions philosophiques et religieuses.

[La Documentation française Revue de Presse May 14th 1998 (source Courrier International)]

(I am going to circulate the ministerial directive in my capacity as head of this hospital but, in no way, can I force a gynaecologist to perform a therapeutic abortion, as this could go against his philosophical or religious convictions.)

As we can see, the protection of victims of rapes was virtually non existent. Another serious problem resulting from the years of unrest was the fate of women whose husbands disappeared. Because there were no official records of their husband's death, the wife could not claim any inheritance, could not divorce in order to remarry and did not have the legal guardianship of her minor children, causing enormous difficulties to obtain official documents

requiring the father's authorisation (such as registration in a school or travelling abroad). According to the FIDH's report, in order to regularise their situation, these women had first to obtain a legal document acknowledging the husband's absence. This was a lengthy and expensive procedure. The woman then had to wait four years before a judge could declare the husband to be dead. These women who had suffered terribly from the loss of their husband were being punished a second time due to their position as 'minors' enshrined in the Family Code. The very suspicious circumstances during which many men 'disappeared' and the continuing political unrest made the official recognition of their death impossible. Women's organisations and Human Rights campaigners have tried to attract international attention on the terrible fate of these women, wives and widows at the same time, who had to endure the worst of both situations.

19 Conclusions (1979 - 1992)

The Chadli Benjedid era was for Algeria a very traumatic period. The country experienced one of its worst economic, social and political crises since independence. It resulted in the abandonment of socialism and single party politics and the adoption of measures reducing economic state control and encouraging private entreprise. It also saw the rise of Islamic revivalism. Nearly ten years after the end of the Chadli Benjedid's government, the country has not yet emerged from the crisis.

For Algerian women, the most significant event was the adoption of the Family Code in 1984. After 22 years of acrimonious debates, the government gave in to the traditionalists' demands by enacting a set of family laws which enshrined women's inferior status in society. This was a desperate attempt by the government at gaining the support of the conservatives to counterbalance the disaffection of the modernist left angered by the economic liberalisation measures. Women's status was sacrificed, once again, for political expediency.

Although the 1984 Family Code remains a symbol of the denial of women's basic human rights, it will also be remembered as the event which spawned the first popular challenge to the government. The women's demonstrations against the first draft of the Family Code throughout 1981 constituted an unprecedented show of public protest. The women who took to the streets were not simply demanding the recognition of their rights, but were defending the democratic rights of all citizens. They dealt the first blow to the monolithic FLN political structure. This will remain a landmark in Algerian women's history.

The collapse of the FLN and the introduction of multi-party politics enabled some women's associations to enter the political scene and bring certain issues concerning women to the forefront. These associations' main success was the abrogation of the law allowing men to vote on behalf of female members of their family. However, the lack of consensus on the question of family laws resulted in a failure by the women's associations to obtain a review of the Family Code. The main weakness of the largely urban elite women's movement was its isolation from the poor urban women and those living in rural areas. The associations' focus on women's rights separated them from the majority of women whose main preoccupation was basic survival. The lack of strategy and unity in the women's movement, as well as their separation from the masses explain their meagre achievements. The increasing violence directed at women by some Islamic groups also hindered their action.

During Chadli Benjedid government, educational developments remained a priority and the percentage of girls receiving education increased at all levels. These educated girls, however, could not always find work. The traditional image of women as mothers was still prevailing and

the high rate of unemployment made the situation worse for women trying to enter the job market. Nevertheless, the modernisation process was taking place and women's greater access to education for a number of years was beginning to have a notable effect in certain domains. This was particularly evident in women's attitude to marriage and contraception. A larger proportion of women tended to marry at a later age, considering that education offered better financial security for the future rather than relying on a husband to provide for them. Women's attitude to contraception also changed due to their higher levels of education. Even women with a primary level of education had fewer children than illiterate mothers. They also wanted their daughters to be educated. Women's self-image was beginning to improve among the educated population and baby girls were no longer seen as a curse. These emerging attitudes indicate a definite departure from women's traditional role in society. They no longer saw themselves as dependent on men but were beginning to develop a self-reliant attitude. Women supporters of the Islamist groups were also much more aware of their rights within an Islamic context. Their education and knowledge of the scriptures gave them greater confidence to voice an opinion on issues such as family laws and women's participation in civil society. Unfortunately, women's rights were overshadowed by the political unrest and the cycle of violence which engulfed the country in the late 1980s.

The Chadli Benjedid era marked a turning point in the history of Algeria. The government was confronted with issues which had been evaded by successive governments since independence: the mandate of the FLN, the economic situation, family laws and the role of Islam. The continuing search for a distinctive identity, free from any colonial influence, whilst grappling with economic and political problems threw the country into turmoil from which it has yet to emerge. The role of women remains a central issue in the slow and difficult passage from a traditional Muslim society to a modern state. The colonial legacy continues to hinder progress in this domain as changes to women's role and status are still considered to be driven by the West and contrary to Algeria's cultural identity.

