

## Title: Sociology of student organizations in Algerian Universities

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### Abstract

This article aims to provide a socio-historical reading of the reality of student movements in the Algerian university, which is a fundamental axis of student activity, as it has contributed significantly to building political and social awareness. This role is evident through its close relationship with student organization movements in both Arab and Western countries, especially during the French colonial period. The university has become a platform that expresses national identity and confronts French colonialism, through student organization movements, influenced by the political and social developments witnessed by the Arab world in that era. This was reflected in the Algerian student movement's adoption of Arab nationalist ideas.

We will shed light on its concept, origins, and the establishment of Algerian student organizations, as well as the history, reality, and roles of Algerian student organizations in terms of the general strike of Algerian students during the French colonial period and student organizations after 1988, and their models during the French colonial period, such as the Association of Algerian Muslim Students in France, the Friendly Association of Muslim Students in North Africa, the National Union of Algerian Students, and the Association of North African Muslim Students, and the importance of the role of student conferences in contributing to spreading the voice of Algerian student organizations in Arab and Western countries during the French colonial period.

**Keywords:** Student movements; Algerian university; history and emergence of Algerian student organizations.

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## Introduction

The Algerian student movements during the French colonial period were a spark that ignited national consciousness and stimulated the struggle for independence. These movements played a pivotal role in shaping Algerian identity and instilling a spirit of resistance, becoming a fundamental element in the course of modern Algerian history. During the period of French control over Algeria, which extended from 1830 to 1962, Algeria witnessed several radical changes in many areas, particularly in education and culture. In this context, student organizations emerged as an influential element in the struggle for liberation and independence. These organizations arose under difficult conditions, as Algerian educational institutions, both universities and schools, were subject to French control, which weakened students' cultural and national identity. However, Algerian students began to form organized groups, inspired by the nationalist and nationalist ideas that were spreading in the Arab region and in colonial territories around the world. Student activities were greatly influenced by international events, such as World War II, which brought about radical shifts in the balance of power at the global level and directly impacted the political awareness of Algerian students. In addition, students were influenced by the independence movements that spread across Africa and Asia, adding momentum and enthusiasm to their involvement in the struggle against colonial domination during that era. During this period, students played a key role in organizing demonstrations and sit-ins, gathering in the streets to demand their rights and the independence of their country. These movements helped foster a sense of national belonging among young people, leading to increased participation in the Algerian Revolution that began in 1954. This paper attempts to answer several questions, including: How did Algerian student movements emerge during the French colonial period? How

did they contribute to the Algerian Revolution? What is their reality and relationship to Algerian universities today?

### 1- The concept of student organizations:

A student organization is a group of young people elected by students to represent them, with the goal of working with them and achieving a better level of services for them and the environment in which they live<sup>2</sup>. A student organization is a group, club, or body whose members are primarily students, encompassing various academic levels, classes, and teams, in addition to related academic activities or events. These organizations aim to organize student events, provide necessary support and services to students, and participate in decision-making related to their affairs. Student organizations are considered part of the social structures that contribute to strengthening relationships between students and guiding their behavior on campus. They are also one of the most important social institutions in the complex university context, given their direct connection to the needs and interests of students. These organizations are characterized by their goals. Integrated educational dimensions, working to raise students according to specific foundations that include educational, social and cultural aspects.

### 2- The Origin and Establishment of Student Organizations in Algeria:

The roots of Algerian student organizations, whose union and political struggles date back to the 1930s, if not further, remain vague today, and their details unknown to those following student activity, whose presence has always been accompanied by the presence of educational

<sup>2</sup> Mark Stephen A. Ravelas . The relationship of organization opportunities and engagement of COED students in fostering cognitive comprehensive skills. International Journal of Research Publications (IJRP.ORG). Laguna University, Volume: 146 , Issue: 1 , April Published Date: 06 April 2024. Santa Cruz, Laguna, Philippines.,p274.

facilities at all levels<sup>3</sup>. The origins of Algerian student organizations date back to 1919, during the period of French colonialism, which paid significant attention to the education sector in Algeria. Primary and secondary schools were established, in addition to sending student missions to France to pursue postgraduate studies. The year 1879 also witnessed the issuance of the law establishing schools, and in 1909, the University of Algiers was opened, which contributed to a significant increase in the number of Algerian university students, especially with the continuation of study missions to France.

