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“HUMANIZE THE CONFLICT”: ALGERIAN HEALTH CARE ORGANIZATIONS AND PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGNS, 1954–62

Abstract

This article explores the vitally important yet often neglected role of medicine and health care in the conduct of the Algerian War of Independence (1954–62). Using French, Swiss, and recently opened Algerian archival materials, it demonstrates how Algerian nationalists developed a health-service infrastructure that targeted the domestic and international arenas. It argues that they employed the powerful language of health and healing to legitimize their claims for national sovereignty and used medical organizations to win local support, obtain financial and material aid from abroad, and recast themselves as humanitarians to an increasingly sympathetic international audience. This research aims to situate Algerian efforts into a broader history of decolonization and humanitarianism and contributes to rethinking the process through which political claims were made at the end of empire.

The Algerian Red Crescent, stained with the blood of our martyrs, will continue to rise in our brilliant sky of stars from the twilight of servitude until the dawn of our liberation.

—Omar Boukli-Hacène, president, Algerian Red Crescent, 1957

In the late 1950s, at the height of the Algerian War of Independence, the National Liberation Front (FLN) published a pamphlet entitled “Aspects of the Algerian Revolution.” The cover features four armed National Liberation Army (ALN) soldiers standing over a map of the country and gazing attentively into the distance. These men are poised to protect and defend their nation as they await the challenges ahead. The pamphlet, which has a particular emphasis on health, includes photos of an Algerian doctor setting up a temporary medical station in the countryside. In one of these, above the caption “Care is dispensed to both combatants and civilians during organized ALN visits,” men, women, and children crowd around the physician, waiting their turn to be examined. A second set of images presents uniformed Algerian nurses with Red Crescent armbands, in what appears to be mountainous terrain, preparing a sterile bandage for an older man. Another photograph depicts nine young women gathered around a male instructor with pens and notebooks in their hands; the heading explains that after the completion of these “nursing courses,” they would “join the ALN units.”¹

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Sustained military violence and deliberate attempts by the French colonial state to restrict the availability of pharmaceutical products and medical materials for those involved in the anticolonial struggle presented the FLN with one of its most pressing issues. The Algerian leadership understood that concern for the population's welfare conveyed a powerful message, and it hoped to demonstrate an organized and vibrant medical sector. Nationalists were committed to protecting their soldiers and the Algerian people and seized the language of health care to argue "that they could care for the welfare of 'their' populations better than [could an] alien colonial government."² They also recognized the value of being regarded as humanitarians by an increasingly sympathetic international audience and developed strategies to accomplish that goal.

While the literature on the Algerian war continues to expand, few studies have focused on medicine and on the health care organizations that the FLN created specifically to bolster nation-state claims and solicit international aid.³ Throughout the war, both the French and the Algerians launched extensive medical and health care propaganda campaigns. While the colonial administration developed health-related strategies to simultaneously win over the population and isolate the rebels, Algerians nationalists created their own health care services, as portrayed in the previously mentioned pamphlet, to counteract these aims.

This article investigates Algerian health care organizations and argues that they were deployed for both social and political ends. The first section concentrates on the development of the FLN-ALN domestic Services de Santé (hereafter referred to as the health-services division) from 1954 to 1957, illustrating the nationalists' commitment to the civilian population and establishing the context for understanding their broader political strategy and its connection to international developments in subsequent years. The second section examines the Algerian Red Crescent (CRA), a de facto national Red Cross society that nationalists established to supplement their domestic health care efforts and to add an international dimension to them.

The CRA, an instrumental component of the Algerian anticolonial movement, has gone unnoticed in the scholarship. It demands attention as one of the most active and vocal organizations that advocated for Algerians throughout the war and that employed the language of humanitarianism to the nationalists' political advantage. Drawing upon original research, including underutilized Algerian sources, I show that the FLN-ALN health-services division and the CRA found ways to convert Algerian health care problems and medicine shortages into international concerns. The scholarly literature on modern imperialism has explored at length how colonial regimes manipulated health and medicine; this article argues that Algerian nationalists also used the provision of medicine and health care to gain the support of the local population and to sway international public opinion.⁴

ALGERIAN HEALTH CARE SERVICES

From its inception, the FLN recognized the strong correlation between medical care and civilian support, yet the first two years of the war (1954-56) were extremely challenging for the Algerian health-services division due to poor coordination among the political leadership. Despite FLN claims that its participants agreed on the methods it should pursue to achieve independence, its leaders were divided about the direction the war

should take.⁵ The initial FLN heads shared an end goal but faced logistical challenges related in part to their dispersed geographic locations; they thus struggled to establish a centralized health-service organization that would adequately address the needs of both their soldiers and the civilian constituency they claimed to represent.