Conclusion

The history of Algeria, from colonial times to 1992 has followed a difficult and tortuous path. The country's independence had to be fought for in a long and bitter war which left indelible scars on the country and its population. Nevertheless, the establishment of an independent democratic republic in 1962 gave the country renewed hopes of a prosperous and stable future. Women, who had wholeheartedly participated in the struggle for liberation expected that a new era would start for them as well. They thought that the roles they had assumed during the war would automatically entitle them to a different status in society. Indeed, the first Algerian Constitution adopted on August 28th 1963 gave Algerian women equal political and economic rights. Women could vote and be elected. However, although women were granted constitutional rights, their private life continued to be structured according to the patriarchal order embedded in Islamic Law, since the Constitution declared Islam to be 'state religion'. This conflict between the role of women in the private and the public spheres has been one of the main impediments to women's progress and is typical of post-colonial Islamic countries going through the modernising process. Whilst modernisation occurs in the public sphere, family life remains 'traditional', governed by Islamic laws and values and re-inforced by the anti-colonial feelings prevailing in post-colonial countries. Attaining independence goes hand in hand with regaining the country's cultural identity. In Islamic countries, this is symbolised by family laws and, therefore, the specific role of women. Any attempt at altering women's role is seen as an attack on the country's cultural heritage, and a relapse into Western or colonial ways. In the case of Algeria, the ambivalent attitude of the successive governments since independence, torn between the desire to modernise the country and, at the same time, longing for an idealised pre-colonial past, was, to some extent, the result of France's particular style of colonialism. The country was not to be a mere trading outpost, but was to become part of the French territory, and its population assimilated into French culture. As a result, a policy of de-culturalisation was adopted. The French educational programmes were the main vehicle of this 'assimilation' policy. Algerian women were also targeted by the French authorities for their important role within the family. They were seen as the guardians of traditions, the soul of the nation. Unveiling Algerian women became, for the French, a major tool in their assimilation policy. It symbolised, in their eyes, the acceptance of French culture. However, the relentless attacks on all aspects of Algerian culture had the opposite effect. It fossilised Algerians' attitudes, particularly in the private sphere, which became the last bastion of Algerian identity. As the Algerian sociologist, Mahfoud Bennoune, concluded:

> This defensive reaction to the total colonization of the country may explain the religious, social and cultural conservatism of Algerian society.
>
> *[Bennoune 1988 in K Bennoune 1995, p 55]*

Although most Algerian women were fierce defenders of their cultural identity and proved their loyalty to their country during the war, they did not realise that the modernisation process after independence was only intended to affect the public sphere, leaving the private, family laws, virtually intact. All attempts at altering the social structure of the family were deemed to be inspired by the West, and rejected as post-colonial heresies. A similar fate was to await Iranian women after the overthrow of the Shah's government. Although their struggle was not against a colonial power, they joined the revolution to restore Iranian cultural identity which had been undermined by years of American influence on the economic and cultural life of the country. However, their understanding of what constituted Iranian identity and that of the new government were totally different. The same can be said of Algerian women. Men defined what represented cultural authenticity and women's traditional role embodied this definition. It is clear that this double political discourse started well before independence. The MTLD, the main nationalist Party, in an appeal to the Algerian population, reminded women of their important role as mothers, *forging new generations* (referred to in section 9.1.1). In a statement on November 1st 1954, the FLN declared its aims to be *the restoration of the Algerian state, sovereign and democratic within the framework of the Islamic principles* (as we saw in section 9.1.2). Maintaining the *moral principles of the nation* and its *arabo-Islamic traditions* became the leitmotif of all government declarations after the war. Although the question of women's status in society was at the heart of the debates between traditionalists and modernists, successive governments refrained from taking a clear stance on the issue. Since women did not have a powerful organisation, they had little or no political influence. Ben Bella, Boumédienne and Chadli Benjedid's governments continued the double political discourse, promising full recognition of women's rights but taking no action to formally acknowledge them, thus maintaining the status quo and saving their fragile political power. It was not until 1984 that a new Family Code was finally introduced. Its ultra-conservative interpretation of women's rights and duties within the family was the government's attempt at placating the now powerful Islamic revivalist movement. Just as, during the war, women's rights came second to the fight against colonialism, their recognition as full citizens was sacrificed for political purposes. In order to divert attention from the growing chaos resulting from the country's dire economic situation and political instability, the government tried to unite the country on the old model of *legitimity of indigenousness (sic)*, as opposed to *constructed foreignness of women's emancipation [Bennoune 1995, p 55]*. The extended historical narrative methodology adopted for this thesis has highlighted the effect the long and damaging French colonisation had on the country, making the quest for a lost cultural identity the undisputed rallying call for the nation after independence. This methodological approach has also emphasised the fact that the question of women's position in society has been used by successive governments for their own political purposes from colonisation to 1992. For the French, emancipating women was a way of undermining the whole social structure of the country in order to attain total assimilation with France. During the war of independence, the ALN asked women to carry weapons and messages because they knew the French authorities

would not suspect Algerian women to perform such bold acts. After independence, the lack of a popular mandate, the in-fighting amongst the different factions within successive Algerian governments weakened their authority and precluded any visionary programme of reforms regarding women's status. The Islamists, later, also used the issue of women's emancipation as a tool to further their political aims. In their attempt at gaining power by uniting the country around its cultural and religious identity, they equated any attempt at recognising women's rights with a return to Western ways. The violence, allegedly perpetrated by Islamist groups against women after the cancellation of the elections in 1992, has been used by the government as a way of discrediting the Islamists in the eyes of the world, therefore, justifying its own acts of violence, committed in total disregard of basic human rights. Once again, women were used as tools to further political motives.

The broad historial narrative methodology adopted here has enabled us to create a fuller picture, linking past and present, allowing for a better understanding of the current situation. Other methodological approaches such as the post-colonial theoretical framework or the gender studies approach were rejected as the former subordinates women to historical events, while the latter de-contextualises women from history. Neither of these approaches would have provided the comprehensive picture derived from the study of historical events and government policies which impacted on women's status over a long period of time.

This thesis also took into account the fact that Algeria is a Muslim country undergoing the modernising process. Daniel Lerner's theory of modernisation seems to apply to Algeria's situation. The modernising process was introduced during the colonial period and created needs and aspirations among the population to which the post-independence governments were unable to respond. The anti-colonial feelings heightened by the French assimilation policy and the long and devastating war of independence crystallised the country's interpretation of its cultural identity, which became synonymous with the total attachment to Islam and its values and the absolute rejection of any Western influence. The role of women within society became a major point of conflict since any attempt at altering their position was seen as an attack on Islam and the country's cultural identity. Whilst the modernising process improved women's educational opportunities and, to a lesser extent, their access to salaried employment, their status within society was not allowed to evolve. The successive governments after independence endeavoured to contain women's liberation to the public arena to avoid losing the support of the traditionalists and destabilising the fragile domestic political scene. The modernising process, in fact, brought the issue of cultural identity to the fore. The tensions between women's new aspirations and the traditionalists' interpretation of the country's cultural identity became more explicit and eventually resulted in the adoption of the 1984 Family Code.