In light of this situation, the first Algerian student union was established at the University of Algiers in 1930 under the name “Association of Muslim Students of North Africa,” which had been called “Association of National Students” in 1919. The association began several activities on integrationist grounds. In 1931, it published the magazine “The Student,” in addition to theatrical performances in Arabic. Although this association was the first, another association was established in 1927 under the name “Association of African Muslim Students in France,” in addition to other unions and associations, and the Association of Algerian Muslim Students in Paris to encourage study in France. This association also contributed to mediating the provision of housing for Algerians in Paris to encourage them to study in France. In addition to other unions and the Association of Algerian Muslim Students, Algerian associations were established in almost all countries where Algerians were present, albeit branches of the “Association of Muslim Students of North Africa.” This was done by students to unify their political goal among students in Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco, by establishing a unified Moroccan student organization that included Algerian and Tunisian students. And the Moroccans, but it failed, and in 1954 the “Union of Algerian

Students of the City of Paris” was established, which was supervised by the French Communist Party. This clearly indicates the deprivation of Algerians from university education, even in its early stages, and highlights the differences between Muslim and European students, in addition to the deprivation of girls from education, so that for every four males there was one girl for every four males. This deprivation and exclusion of the children of Algerian Muslims was from the beginning of the educational system and in its various stages. Moreover, discrimination was practiced among Algerian children, between the bourgeois classes loyal to the French and the poor class deprived even of primary education.

### **3- History of Algerian Student Organizations:**

#### **3-1- The General Strike of Algerian Students on May 19, 1956:**

The decision to strike was initially an initiative of the Algerian branch of the Algerian Students' Union. Consequently, it was necessary to contact the union in Paris for information, consultation, and coordination. However, before they could contact Paris, activist Hassan Qaid Hamoud, representing Abane and Ben Khedda, urged the immediate announcement of the strike to capitalize on the enthusiasm prevailing among students<sup>4</sup>. The Algerian students' strike on May 19, 1956, represented an official declaration of their involvement in the revolution as an organization by students who had participated in the revolution individually before that date. The strike was decided by the Algerian branch of the Algerian Muslim Students' Union, and was called for by all Algerians enrolled in French universities. Algerian students from other universities in Morocco and the Arab Mashreq also joined in solidarity with Algerian students. The call was for middle, high school, and university students, as well as graduates, to join the revolution in the

<sup>3</sup> Abdullah Hammadi, *The Algerian Student Movement, 1871-1962 “Cultural and Ideological Trends”*, 2nd ed., National Museum Publications, National Publishing Institution, Rouiba, Algeria, 1995. p. 23.

<sup>4</sup> Ahmed Marioush, *The Algerian Student Movement and its Role in the National Cause and the 1954 Liberation Revolution*, PhD thesis, History, University of Algiers, 2006, p. 341.

mountainous regions. They were assigned tasks such as health, politics, administration, communications, journalism, and martyrdom for the homeland. Relationships between students, villages, and residents were strengthened, and feelings, emotions, and coexistence between the people and the revolutionary leaders increased.

fieshiat 19 may 1956 eqad rayiys al'iitihad mutamar suhufiun min khilalih wajah nida'an 'ilaa jamie altalabat aljazayiriyn biwaqf aldirasat wamuqataeat al'imtilhanat 'ilaa ajil ghayr musamaa w altatawue w al'iiltihaq bialmujahidin fi aljibal , ghayr 'ana hadha al'idrab kanat lah eiddat 'asbab wadawafie 'ahmuha: - tadahwur alealaqat bayn altulaab aljazayiriyn walfaransiyn baed 'an sa'at alealaqat bayn altulaab aljazayiriyn walfaransiyn fi sanat 1956, baed tadeim altulaab alfaransiun lilsiyasat al'iistiemariat fi aljazayir. - khatf wa'iightial altalabat aljazayiriyn min taraf alshurtat alfaransiati, mithl altaalib hujaj farahat fi jijl, min bayn al'asbab alati eajilat fi al'idrabi. - al'iietiqalat wal'iightialat litalabat aljazayiriyn min taraf almustaemir alfaransi, kaharq altaalib brahimi, waqutil alduktur bin zarjab. - 'ihtilal aljameiat aleamat litalabat aljazayiriyna, min qibal altalabat almutatarifin wasis munazamat fashiat, min majlis kuliyat jameiat aljazayar, damat hadhih almunazamat jamie altalabat almunadilin alfaransiyna, wa'utliq ealayha aism lajnat aleamal aljamieii, wakanat 'ahdafuha aldifae ean aljazayir alfaransiati, wamuharabat althawrat wa'ansariha, watahwiliha 'ilaa 'adaat daght waeunf . - 'iindimam talabat jameiat aleulama' 'ilaa al'idrab walthawrati, walakina mawqif qiadat jameiat aleulama', wala siama fi eahd alshaykh albashir al'iibrahimii, kan muayidan lileamal althawri, baed qatl al'amin aleami limaehad alshaykh eabd alhayd bin badis rida hwhu.