During this period, communication between different regions of the country was limited, and the ALN did not have standard procedures or trained medical personnel upon whom to rely, resulting in what Mohammed Harbi, a former Algerian political activist, calls a “relatively inefficient” health system.⁶ In December 1954, fewer than 1,900 doctors in Algeria (of whom only seventy-five were Algerian) served a population of roughly nine million Muslim Algerians and one million Europeans and *pieds-noirs*.⁷ As a result, FLN and ALN participants worked with limited expertise and made creative use of inadequate supplies.⁸

Two important events, the May 1956 strike (La grève du 19 Mai 1956) and the August 1956 Soummam Congress, transformed the FLN–ALN health-services division, which reported directly to the army, and enabled nationalists to argue that they were prepared to assume responsibility for the people’s welfare.⁹ In the spring of that year, the General Union of Muslim Algerian Students (Union Générale des Etudiants Muselmanns Algériens, UGEMA) organized what turned out to be an extremely effective recruiting tool for the wartime medical division and inaugurated a new phase of the conflict. On 19 May, the union called on Algerian students to walk away from their classrooms and devote themselves to national service. It questioned the nature of their coursework and the value of their diplomas in such a time of crisis, when their “mothers, spouses, [and] sisters are raped, when [their] elderly die by machinegun fire, bombs, and napalm.”¹⁰ The UGEMA urged students in all disciplines to suspend their studies immediately and indefinitely, “desert university benches,” and commit themselves to “more urgent and glorious tasks.”¹¹

Hundreds of students joined the maquis in the spring of 1956, a moment that doctor and historian Ahmed Benkhaled calls “a crucial turning point in the history of the Algerian health services during the national liberation struggle.”¹² In 1956, there were only 360 Algerians enrolled at the University of Algiers and, of that group, only 128 were studying medicine.¹³ Medical students’ knowledge and skills were in high demand, especially considering how few of them there were, and any student was a valuable asset.

Many medical students had not finished their training, but they were a welcome addition to FLN ranks.¹⁴ A number of Algerian students pursuing medical degrees abroad responded to the UGEMA call. In Lyon, Bensalem Djamel-Eddine (Bin Salim Jamal al-Din) and some of his fellow classmates interrupted their coursework to return to Algeria. In December 1956, Djamel-Eddine took a boat to Tunisia, where he practiced medicine in Sousse for several months and worked closely with Dr. Mohammed Nekkache (Naqqash), a member of the Algerian health commission in the east. In May 1957, he entered into Algeria and began working in Wilaya 1.¹⁵

Doctors and nurses supporting the nationalist effort helped train new recruits for propaganda and basic medical care in clandestine safe houses and other secret locations.¹⁶ *El Moudjahid*, an FLN newspaper that was printed in both French and Arabic, reported that the ALN took the time to instruct an elite cadre of medical personnel before sending them to the maquis. Out of a group of roughly 300 soldiers preparing for combat, forty were selected to receive intensive instruction in triage and basic surgical

procedures—skills “the struggle required,” noted the ALN supervisor. After one month, they were rotated back out to the larger group, and forty more recruits would start their medical training.¹⁷ This degree of preparation was rare but it speaks to the concerted FLN effort to bolster its medical presence in Algeria as well as to publicize that presence.

The second major development in health care recruitment and organization in 1956 was the Soummam Congress, which began on 20 August in the Soummam valley. The main impetus behind the congress was political. The FLN needed to unite its different leadership factions, generate a coherent strategy, and refine its goals. This summit, attended by sixteen delegates from around the country, established political rule over the organization’s military wing and prioritized the internal leadership over the external one operating in Cairo.¹⁸ The attendees issued a platform outlining cease-fire and negotiation conditions; the role of women and youth; and the FLN’s relationship with peasants, trade unions, the Jewish community, communists, and *pieds-noirs*. They also divided Algeria into six *wilāyāt* or provinces for organizational purposes and established new executive hierarchies throughout the country.