In order to evaluate women's progress, three main areas were considered: education, employment and political participation. Throughout the study it became clear that, despite the numerous barriers to women's progress, one aspect of the successive governments' policies which definitely worked to their advantage was education. Since independence, the development of universal education was a constant target and important financial resources were devoted to educational developments. Girls undoubtedly benefited from this policy. At the level of fundamental education (the first nine years of education) the ratio of male to female students declined from 1.67 in 1970 to 1.21 in 1992. In secondary education, the sex ratio declined from 2.50 in 1970 to 1.24 in 1992 and in Higher Education, the decline was even more substantial: from 4.00 in 1970 to 1.49 in 1992 *[International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis Sept 1996, p 31]*. Higher levels of education, not only offer better work opportunities for women, but they also give women a greater awareness of the choices open to them. They gain in self-confidence and take more control of their life, particularly in terms of contraception. Choosing to have a small number of children is a major step for women in Third World countries where traditionally large families are the norm and women gain respect from their position as mothers of a large progeny. Educated women also positively influence their children's attitude to education. Throughout the Middle East and North Africa, a greater proportion of girls has started going into Higher Education. Furthermore, female students are increasingly opting for the normally male dominated sections (such as engineering, medicine and pharmacy).

Despite the post-independent Algerian governments' strategy for development (the 'Import Substitution Industrialisation' strategy) which concentrated on heavy industry and did not favour women's employment, some progress was made, nevertheless, in female employment rates as a result of the improved access of girls to education. Attitudes to female salaried work also changed over time and educated girls started relying more on qualifications and work rather than on their husband to provide for their future. Employment, even when it is forced on them by economic necessities, gives women more say in decisions within the household. Although the difficult economic situation following the collapse of oil revenues and the high levels of unemployment have contributed to reactionary attitudes amongst some sections of the population, blaming women for taking men's jobs, the number of two income households has been increasing in Algeria. This denotes a change of attitudes, particularly amongst the younger generations who no longer see women's work outside the home as degrading. Furthermore, as work opportunities in the public sector, traditionally the largest female employer, declined in the 1980s, women turned their attention to the private sector and started creating their own companies. The opening of the public sphere to women has been slow. Wider access to education was the first step and it will undoubtedly offer new opportunities for women to participate in the modernising process.

When considering women's political participation, a distinction has to be made between the number of women elected to political bodies and women's participation through less formal means. Although Algerian women gained the right to vote and be elected as early as 1963, and despite their involvement during the war of independence, their representation in formal politics, subsequently, has been minimal. As in most countries in the world, and more so in Muslim countries, politics is still a male dominated area which poses the greatest resistance to women's access to the decision making processes. Women's lack of an economic and political network of support, their family commitments and the prevailing view, even amongst female voters, that politics is the preserve of men, create further barriers to women's entry into formal politics. However, when looking at the turbulent history of the country, one has to recognise women's political contribution. Women's participation in the war of independence took both the French government and the FLN by surprise. Although women's role was critical in the outcome of the war, their active presence on the political scene vanished for nearly 20 years after independence. The need to return to some form of normality after eight years of war explains, to some extent, the withdrawal of women war activists from public life. The government's reluctance to bring in reforms which would have altered women's traditional role in society and the lack of a powerful women's organisation were other factors which reduced the extent of women's political involvement. However, women's participation in the liberation of the country had created a political consciousness which was awakened by the announcement, in 1981, that a new Family Code, elaborated without any public debate, was about to be promulgated. Even though women's response was disorganised and lacked a clearly thought out strategy, their public demonstrations supported by large numbers of women, including female war veterans, forced the government to withdraw the draft proposal. Although this victory was short lived, since three years later, the government succeeded in introducing a virtually identical version of the 1981 Family Code, women had taken a major step in entering the political arena. They were the first group of citizens who dared publicly oppose government policy. Their demands were not limited to women's rights but extended to the recognition of all democratic rights. They dealt the first blow to the monolithic FLN power structure. With the end of the FLN monopoly on power, a number of women's associations were created in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Most of these associations concentrated their campaigns on women's legal rights in the public as well as the private spheres. Their greatest achievement was the abrogation of the electoral law which enabled men to vote on behalf of up to five women, through a system of vote by proxy. On the Family Code, though, the women's associations could not agree, some demanding its abrogation and its replacement by civil laws, whilst others only wanted certain articles of the Code to be amended. The question of whether the associations should be totally independent or integrated into more powerful democratic political parties also created tensions, as did the position of the women's associations regarding the FIS, the main Islamist Party. After the cancellation of the elections in 1992, the women's associations were totally divided in the new political landscape. Another major limitation of the effectiveness of the women's associations was their focus on abstract political debates rather

than on practical issues affecting women's everyday life. The Islamist movement, on the contrary, developed a network of social work, offering practical help to the poorest by distributing food and clothes or by running literacy classes. The end of collective actions by the women's associations was precipitated by the lack of public support for their initiative in 1997. For the celebration of International Women's Day, on March 8th 1997, 14 women's associations joined forces and organised a petition under the heading: 'One million signatures for women's rights within the family'. The petition was a gamble, hoping to show the strength of support in the country for the reopening of the debate on women's rights as defined by the 1984 Family Code. It was a complete failure, as the total number of signatures did not even reach 50,000. In her article on the subject, Ghania Moufok, gives several reasons for the lack of support for the women's collective action. In view of the inability of the movement to present a united front on a number of issues, it was seen as having lost its way. Furthermore, the women's associations were perceived as rejecting the arabo-Islamic identity of the country, preferring a Western 'feminist' definition of women's role in society. Finally, after years of civil war, the question of women's rights was seen as only one of many urgent problems to be resolved *[Vivant Univers Nov-Dec 1998].*[175] Other analysts do not paint such a bleak picture for the future of the women's movement. They emphasise the collaboration which has started to take place between the women's associations and University researchers, on the one hand, and non-governmental humanitarian associations such as SOS Femmes en Détresse[176] on the other. Through their research on Algerian women's 'real life experiences', academics have attempted to deconstruct the image of Algerian women as mere victims of the patriarchal system. They showed the complexity of women's roles as *active participants in the reproduction or alteration of the social structures [Maghreb Machrek no. 154 Oct-Dec 1996, p 24].* This collaboration with researchers and humanitarian associations may help the women's movement to elaborate new strategies taking into account the specific cultural and historical factors which constitute an integral part of Algerian women's identity *[ibid, p 23].*