On the evening of May 19, 1956, the union president held a press conference during which he called on all Algerian students to suspend their studies, boycott exams indefinitely, and volunteer

to join the mujahideen in the mountains<sup>5</sup>. However, this strike had several causes and motivations, the most important of which were:

- The deterioration of relations between Algerian and French students, following their deterioration in 1956, following French students' support for colonial policies in Algeria.
- The kidnapping and assassination of Algerian students by the French police, such as that of student Hajjaj Farhat in Jijel, were among the factors that precipitated the strike.
- The arrests and assassinations of Algerian students by the French colonial authorities, such as the burning of student Brahimi and the murder of Dr. Benzerdjeb.
- The occupation of the General Association of Algerian Students by extremist students and the establishment of a fascist organization within the Faculty Council of the University of Algiers. This organization included all French student activists and was called the University Action Committee. Its goals were to defend French Algeria, combat the revolution and its supporters, and transform it into a tool of pressure and violence.
- The students of the Association of Scholars joined the strike and revolution. However, the position of the Association of Scholars' leadership, particularly during the era of Sheikh Bachir Ibrahim, was supportive of revolutionary action, following the assassination of Redha Houhou, Secretary General of the Sheikh Abdelhaid Ben Badis Institute.

### 3-2- Student Organizations after 1988.

The events that Algeria witnessed in the late 1980s, known as the October 1988 events, brought social change to the country. The Algerian people demanded numerous social,

<sup>5</sup> Najat Beya, Algerian Students and the National Liberation Revolution, Mondial Brantzer Weiss House, National Center for Studies and Research on the National Movement and the Revolution of November 1, 1954, El Biar, Algeria, p. 68.

political, and economic demands to improve living conditions. Various segments of society, including university students, participated in these demands. The national university scene witnessed the emergence of several new student unions, including the National League of Algerian Students, the National Union of Free and Democratic Algerian Students, "the National Organization for National Student Solidarity, and the National Union of Algerian Students"<sup>6</sup>. The first signs of change were the transition from a single party to a multi-party system in Algeria, with the emergence of factions of various colors. This was also reflected in student organizations, which found themselves in a political struggle between conservative forces, represented by the National Liberation Front, and Islamist forces, represented by the Islamic Salvation Front. We cannot deny the achievements of the student movement in the educational, social, and political fields alike. During the Black Decade, the student movement responded to the demands of the state and its institutions, and represented students in national and international forums. During this dangerous phase that Algeria went through, the student movement paid a heavy price with the martyrdom of some student organization activists. After the events of October 1988 and the emergence of multi-partyism, changes also occurred at the level of student organizations, as major trade union and political movements emerged, which led the Free General Union of Students to talk about university reform. It also presented a comprehensive and detailed project for university reform to the relevant ministries. The National Union of Algerian Students also called for several projects, including a university charter.

#### **4- Student movements and models of Algerian student organizations during the French colonial period.**

##### **4-1- The Association of Algerian Muslim Students in France (A.E.M.A.F.)**

The Association of Algerian Muslim Students in France played an important role in developing the Algerian national movement abroad. It became an important platform for discussion about independence and the rights of Algerians, and was closely linked to the liberation movements and revolutionary resistance. However, the issue of naturalization of Algerian students became an obstacle in linking Algerian students with those wishing to be naturalized with French citizenship, which created a conflict between these two groups, each with its own orientation, especially on issues of the French language, Arabic, and the Islamic religion. Its headquarters were in Paris. In 1908, the French Governor-General, Gunnar, said: "It is in our interest to work to create an educated elite from the people capable of responding to our progressive and just ideas. We need a conservative bourgeoisie to help us and facilitate the implementation of our plans."<sup>7</sup> The new Algerian student orientation made the French Student Union view this dangerous change with resentment and disapproval, because they had high hopes for this elite, made up of Algerian Muslim intellectuals, whose mission was to play the role of mediator between colonial policies and the people. Algerians, but they insisted on the necessity of an educated, French-speaking Algerian class to play a role in consolidating reconciliation between the French and Algerian peoples. Thus, the apostate wing of Islam emerged among students who converted to Christianity instead of Islam and acquired French citizenship, particularly in France. In 1932, some supporters of this trend among students shouted slogans against the Algerian Muslim student movement, including the Association of Native Teachers and Algerian Students from the Kabylie region who had come to Paris. The openness of Arab and Muslim students to Western culture also led to the naturalized students becoming involved in the wave of Western mentality and openness to Western culture, which robbed them of their

<sup>6</sup> The Student Movement after the October Events, *Al-Shaab* Newspaper, Algeria, July 14, 1994, p. 11.