After the fall of 1956, the FLN’s wartime health care system operated within the new territorial infrastructure of the *wilāyāt*, each of which was further divided into zones, regions, sectors, and finally subsectors. Each health-services unit within this hierarchy was expected to maintain detailed reports on the patients it treated and submit them to the unit above it. Several accounts depict the ALN–FLN health-services division as functioning relatively smoothly during this phase, with medical personnel following the proper chain of command.¹⁹ They suggest that doctors filled out patient reports and sent many wounded individuals for further treatment or rehabilitation abroad.²⁰

However, the system described in these sources is an idealized version of how the medical sector actually functioned.²¹ One doctor remembers that “people did what they could” and that the health care services “were not dependable.”²² Another activist explains that the unit’s location greatly impacted the amount of supplies it received. For example, Mustafa ‘Amirush, who fought primarily in Wilaya IV, recalls that medical units closest to the Moroccan and Tunisian borders were the most successful in obtaining essential supplies.²³ Others remember that the health-services division during this period was not very visible and that it operated on a day to day basis.²⁴ These descriptions challenge the picture described in the official FLN documents and highlight the discrepancy between the leadership’s intentions and the reality experienced by many *maquisards*.

Attempting to construct a viable medical sector, the FLN–ALN issued strict instructions about the aims of the health branch and how *maquisards* were expected to behave. According to a doctor who served in Wilaya IV, the four main goals of the wartime health division were to conduct regular visits to soldiers; prevent infectious diseases; treat combatants, refugees, and political militants; and, finally, care for wounded civilians.²⁵ Accomplishing these tasks and obtaining the necessary supplies required cooperation between different military, political, and social groups.

The French military seized some of these reports as they circulated clandestinely and noticed that part of the new Algerian health initiative targeted rural and remote areas. In June 1957, General Raoul Salan discovered that the FLN–ALN health-services division was treating not only soldiers but also Algerian civilians. Mobile medical teams passed through villages and the countryside—as did the French Sections Administratives Spécialisées—offering treatment that was previously unavailable. Salan noted what a

“psychological effect” the “rebel commanders” could have on the rural population. He thought offering medical treatment was one of the “best FLN propaganda tools” he had seen to date and commented on the important moral dimension of this kind of work.²⁶ The nationalists intended to win support through their health programs and, to borrow an expression from Sandra Sufian, thereby “heal the land and the nation.”²⁷ Given their limited resources and personnel, it is difficult to assess the full impact of FLN–ALN medical offerings in isolated parts of Algeria. However, French officials and army generals had to acknowledge that they were not the only players on this field.

The psychological effect of medical care on the civilian population thus became strategically significant for Algerian nationalists. In one FLN–ALN service note, Lakhdar, a captain in Wilaya IV, reminded his personnel to “periodically visit and treat the population.”²⁸ In reports about morale and social conditions, medical officers often commented on their successes winning over the Algerian people. “Mahmoud,” an ALN member in Wilaya IV, wrote that “the population always receives [doctors and nurses] with great satisfaction. They never pass through a village without providing care to a large number of children and the elderly. The people know the difficulties we face in procuring medication and appreciate our efforts even more.”²⁹ Monthly reports issued by the FLN and ALN noted that medical care was “an excellent psychological weapon to use against the French” and observed “how happy civilians were to see Arab physicians” caring for and encouraging them.³⁰

One doctor explained that the FLN deployed Algerian doctors to areas that might benefit from medical propaganda.³¹ They tried to reassure the population that the nationalist organization could “take care of them” and stressed that its leaders were “interested in their lives” and would “not let them die” in poor conditions.³² Similar to strategies employed in other colonial contexts in Africa and the Middle East, Algerian political leaders tried to equate its own medical services with those of a future sovereign state and employed a social welfare framework to show that they “[spoke] for the masses and their well-being.”³³

INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL AMBITIONS: THE ALGERIAN RED CRESCENT

From the beginning of the anticolonial movement, the FLN attended to both local and international dimensions of the Algerian struggle for independence, and this attention also applied to the medical division. The student strike and the Soummam Congress contributed to establishing a more sophisticated domestic health sector, even while the brutal conditions of war made it difficult to adequately meet all of the population’s needs. In 1957, the nationalists concentrated on expanding their health care system beyond Algeria. They had already received assistance from doctors in the newly sovereign states of Morocco and Tunisia; throughout the conflict, in the latter country especially, hospitals regularly reserved beds for wounded Algerians.³⁴ They wanted to build upon Arab alliances and viewed the internationalization of medical aid beyond these spheres as a critical tactic in gaining additional support.