The rise of the Islamist movement in the 1980s and 1990s has been accompanied by the development of women Islamist supporters. Their role could be an important determinant in the future. Islamist women, particularly those who attained a high level of education, acquired a new self-image through their involvement in the movement. Having recognised the essential role of Islam, they made it their duty to study the scriptures and consequently felt they were in a position to argue against men's interpretation of the Shar'ia. By developing their own interpretation, these women could legitimately, in the eyes of society, seek women's emancipation in the public arena without being accused of undermining or threatening the cultural identity of the society. Educated Islamist women in Iran also argued publicly against the traditionalists' interpretation of the Qur'an which denied women access to certain public

175 available on-line at http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/~yusuf/algeria-watch/code.htm

176 This association 'SOS Women in Distress' was created in 1991 by ex-*Moudjahidate*.

positions such as judges *[Le Monde Diplomatique Nov 1996].*[177] In Egypt, educated Islamist women carved *legitimate public space for themselves [Peuples Méditerranéens nos. 22-23 Jan-June 1983, p 87].* Wearing a veil to separate them from men, Islamist women were no longer intruders in the public sphere, in fact their newly acquired self-confidence enabled them to enter the most prestigious careers (such as doctors and University professors) which until recently were almost the exclusive preserve of men. In Algeria, Islamist women have also started gaining in self-confidence and relying on their own interpretation of the scriptures. A young woman supporter of the FIS (the main Islamist party) declared in an interview that she was in favour of introducing amendments to certain articles of the Family Code which do not comply with the Shari'a. She also advocated *ijtihad*, a reinterpretation of certain aspects of Muslim Laws to respond to the needs of a modern society *[Hinde Taarji 1990, p 279].* In their search for a new definition of their identity, both as Muslims and as women, Islamist women have begun establishing links with secularist women's associations. In Iran, Mrs Mahboubeh Ommi, an Islamist supporter and editor of the women's magazine Farzaneh, declared in an interview that the sectarianism of the early years of the movement had been detrimental to women. She felt that the way forward was in collaboration with women outside of the Islamist movement *[Le Monde Diplomatique Nov 1996].*[178] Even more surprising and very encouraging for the future was the rapprochement taking place between Algerian Islamist women and secularist women's associations. According to Salima Ghezali, editor of the Algerian newspaper La Nation, the two groups of women have been coming together on common basic principles such as the right to education and work for women and the condemnation of all forms of violence *[La Nation no.115 Oct 3rd-9th 1995, p 22 in La Documentation Française Revue de Presse no. 398-7 Sept-Oct 1995].*

The government's task, in the future, will be to redefine Algeria's Muslim identity within a society respectful of all citizens' rights: women, workers, people from different religious or ethnic groups. Islam should not be a barrier to this development. As the anthropologist, Ernest Gellner, wrote:

> ... [l'Islam est] le plus protestant des grands monothéismes, toujours enclin à la réforme (l'Islam pourrait, en réalité, être défini comme une réforme permanente).
>
> *[Gellner1983, p 118 in algeria-watch]*[179]

> (... [Islam is] the most protestant of the great monotheist religions, always open to reform (Islam, in fact, could be defined as a permanent reform).)

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177 Available on-line at http://www.monde-diplomatique.fr/1996/11/KIAN/7382.html

178 Available on-line at http://www.monde-diplomatique.fr/1996/11/KIAN/7382.html

179 Available on-line at http//www.userpage.fu-berlin.de/~yusuf/algeria-watch/alibi.htm

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages

(Full text)

Entered into force **Dec 9, 1964**

United Nations Treaty Service no. 231

The Contracting States,

Desiring, in conformity with the Charter of the United Nations, to promote universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, without distinction as to race, sex. Language or religion,

Recalling that article 16 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that:

Men and women of full age, without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion. have the right to marry and to found a family. They are entitled to equal rights as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution.

Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses,

Recalling further that the General Assembly of the United Nations declared, by resolution 843 (IX) of 17 December 1954, that certain customs, ancient laws and practices relating to marriage and the family were inconsistent with the principles set forth in the Charter of the United Nations and in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,

Reaffirming that all States, including those which have or assume responsibility for the administration of Non-Self-Governing and Trust Territories until their achievement of independence, should take all appropriate measures with a view to abolishing such customs, ancient laws and practices by ensuring, inter alia, complete freedom in the choice of a spouse, eliminating completely child marriages and the betrothal of young girls before the age of puberty, establishing appropriate penalties where necessary and establishing a civil or other register in which all marriages will be recorded,

Hereby agree as hereinafter provided:

Article 1

No marriage shall be legally entered into without the full and free consent of both parties, such consent to be expressed by them in person after due publicity and in the presence of the authority competent to solemnize the marriage and of witnesses, as prescribed by law.

Notwithstanding anything in paragraph I above, it shall not be necessary for one of the parties to be present when the competent authority is satisfied that the circumstances are exceptional

and that the party has, before a competent authority and in such manner as may be prescribed by law, expressed and not withdrawn consent.

Article 2

States Parties to the present Convention shall take legislative action to specify a minimum age for marriage. No marriage shall be legally entered into by any person under this age, except where a competent authority has granted a dispensation as to age, for serious reasons, in the interest of the intending spouses.