<sup>7</sup> Charles Robert. *Les Algériens musulmans et la France (1871-1919)*. Paris. puf. p 451.

religion and social behavior. They also separated from their original organizations, which inevitably widened the gap between students and led to the establishment of the Association of Algerian Muslim Students in France. They appointed Maurice Viollet as president of the association and Amar Naron as his deputy.

#### **4-2- The Association of Muslim Students in North Africa (A.AE.M.N.A.)**

The arbitrary policies pursued by France in Algeria did not spare any segment of Algerian society. They also affected students, who were not exempt from the injustice of colonial rule, which sought to undermine students' Islamic identity and discourage them. Algerian students faced marginalization and racism in French universities. However, despite this suffering, it did not drive them to despair or surrender. Rather, it served as an incentive for them to enhance their capabilities and showcase their potential and struggle in French universities, and even in other universities in Arab countries that supported the Algerian cause.

The Association of Muslim Students was founded during the French colonial period in Algeria. The association aimed to promote Islamic education and encourage solidarity among Muslim students by developing cultural and national awareness among young people within the framework of resistance to French colonialism. In light of this inappropriate and tense atmosphere between Algerian students and the French colonizer, they had to think about forming an organization with a legal character of their own, which would defend their rights, unify their ideas, and contribute to the formation of strong ties, to exchange feelings of brotherhood and loyalty among them, while at the same time providing assistance to those in need. One of the direct reasons for the establishment of the association was the expulsion of Muslim students from the French Students Association, which was founded in Algeria in 1885. This was one of the main and direct reasons for the establishment of the association, and this

prompted them to establish their own organization. The man credited with establishing the Association of Muslim Students was Belkacem Benhabyles. This led to the outbreak of conflict between French and Algerian students, as evidenced by the expulsion of Algerian students from the French Students Association. On the eve of the end of World War I, an organization was established at the University of Algiers. My students, in the name of the Association of Muslim Students in North Africa, and "the association includes students studying at this university, which is subject to the French university system, and the credit for establishing this association goes to an elite group of Algerian students."<sup>8</sup> The association was an offshoot of the French National Union of Student Associations, and its first board meeting was chaired by Ben Habis, assisted by El Hadi Ben Smaia. According to its statutes and bylaws, the association aims to bring together students and assist them in all areas, whether material or moral. It also discussed academic issues, not political or religious ones. "Since its inception, the association has expressed the aspirations of the educated people, seeking to place the affairs of Algerians before various bodies, address issues of equality and civil rights, give intellectuals a place in representation and work to study social problems, and attract support for its endeavors through relations with those sympathetic to Algerians and their issues."<sup>9</sup>

#### **4-3- The National Union of Algerian Students (U.N.E.A)**

This organization was born in Paris in 1953, and was the result of the ideological conflict between Algerian Muslim students and Muslim students who were trained and organized in political parties and organizations. These successive Francophone

<sup>8</sup> Mohamed Belkacem, *The Unitarian Trend in the Maghreb 1910-1954*, Al-Basaer Publishing and Distribution House, Algeria, 2013, p. 120.

<sup>9</sup> Muhammad al-Sa'id `Aqib, *The General Union of Algerian Muslim Students and its Role in the Revolution*, 1st ed., Al-Shatibiya Publishing and Distribution, Algeria, 2012, pp. 33-34.

generations, despite their relatively small number, grew up in the embrace of colonial integrationist thought and coexisted with the colonial presence. Integrationist thought did not only mean learning the language of the colonies and equality in rights and duties, but also meant imitating the models of colonial rulers through imitation and emulation by linking social relations with the French. It was almost purely ideological. "Because of the intensity of attachment to the colonial colonizer, some sources confirm that Francophone Algerian youth had acquired a capacity and jealousy even for the French language, which made them master it more than the French themselves,"<sup>10</sup> which clarifies the extent of attachment of Algerian students who had a French orientation and their attempt to integrate with them in all aspects of life and society. The emergence of the two statements on the political scene after the crisis of the victorious democratic liberation movement played a role in the emergence of this The organization, as this student organization included all left-wing French-speaking student groups, was open to all other student organizations present on French soil. However, the union's orientation called for decentralization and a convergence of ideas, visions, working methods, and goals with the Algerian Communist Party.