The FLN worked closely with Arab and Eastern Bloc governments to supplement its health care instruction efforts. In December 1958, Egyptian president Jamal ‘Abd al-Nasir invited a group of Algerian nurses to participate in an internship at the Egyptian

Red Crescent. He told *El Moudjahid* he was “convinced that if a young Algerian girl is determined to fight for her country, her faith will be rewarded, and God will bestow victory and dignity upon Algeria.”³⁵ The nationalists also reached out to the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia for help. These governments developed a system that allowed the ALN to regularly send its wounded to treatment facilities abroad. Several articles in *El Moudjahid* describe trips that Algerian soldiers made in order to receive treatment unavailable in the Maghrib.³⁶ Another Algerian doctor recalled the important role that Eastern countries played in providing treatment and physical therapy for the wounded.³⁷ The FLN considered this to be a “concrete gesture” that signified a larger commitment to independent Algeria.³⁸ It can also be interpreted as an instance of Cold War alliances in the global South such as those Matthew Connelly and Odd Arne Westad have analyzed.³⁹

The nationalists wanted to expand their support network further to include organizations with international ties; one already active in Algeria was the French Red Cross (CRF), a national society of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) based in Geneva. According to ICRC regulations, each sovereign country was permitted one national society linked to the international organization to carry out humanitarian activities according to local needs. Though associated with the founding branch in Geneva and expected to uphold the principles of neutrality and impartiality, national societies approved by the central organization were not under its direct authority and maintained their own staff.⁴⁰ In theory, the CRF in Algeria could have been a place for French and Algerian doctors to join forces openly, where patients of all backgrounds could feel safe from both government and FLN attacks. Instead, it found itself torn between a colonial mission and a humanitarian one and in fact systematically assumed a position of sympathy for the metropole.

During the decades preceding the war for independence, the CRF in Algeria organized national health days, contributed aid to tubercular North African patients in France, assisted veterans of World War II and Indochina, and matched Algerian host families with young French missionaries for the Christmas and New Year holidays.⁴¹ The evidence suggests that during this time the CRF maintained a low profile and was not a target of significant criticism from either the European or Algerian population. But this changed after 1954, when FLN representatives accused it of being “a vessel of colonialism” and “a puppet of the French authorities,” thrusting it into the national and international spotlights.⁴²

Internal CRF reports from the start of the war in November 1954 until late 1956 rarely mentioned the conflict or even any increased demand for medical services in Algeria.⁴³ A short internal letter from 1956 noted that the CRF intended to collect funds for and assist “those hit by the events.”⁴⁴ But the national society’s annual reports for 1954 and 1955 focused primarily on its relief efforts for the September 1954 earthquake in Orléansville. The only indication in these reports that the CRF was affected by the war are references to “insurrectional conditions” and to the French army’s need for aid, suggesting a political orientation toward the colonial authorities.⁴⁵ The CRF monthly magazine continued to publish interest stories about French physicians who served with the colonial military in Indochina and who debated the disorder of medical infrastructure in times of war.⁴⁶ The CRF appeared to carry on as though nothing transformative in Algeria was taking place.

In 1957, the CRF began to refer more regularly, albeit still euphemistically, to “the events” and to acknowledge the reality of a “pacification campaign,” French code for the war.⁴⁷ It was also forced to expand its programming as the conflict created more need for medical assistance throughout the country. The 1957 annual report, in contrast to those from the first three years of the war, stressed the organization’s social and humanitarian spirit and its commitment to helping “victims of the calamitous events . . . regardless of race or religion.”⁴⁸ While the organization’s official discourse asserted its enthusiasm for helping all victims of the war, in practice it maintained a stronger working relationship with the French army than with the FLN and devoted significant resources to assisting wounded French soldiers.⁴⁹ Accounts in newspapers and magazines such as *Le Monde*, *L’Echo d’Alger*, and *Vie et Bonté* (a monthly CRF magazine) seem to suggest that a primary objective of the CRF was to boost French morale by visiting soldiers in hospitals and providing them with cigarettes, candy, and games.⁵⁰