Article 3

All marriages shall be registered in an appropriate official register by the competent authority.

Article 4

The present Convention shall, until 31 December 1963, be open for signature on behalf of all States Members of the United Nations or members of any of the specialized agencies, and of any other State invited by the General Assembly of the United Nations to become a Party to the Convention.

The present Convention is subject to ratification. The instruments of ratification shall be deposited with the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Article 5

The present Convention shall be open for accession to all States referred to in article 4, paragraph 1.

Accession shall be effected by the deposit of an instrument of accession with the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Article 6

The present Convention shall come into force on the ninetieth day following the date of deposit of the eighth instrument of ratification or accession.

For each State ratifying or acceding to the Convention after the deposit of the eighth instrument of ratification or accession, the Convention shall enter into force on the ninetieth day after deposit by such State of its instrument of ratification or accession.

Article 7

Any Contracting State may denounce the present Convention by written notification to the Secretary-General of the United Nations. Denunciation shall take effect one year after the date of receipt of the notification by the Secretary-General.

The present Convention shall cease to be in force as from the date when the denunciation which reduces the number of Parties to less than eight becomes effective.

Article 8

Any dispute which may arise between any two or more Contracting States concerning the interpretation or application of the present Convention which is not settled by negotiation shall, at the request of all the parties to the dispute, be referred to the International Court of Justice for decision, unless the parties agree to another mode of settlement.

Article 9

The Secretary-General of the United Nations shall notify all States Members of the United Nations and the non-member States contemplated in article 4, paragraph 1, of the present Convention of the following:

Signatures and instruments of ratification received in accordance with article 4;

Instruments of accession received in accordance with article 5;

The date upon which the Convention enters into force in accordance with article 6;

Notifications of denunciation received in accordance with article 7, paragraph I;

Abrogation in accordance with article 7, paragraph 2.

Article 10

The present Convention, of which the Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish texts shall be equally authentic, shall be deposited in the archives of the United Nations.

The Secretary-General of the United Nations shall transmit a certified copy of the Convention to all States Members of the United Nations and to the non-member States contemplated in article 4, paragraph 1.

Appendix 2: The Convention on the Political Rights of Women

(Full text))

Opened for signature and ratification by General Assembly resolution 640(VII) of 20 December 1952

Entry into force **7 July 1954, in accordance with article VI**

The Contracting Parties,

Desiring to implement the principle of equality of rights for men and women contained in the Charter of the United Nations,

Recognizing that everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country directly or indirectly through freely chosen representatives, and has the right to equal access to public service in his country, and desiring to equalize the status of men and women in the enjoyment and exercise of political rights, in accordance with the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations and of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,

Having resolved to conclude a Convention for this purpose,

Hereby agree as hereinafter provided:

Article I

Women shall be entitled to vote in all elections on equal terms with men, without any discrimination.

Article II

Women shall be eligible for election to all publicly elected bodies, established by national law, on equal terms with men, without any discrimination.

Article III

Women shall be entitled to hold public office and to exercise all public functions, established by national law, on equal terms with men, without any discrimination.

Article IV

This Convention shall be open for signature on behalf of any Member of the United Nations and also on behalf of any other State to which an invitation has been addressed by the General Assembly.

This Convention shall be ratified and the instruments of ratification shall be deposited with the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Article V

This Convention shall be open for accession to all States referred to in paragraph 1 of article IV.

Accession shall be effected by the deposit of an instrument of accession with the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Article VI

This Convention shall come into force on the ninetieth day following the date of deposit of the sixth instrument of ratification or accession.

For each State ratifying or acceding to the Convention after the deposit of the sixth instrument of ratification or accession the Convention shall enter into force on the ninetieth day after deposit by such State of its instrument of ratification or accession.

Article VII

In the event that any State submits a reservation to any of the articles of this Convention at the time of signature, ratification or accession, the Secretary-General shall communicate the text of the reservation to all States which are or may become Parties to this Convention. Any State which objects to the reservation may, within a period of ninety days from the date of the said communication (or upon the date of its becoming a Party to the Convention), notify the Secretary-General that it does not accept it. In such case, the Convention shall not enter into force as between such State and the State making the reservation.

Article VIII

Any State may denounce this Convention by written notification to the Secretary-General of the United Nations. Denunciation shall take effect one year after the date of receipt of the notification by the Secretary-General.

This Convention shall cease to be in force as from the date when the denunciation which reduces the number of Parties to less than six becomes effective.

Article IX

Any dispute which may arise between any two or more Contracting States concerning the interpretation or application of this Convention, which is not settled by negotiation, shall at the request of any one of the parties to the dispute be referred to the International Court of Justice for decision, unless they agree to another mode of settlement.

Article X

The Secretary-General of the United Nations shall notify all Members of the United Nations and the non-member States contemplated in paragraph 1 of article IV of this Convention of the following:

Signatures and instruments of ratification received in accordance with article IV;

Instruments of accession received in accordance with article V;

The date upon which this Convention enters into force in accordance with article VI;
Communications and notifications received in accordance with article VII;
Notifications of denunciation received in accordance with paragraph 1 of article VIII;
Abrogation in accordance with paragraph 2 of article VIII.

Article XI

This Convention, of which the Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish texts shall be equally authentic, shall be deposited in the archives of the United Nations.
The Secretary-General of the United Nations shall transmit a certified copy to all Members of the United Nations and to the non-member States contemplated in paragraph 1 of article IV.