#### **4-4- The Association of Muslim Students of North Africa (A.E.M.N.A.):**

The Association of Muslim Students of North Africa was founded in France in 1927. It was one of the most prominent student organizations in the Maghreb region at that time. Based in Paris, it successfully challenged French colonial schemes aimed at dividing Algerian society and starving it financially and morally. Since its inception, it has been committed to defending the rights of Maghrebi students suffering from difficult financial circumstances, by mediating to improve their living conditions in France. To this end, it

established special student clubs and restaurants to support students. It was distinguished by its reforms, cultural and social activities, patriotic stances, and long-standing and ongoing struggle against the French colonizers.

5- The movement and roles of Algerian student organizations today. Student associations are working groups of students with similar interests, whether in the field of collaborative studies or developing diverse student interests. These forums, associations, and student organizations provide the student community with the principle of exchanging goals by enhancing their ability to interact with their peers in a variety of environments. These associations enhance the personal and professional development of their members and enable them to gain rich experiences that contribute to their educational formation. The purpose of student associations is to bring students together and build relationships based on their individual interests so that they later become collective interests. This is the actual reality that student organizations in any university across the Algerian national territory must practice. However, the reality of student organizations in Algerian universities, in performing their tasks and roles, is dominated by defects in the process of performing their tasks in the best way, due to their neutrality towards some student organizations and their deviation from performing the tasks and activities legally assigned to them. Although the law in Algerian legislation is clear regarding the formation of student associations and the recognition of their activities in universities, there are always problems. What appears in practical and actual practice in the field, as for the latter, there is a discrepancy in terms of practice, as observers of the activities of student associations in the university environment see, that student associations deviate from their main goal, which is based on achieving purely student goals, to activities that interact directly or indirectly with certain parties, such as political parties, i.e. neutrality from their performance, so they went and immersed themselves in political problems, in

<sup>10</sup> Abdullah Hammadi, *The Algerian Student Movement, 1871-1962, "Cultural and Ideological Trends,"* previous reference, p. 65.

order for their members or leaders to achieve their personal goals in the greed to reach power, and returning to the field, we often ask a question that comes to our mind, do student organizations aim to actually serve the general interests of students? New students, especially those who do not know anything about these student organizations, the details, activities and management of student organizations at the university, especially when the advantages of student participation in strikes and in many of the decisions taken by the university authorities are presented. The beneficiaries of these student organizations are a starting point for their owners to achieve their goals due to their seniority at the university. The margin of freedom exercised by members of student organizations is represented by the law that authorizes them to practice their activities legally in the public space on the university campus, which has its academic sanctity and is considered a place where students meet to receive various sciences. It is considered a formative institution for the individual to become, after his formation, a good member of society. What we can see with the naked eye about the practices of student organizations on the university campus does not reflect the true picture of what student organizations do. We see protests, strikes, and closing the university doors in the face of students and professors, wasting their time, as this is not in the interest of the student. Compared to Western countries, we find that the main goal of student unions is to achieve the general interests of students within the framework of cooperation between them and The university institution provides them with all the appropriate conditions to perform their duties in the best possible way. These student unions and associations work as an assistant to the university, not as a supervisor who seizes the opportunity to achieve his goals, under the guise of defending student rights. This does not apply to all student organizations present at the national level in Algeria. There are organizations that have principles based on the best performance of their tasks, and they practice their activities continuously every year. They help

the administration and the student in solving their problems and setting limits on illegal practices that are not in the interest of the student, and they act as a mediator between the administration and the student through legal and legitimate means without practicing strikes, which are not in the interest of the student, especially if they last for a long time. The conflict between tasks, performing roles, and achieving interests puts the student organization in conflict between these roles and confuses its objectives set by it.

### Conclusion

At the end of this research paper, we conclude that Algerian student movements have played a significant role in the historical course of education in Algeria. They also played a fundamental role in supporting the Algerian liberation revolution against the French colonialists. They sacrificed their lives and their wealth so that Algerian society could live in peace, despite the persecution they suffered at the hands of the French authorities, who were trying to hinder the achievement of their goals. This means that they played a significant role in changing the French colonialists' intellectual vision of Algerian Muslim students and students loyal to them. However, after French colonialism and the attainment of freedom by Algerian society, the concept of Algerian student organizations changed over specific periods of time, from independence to even before the change that occurred after the events of October 1988, from a single-party system to a multi-party system.

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