The FLN leadership was consistently critical of the CRF, accusing it of siding with the French army and European settler population. In January 1957, it decided to develop a separate national society, the Algerian Red Crescent (CRA). Given that the CRF had been operational in Algeria for decades, the Geneva-based ICRC was unlikely to recognize the newly conceived CRA. But the Algerian leadership was not deterred by the probability of the international organization only granting their national society *de facto* status, if any status at all. In his history of the Algerian Red Crescent, its former secretary general, Mustapha Makaci, explained that “revolutionary Algeria was not in the position to fulfill ICRC conditions . . . The Algerian government did not exist in this period . . . Yet meeting the population’s needs was urgent. We had to consider an intermediary solution, a convenient solution.”⁵¹ Members of the Comité de Coordination et d’Exécution (CCE), the precursor to the Algerian Provisional Government (GPRA), believed it was necessary for “wounded Algeria to create and have at its disposal a mouthpiece close to the international committees of Red Crosses and Red Crescents, to solicit and receive aid.”⁵² They envisioned that the CRA would work closely with the ICRC; the former’s first president, Omar Boukli-Hacène (‘Umar Buqli Hasan), a lawyer from Tlemcen, expressed hope that “*de jure* recognition [of the CRA] would be linked to Algerian independence.”⁵³ The CRA would be the kind of organization that other countries around the world would respect. Its delegates would monitor and report French violations of human rights and of the Geneva Conventions in Algeria. The nationalists’ early articulation of CRA responsibilities shows a shrewd political awareness of the boundaries the new organization could contest, and the issues it could exploit, in the future.

Algerians met as early as September 1956 to discuss the possibility of forming a Red Crescent.⁵⁴ In December 1956, the CCE—the FLN chief executive body—approved the creation of the CRA, with the understanding that it would follow FLN directives and would be “perfectly integrated” into the existing executive FLN–ALN war branches. It would function as a much needed social wing of the revolutionary movement, supplementing its primary political and military initiatives.⁵⁵ The CRA would pursue a complementary agenda to that of the FLN and ALN, yet it would have different responsibilities from those branches because it would use humanitarian ideals, principles, and rhetoric to expand support by merging Algerian “political questions with humanitarian ones”—a dangerous combination, from the perspective of ICRC representative Pierre Gaillard.⁵⁶

Appropriating humanitarian language was a key component of CRA strategy; it projected an awareness of and commitment to international norms, demonstrating that Algerian leaders were capable of translating a vocabulary developed by Western institutions into one that served their own ends and through which they could make claims for sovereignty.⁵⁷ CRA representatives drew freely from ICRC literature in formulating the central elements of its mission, which included treating the injured, assisting war victims, serving as an intermediary between prisoners of war and their families, and facilitating ICRC missions to Algeria.⁵⁸ Additional CRA concerns were to assist the growing Algerian refugee population in Morocco and Tunisia; supply medicine and medical personnel to the ALN–FLN health-services division; and integrate Algeria into a global international aid movement.⁵⁹ The Algerians' international ambition to align themselves with the Geneva-based organization and its humanitarian principles was clearly defined from the foundation of the CRA.⁶⁰

The CRA established its first offices in Tangiers and Tunis in early 1957; later that year it created branches in Geneva and Cairo. According to the first secretary general, Geneva was chosen because it was where the Red Cross and Red Crescent committees and international organizations were concentrated and Cairo because it could serve as a center “to receive donations and ensure their distribution.”⁶¹ A general overview of CRA activities, likely written by one of its early officials, highlighted Cairo's strategic importance for connecting with “Middle Eastern brothers.”⁶² In the same report, the author recounted the day-to-day tasks that the Tangier office performed—“foreign correspondence, continuous contact and discussion with ICRC representatives [contacts et discussion sans fins avec les Représentants du CICR], to make them recognize the CRA,” and “sending propaganda documents”—and encouraged those working in other cities to emulate them.⁶³ FLN delegates and early CRA leaders considered contacting sympathetic organizations for aid and lobbying the ICRC crucial components of their work. The CRA set out to establish relationships with influential representatives of humanitarian organizations and communicate regularly with national Red Cross societies around the world, hoping to show the extent of its dedication to conducting the war in a humane fashion.