Appendix 3: Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)

(Selected articles)

Adopted: 18th December 1979

Entry into force: 3rd September 1981

Article 2

States Parties condemn discrimination against women in all its forms, agree to pursue by all appropriate means and without delay a policy of eliminating discrimination against women and, to this end, undertake:

To embody the principle of the equality of men and women in their national constitutions or other appropriate legislation if not yet incorporated therein and to ensure, through law and other appropriate means, the practical realization of this principle;

To adopt appropriate legislative and other measures, including sanctions where appropriate, prohibiting all discrimination against women;

To establish legal protection of the rights of women on an equal basis with men and to ensure through competent national tribunals and other public institutions the effective protection of women against any act of discrimination;

To refrain from engaging in any act or practice of discrimination against women and to ensure that public authorities and institutions shall act in conformity with this obligation;

To take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women by any person, organization or enterprise;

To take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to modify or abolish existing laws, regulations, customs and practices which constitute discrimination against women;

To repeal all national penal provisions which constitute discrimination against women.

Article 9

Parties shall grant women equal rights with men with respect to the nationality of their children.

Article 15

States Parties shall accord to men and women the same rights with regard to the law relating to the movement of persons and the freedom to choose their residence and domicile.

Article 16

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in all matters relating to marriage and family relations and in particular shall ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women:

The same right to enter into marriage;

The same right freely to choose a spouse and to enter into marriage only with their free and full consent;

The same rights and responsibilities during marriage and at its dissolution;
The same rights and responsibilities as parents, irrespective of their marital status, in matters relating to their children; in all cases the interests of the children shall be paramount;
The same rights to decide freely and responsibly on the number and spacing of their children and to have access to the information, education and means to enable them to exercise these rights;
The same rights and responsibilities with regard to guardianship, wardship, trusteeship and adoption of children, or similar institutions where these concepts exist in national legislation; in all cases the interests of the children shall be paramount;
The same personal rights as husband and wife, including the right to choose a family name, a profession and an occupation;
The same rights for both spouses in respect of the ownership, acquisition, management, administration, enjoyment and disposition of property, whether free of charge or for a valuable consideration.

Article 29

Any dispute between two or more States Parties concerning the interpretation or application of the present Convention which is not settled by negotiation shall, at the request of one of them, be submitted to arbitration. If within six months from the date of the request for arbitration the parties are unable to agree on the organization of the arbitration, any one of those parties may refer the dispute to the International Court of Justice by request in conformity with the Statute of the Court.

Appendix 4: Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

(Selected articles)

Adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 10th December 1984

Entry into force: 26th June 1987

Article 21

1. A State Party to this Convention may at any time declare under this article 3 that it recognizes the competence of the Committee to receive and consider communications to the effect that a State Party claims that another State Party is not fulfilling its obligations under this Convention. Such communications may be received and considered according to the procedures laid down in this article only if submitted by a State Party which has made a declaration recognizing in regard to itself the competence of the Committee. No communication shall be dealt with by the Committee under this article if it concerns a State Party which has not made such a declaration. Communications received under this article shall be dealt with in accordance with the following procedure:

If a State Party considers that another State Party is not giving effect to the provisions of this Convention, it may, by written communication, bring the matter to the attention of that State Party. Within three months after the receipt of the communication the receiving State shall afford the State which sent the communication an explanation or any other statement in writing clarifying the matter which should include, to the extent possible and pertinent, references to domestic procedures and remedies taken, pending, or available in the matter.

If the matter is not adjusted to the satisfaction of both States Parties concerned within six months after the receipt by the receiving State of the initial communication, either State shall have the right to refer the matter to the Committee by notice given to the Committee and to the other State.

The Committee shall deal with a matter referred to it under this article only after it has ascertained that all domestic remedies have been invoked and exhausted in the matter, in conformity with the generally recognized principles of international law. This shall not be the rule where the application of the remedies is unreasonably prolonged or is unlikely to bring effective relief to the person who is the victim of the violation of this Convention.

The Committee shall hold closed meetings when examining communications under this article.

Subject to the provisions of subparagraph (c), the Committee shall make available its good offices to the States Parties concerned with a view to a friendly solution of the matter on the basis of respect for the obligations provided for in the present Convention. For this purpose, the Committee may, when appropriate, set up an ad hoc conciliation commission.

In any matter referred to it under this article, the Committee may call upon the States Parties concerned, referred to in subparagraph (b), to supply any relevant information.

The States Parties concerned, referred to in subparagraph (b), shall have the right to be represented when the matter is being considered by the Committee and to make submissions orally and/or in writing.

The Committee shall, within 12 months after the date of receipt of notice under subparagraph (b), submit a report.

If a solution within the terms of subparagraph (e) is reached, the Committee shall confine its report to a brief statement of the facts and of the solution reached.

If a solution within the terms of subparagraph (e) is not reached, the Committee shall confine its report to a brief statement of the facts; the written submissions and record of the oral submissions made by the States Parties concerned shall be attached to the report.

In every matter, the report shall be communicated to the States Parties concerned.

2. The provisions of this article shall come into force when five States Parties to this Convention have made declarations under paragraph 1 of this article. Such declarations shall be deposited by the States Parties with the Secretary-General of the United Nations, who shall transmit copies thereof to the other States Parties. A declaration may be withdrawn at any time by notification to the Secretary-General. Such a withdrawal shall not prejudice the consideration of any matter which is the subject of a communication already transmitted under this article; no further communication by any State Party shall be received under this article after the notification of withdrawal of the declaration has been received by the Secretary-General, unless the State Party concerned has made a new declaration.

Article 22

1. A State Party to this Convention may at any time declare under this article that it recognizes the competence of the Committee to receive and consider communications from or on behalf of individuals subject to its jurisdiction who claim to be victims of a violation by a State Party of the provisions of the Convention. No communication shall be received by the Committee if it concerns a State Party to the Convention which has not made such a declaration.

The Committee shall consider inadmissible any communication under this article which is anonymous, or which it considers to be an abuse of the right of submission of such communications or to be incompatible with the provisions of this Convention.

Subject to the provisions of paragraph 2, the Committee shall bring any communication submitted to it under this article to the attention of the State Party to this Convention which has made a declaration under paragraph 1 and is alleged to be violating any provisions of the Convention. Within six months, the receiving State shall submit to the Committee written

explanations or statements clarifying the matter and the remedy, if any, that may have been taken by that State.