Just four weeks after radios announced the creation of the CRA on 8 January 1957, at the height of the battle of Algiers and shortly before the FLN eight-day strike initiative, the new organization's representatives were sending letters to national societies abroad and enlisting their support.⁶⁴ For example, a letter from Boukli-Hacène to the president of the English Red Cross in London on 7 February informs the latter that “the CRA had been established in Tangiers” and that it “pursued the exact same goals” as other national societies around the world. Boukli-Hacène stresses “the long-lasting feelings of solidarity that motivate your organization and your great nation,” to act on behalf “of the suffering” and asks that the English Red Cross “respond with aid for Algerian soldiers, the sick and wounded, and orphans and refugees.”⁶⁵

By March 1957, CRA leaders were writing to and meeting with ICRC representatives. On 8 and 9 March, the CRA president, general secretary, and treasurer arrived in Geneva from Tangiers and met with FLN delegates and ICRC delegate Claude Pilloud. CRA President Boukli-Hacène had prepared a lengthy memo explaining why the ICRC should recognize the CRA; however, none of the reasons given were tenable according to ICRC conditions for an official national society. The two parties discussed prisoners, ICRC

visits to Algeria, and the possibility of sending trained medical personnel to aid the Algerians. The Algerian delegates also used the meeting to raise "a long list of French atrocities and inhumane treatment," including "executions, torture, hostages, attacks, pillages, and rapes" committed by French authorities.⁶⁶ Even though Pilloud does not make any definitive recommendations about how the international organization might proceed with the Algerians, securing a face to face meeting with the ICRC was an achievement for the new organization because it unofficially legitimized CRA action.

The motivations for the creation of the CRA were not lost on Pilloud, who voiced concerns about the aims of the organization and "the delicate position" in which it had placed the ICRC. Pilloud remarked that

the goal of creating this organism is to have an institution, distinct from the FLN, that will be able to negotiate with the ICRC and humanize the war. There is a tendency from my FLN interlocutors to send all problems that might interest the ICRC to the Algerian Red Crescent . . . Upon their return to Tangiers, they were going to assemble the CRA committee and [re]examine the problem in light of [what I said].

He worried that by meeting with CRA representatives he had recognized their activities and, by extension, their organization. He promised "to do my best to avoid difficulties for the ICRC," though "this [would] not be easy."⁶⁷ Pilloud's concerns were not unfounded. Association with the reputable humanitarian institution provided the Algerian nationalists an opportunity to present their agenda as analogous to that of the ICRC and to create a broader international platform from which to make appeals.

1958: SOLIDIFYING A HUMANITARIAN AGENDA

The year 1958 was a turning point in the war. Charles de Gaulle returned to power in France and began a gradual four-year shift in official policy toward Algerian independence; many of the original FLN leaders, including Hocine Ait Ahmed, Rabah Bitat, Mohamed Khider, and Mohamed Boudiaf,⁶⁸ established the Algerian Provisional Government (GPRA) in Cairo; and revelations about the systematic use of torture started to change French public opinion about the conflict.⁶⁹ As Matthew Connelly has shown, the Algerians "employed human rights reports, press conferences, and youth congresses" as weapons to rally "majorities against France at the United Nations, [win] accolades of international conferences, and [gain] twenty-one-gun salutes in capitals across the globe."⁷⁰ Internationalizing the conflict through diplomacy was always a central component of nationalist strategy, and, as Connelly's work shows, after 1958 the GPRA was increasingly successful in achieving this aim.

Yet a vital dimension of the Algerian nationalists' global outreach has been overlooked. Beginning in the fall of 1958, GPRA leaders, and its president Ferhat Abbas in particular, worked closely with the CRA to create an image of themselves and the Algerian people as humanitarians. Two ways they did this were by organizing French-prisoner releases attended by representatives of the European and Maghribi press and by expanding their propaganda and solicitation campaigns for aid. These efforts yielded millions of dollars in donations from countries as far away as Japan, Korea, the Soviet Union, and Cuba and helped the CRA obtain crucial medical supplies that the French government had purposely withheld. Nationalists used the Red Crescent as a launch pad

to construct a version of the Algerian struggle and colonial oppression that it wanted the world to hear.

French colonial discourse had long portrayed Algerians as “intensely violent by nature,” a myth that predates 1830 but that the French military manipulated throughout the conquest in the 19th century. Similar claims were made during major uprisings against the colonial regime in the wake of World War II, most notably after the Sétif and Guelma protests in May 1945.⁷¹ The war for independence provided the French government with a new occasion to demonize its enemy. The FLN was described as a violent group that “neglected all the laws and customs of war” and could not overcome its internal divisions and personal struggles for power.⁷² Others, such as a *pied-noir* farmer at Ménerville, approximately forty miles east of Algiers, portrayed Algerians as ruthless people who “don’t kill because they have anything against you. These days they kill for the sake of killing.”⁷³

French government and military officials regularly depicted the FLN and ALN as organizations of brutal savages. However, confirmation of French torture in 1958—a dominant military strategy until 1960—galvanized French domestic opinion against the government’s actions.⁷⁴ Algerian nationalists exploited the torture revelations to recast the colonial administration as an abuser and violator of its own republican ideals. Moreover, with the help of the CRA, the FLN shifted the focus of the debate, casting its members as liberal, generous humanitarians willing to voluntarily follow the Geneva Conventions.