The Committee shall consider communications received under this article in the light of all information made available to it by or on behalf of the individual and by the State Party concerned.

The Committee shall not consider any communication from an individual under this article unless it has ascertained that:

The same matter has not been, and is not being examined under another procedure of international investigation or settlement;

The individual has exhausted all available domestic remedies; this shall not be the rule where the application of the remedies is unreasonably prolonged or is unlikely to bring effective relief to the person who is the victim of the violation of this Convention.

The Committee shall hold closed meetings when examining communications under this article.

The Committee shall forward its views to the State Party concerned and to the individual.

2. The provisions of this article shall come into force when five States Parties to this Convention have made declarations under paragraph 1 of this article. Such declarations shall be deposited by the States Parties with the Secretary-General of the United Nations, who shall transmit parties thereof to the other States Parties. A declaration may be withdrawn at any time by notification to the Secretary-General. Such a withdrawal shall not prejudice the consideration of any matter which is the subject of a communication already transmitted under this article; no further communication by or on behalf of an individual shall be received under this article after the notification of withdrawal of the declaration has been received by the Secretary-General, unless the State Party concerned has made a new declaration.

Appendix 5: ILO Convention 156: Workers with Family Responsibilities, 1981

(Full text)

Convention concerning Equal Opportunities and Equal Treatment for Men and Women Workers: Workers with Family Responsibilities (Note: Date of coming into force: 11:08:1983.)

Description:(Convention)

Convention:C156

Place:Geneva

Session of the Conference:67

Date of adoption:23:06:1981

Subject classification: Equality of Opportunity and Treatment

Subject classification: Women

The General Conference of the International Labour Organisation,
Having been convened at Geneva by the Governing Body of the International Labour Office and having met in its Sixty-seventh Session on 3 June 1981, and
Noting the Declaration of Philadelphia concerning the Aims and Purposes of the International Labour Organisation which recognises that "all human beings, irrespective of race, creed or sex, have the right to pursue their material well-being and their spiritual development in conditions of freedom and dignity, of economic security and equal opportunity", and
Noting the terms of the Declaration on Equality of Opportunity and Treatment for Women Workers and of the resolution concerning a plan of action with a view to promoting equality of opportunity and treatment for women workers, adopted by the International Labour Conference in 1975, and
Noting the provisions of international labour Conventions and Recommendations aimed at ensuring equality of opportunity and treatment for men and women workers, namely the Equal Remuneration Convention and Recommendation, 1951, the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention and Recommendation, 1958, and Part VIII of the Human Resources Development Recommendation, 1975, and
Recalling that the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958, does not expressly cover distinctions made on the basis of family responsibilities, and considering that supplementary standards are necessary in this respect, and
Noting the terms of the Employment (Women with Family Responsibilities) Recommendation, 1965, and considering the changes which have taken place since its adoption, and
Noting that instruments on equality of opportunity and treatment for men and women have also been adopted by the United Nations and other specialised agencies, and recalling, in particular, the fourteenth paragraph of the Preamble of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, 1979, to the effect that States Parties are "

aware that a change in the traditional role of men as well as the role of women in society and in the family is needed to achieve full equality between men and women", and

Recognising that the problems of workers with family responsibilities are aspects of wider issues regarding the family and society which should be taken into account in national policies, and

Recognising the need to create effective equality of opportunity and treatment as between men and women workers with family responsibilities and between such workers and other workers, and

Considering that many of the problems facing all workers are aggravated in the case of workers with family responsibilities and recognising the need to improve the conditions of the latter both by measures responding to their special needs and by measures designed to improve the conditions of workers in general, and

Having decided upon the adoption of certain proposals with regard to equal opportunities and equal treatment for men and women workers: workers with family responsibilities, which is the fifth item on the agenda of the session, and

Having determined that these proposals shall take the form of an international Convention,

adopts the twenty-third day of June of the year one thousand nine hundred and eighty-one, the following Convention, which may be cited as the Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981:

Article 1

1. This Convention applies to men and women workers with responsibilities in relation to their dependent children, where such responsibilities restrict their possibilities of preparing for, entering, participating in or advancing in economic activity.

2. The provisions of this Convention shall also be applied to men and women workers with responsibilities in relation to other members of their immediate family who clearly need their care or support, where such responsibilities restrict their possibilities of preparing for, entering, participating in or advancing in economic activity.

3. For the purposes of this Convention, the terms dependent child and other member of the immediate family who clearly needs care or support mean persons defined as such in each country by one of the means referred to in Article 9 of this Convention.

4. The workers covered by virtue of paragraphs 1 and 2 of this Article are hereinafter referred to as ***workers with family responsibilities*** .

Article 2

This Convention applies to all branches of economic activity and all categories of workers.

Article 3

1. With a view to creating effective equality of opportunity and treatment for men and women workers, each Member shall make it an aim of national policy to enable persons with family responsibilities who are engaged or wish to engage in employment to exercise their right to do

so without being subject to discrimination and, to the extent possible, without conflict between their employment and family responsibilities.

2. For the purposes of paragraph 1 of this Article, the term ***discrimination*** means discrimination in employment and occupation as defined by Articles 1 and 5 of the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958.

Article 4

With a view to creating effective equality of opportunity and treatment for men and women workers, all measures compatible with national conditions and possibilities shall be taken--

(a) to enable workers with family responsibilities to exercise their right to free choice of employment; and

(b) to take account of their needs in terms and conditions of employment and in social security.

Article 5

All measures compatible with national conditions and possibilities shall further be taken--

(a) to take account of the needs of workers with family responsibilities in community planning; and

(b) to develop or promote community services, public or private, such as child-care and family services and facilities.

Article 6

The competent authorities and bodies in each country shall take appropriate measures to promote information and education which engender broader public understanding of the principle of equality of opportunity and treatment for men and women workers and of the problems of workers with family responsibilities, as well as a climate of opinion conducive to overcoming these problems.

Article 7

All measures compatible with national conditions and possibilities, including measures in the field of vocational guidance and training, shall be taken to enable workers with family responsibilities to become and remain integrated in the labour force, as well as to re-enter the labour force after an absence due to those responsibilities.

Article 8

Family responsibilities shall not, as such, constitute a valid reason for termination of employment.

Article 9

The provisions of this Convention may be applied by laws or regulations, collective agreements, works rules, arbitration awards, court decisions or a combination of these methods, or in any other manner consistent with national practice which may be appropriate, account being taken of national conditions.

Article 10

1. The provisions of this Convention may be applied by stages if necessary, account being taken of national conditions: Provided that such measures of implementation as are taken shall apply in any case to all the workers covered by Article 1, paragraph 1.

2. Each Member which ratifies this Convention shall indicate in the first report on the application of the Convention submitted under article 22 of the Constitution of the International Labour Organisation in what respect, if any, it intends to make use of the faculty given by paragraph 1 of this Article, and shall state in subsequent reports the extent to which effect has been given or is proposed to be given to the Convention in that respect.

Article 11

Employers' and workers' organisations shall have the right to participate, in a manner appropriate to national conditions and practice, in devising and applying measures designed to give effect to the provisions of this Convention.

Article 12

The formal ratifications of this Convention shall be communicated to the Director-General of the International Labour Office for registration.

Article 13

1. This Convention shall be binding only upon those Members of the International Labour Organisation whose ratifications have been registered with the Director-General.
2. It shall come into force twelve months after the date on which the ratifications of two Members have been registered with the Director-General.
3. Thereafter, this Convention shall come into force for any Member twelve months after the date on which its ratifications has been registered.

Article 14

1. A Member which has ratified this Convention may denounce it after the expiration of ten years from the date on which the Convention first comes into force, by an Act communicated to the Director-General of the International Labour Office for registration. Such denunciation should not take effect until one year after the date on which it is registered.
2. Each Member which has ratified this Convention and which does not, within the year following the expiration of the period of ten years mentioned in the preceding paragraph, exercise the right of denunciation provided for in this Article, will be bound for another period of ten years and, thereafter, may denounce this Convention at the expiration of each period of ten years under the terms provided for in this Article.

Article 15

1. The Director-General of the International Labour Office shall notify all Members of the International Labour Organisation of the registration of all ratifications and denunciations communicated to him by the Members of the Organisation.
2. When notifying the Members of the Organisation of the registration of the second ratification communicated to him, the Director-General shall draw the attention of the Members of the Organisation to the date upon which the Convention will come into force.

Article 16

The Director-General of the International Labour Office shall communicate to the Secretary-General of the United Nations for registration in accordance with Article 102 of the Charter of

the United Nations full particulars of all ratifications and acts of denunciation registered by him in accordance with the provisions of the preceding Articles.

Article 17

At such times as may consider necessary the Governing Body of the International Labour Office shall present to the General Conference a report on the working of this Convention and shall examine the desirability of placing on the agenda of the Conference the question of its revision in whole or in part.

Article 18

1. Should the Conference adopt a new Convention revising this Convention in whole or in part, then, unless the new Convention otherwise provides:

a) the ratification by a Member of the new revising Convention shall ipso jure involve the immediate denunciation of this Convention, notwithstanding the provisions of Article 14 above, if and when the new revising Convention shall have come into force;

b) as from the date when the new revising Convention comes into force this Convention shall cease to be open to ratification by the Members.

2. This Convention shall in any case remain in force in its actual form and content for those Members which have ratified it but have not ratified the revising Convention.

Article 19

The English and French versions of the text of this Convention are equally authoritative.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

beylic land	land previously owned by the bey and used as communal land
cadi	Muslim judge
colons	European settlers
département	French administrative division, equivalent to a county
djemaa	village assembly in Kabylia
droit de djabr	right of the father to impose his choice of husband on his daughter
fatma	name given by French settlers to Algerian housemaids
fidayate	civilian women urban fighters
fitna	chaos, disorder
habous	donations to religious institutions
habous land	land given to religious institutions by individuals
habous system	system in which the habous land constituted an indivisible communal asset but whose usufruct belonged to the original owner and subsequently to his designated heirs
ijtihad	Islamic concept of reinterpretation of the scriptures to reflect societal changes
juge de paix	Justice of the peace
lefdi	sum of money to be paid back to the husband by the girl's father in case of repudiation in Kabylia
Maliki Mathhab	one of the four main schools of thought in Islam
medersa	secondary Islamic school
moudjahida (plural moudjahidate)	women military combatants in the maquis
moudjahidine	male and female combatants
moussebilate	civilian women activists
mufti	Muslim expert and adviser on the Qur'an
qanouns	local laws
thâmanth	sum of money given by the groom to the father of the bride in Kabylia
ulama	religious scholars
umma	community of believers in the Muslim religion
wilaya	region (in this context)

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CAABU	Council for the Advancement of Arab-British Understanding, London
CRIDSSH	Centre de Recherches et d'Information Documentaire en Sciences Sociales et Humaines, University of Oran, Oran which includes:
GRFA	Groupe de Recherche sur les Femmes Algériennes
ISIS	(A research group)
CDSH	Centre de Documentation en Sciences Humaines
CEDETIM	Centre d'Etudes et d'Initiatives de Solidarité Internationale, France
CNRS	Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, Paris
CERMAC	Centre d'Etudes et de Recherches sur le Monde Arabe Contemporain, Université Catholique, Louvain
LCR	Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire, Paris
PUF	Presses Universitaires de France, Paris
IRESCO	Institut de Recherche sur les Sociétés Contemporaines, Paris
IREMAM	Institut de Recherches et d'Etudes sur le Monde Arabe et Musulman, Aix-en-Provence
UGTA	Union Générale des Travailleurs Algériens, Alger
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Social and Cultural Organisation, Paris
WIDER	World Institute for Development Economics Research of the UN University

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