The CRA and ICRC corresponded continually during the first eighteen months of the former’s existence, often on the issue of prisoners. Central elements of the ICRC’s mission were providing relief for prisoners of war on both sides, tracing missing persons, and reporting on the wounded.⁷⁵ The ICRC had initially hoped that the CRA, even though not officially recognized, would provide the international organization with information about French POWs. (It asked the same of the French military regarding Algerian POWs.) Despite repeated efforts by Ferhat Abbas and Djilali Bentami (Jilali bin Tami, a CRA delegate and doctor in Geneva) throughout 1957 and the first half of 1958, they could not obtain reliable information from the FLN and ALN regarding the whereabouts and health of French prisoners. After a summer 1958 meeting in Geneva, ICRC delegate I. Zreikat’s report hinted at frustration when working with the Algerians. He wrote that “Dr. Bentami understands the necessity of an FLN gesture and that it observe the Red Cross humanitarian principles if it wants reciprocity.”⁷⁶ Up until this point, he added, it had not done so.

This changed later in the year with the creation of the GPRA. Abbas had been in contact with the ICRC for nearly two years by the time he was named head of the GPRA and was thus familiar with Red Cross concerns about French prisoners. In one of his first official acts, on 3 October 1958, Abbas, along with GPRA Vice President and Minister of the Armed Forces Krim Belkacem and Minister of the Interior Lakhdar Ben Tobbal, issued a prisoner release decree that extended “a general amnesty to certain categories of detainees.”⁷⁷ It specified that “all detainees who were in local FLN and ALN units with the exception of those pursued or condemned for high treason or collaboration with the enemy” were entitled to amnesty and liberation. The official notice concluded that “certain French soldiers” held by the ALN also would “be liberated without conditions and returned to their families by delegates of the International Red Cross of Geneva.”⁷⁸

This decree would soon have an undeniable impact on improving relations with the ICRC and on reshaping the image of Algerian nationalists. The GPRA and CRA had interacted with the ICRC long enough to know that prisoner safety was one of the international organization’s priorities, and Abbas hoped to prove that he and CRA representatives were worthy interlocutors on whom the ICRC could depend. The GPRA and CRA also had a chance to combat the negative press, propaganda, and derogatory portrayals the French government was circulating globally.

The nascent Algerian government wanted to project a positive image of Algerian men and women fighting for national liberation, one that suggested they believed in human rights, treated French prisoners with respect, and embraced the Geneva Conventions. Eleven days after the 3 October decree, an unnamed GPRA member discussed the potential impact prisoner releases could have on the organization and recommended that they should be brought to the attention of local press, political personalities, and organizations such as the Red Cross. He stressed that it was “very desirable that the accent be put on our liberalism and our concern for humanity.”⁷⁹ In the event that prisoner releases “need[ed] to be explained in political terms to your interlocutors,” he recommended that it should first be made clear that “it is an act of good will on our part [and] implies to our adversary that we respect the Geneva Conventions.” Second, “it is from a position of strength that we are able to be liberal and generous. [Our actions] are not a sign of weakness.” And third, “we await a French Government response to our eminently humane initiative” that shows “the same good will.” When possible, he concluded, “it is in this way that newspaper editorials should be oriented.”⁸⁰ The nationalists’ willingness to tackle the delicate matter of POWs was a deliberate strategy to demonstrate to the ICRC that they intended to comply with humane practices.

The Algerian leadership did not waste any time preparing their first prisoner-release ceremony in Tunisia. Two and a half weeks after Abbas announced the decree, the ALN released four French prisoners it had captured near Sakhiet-Sidi-Youssef on 11 January of that year and had held for ten months.⁸¹ Working in conjunction with the Tunisian Red Crescent (CRT), the CRA organized a ceremony for their release on 20 October 1958. *El Moudjahid* reported that Aziz Djellouli (al-‘Aziz al-Jaluli), president of the CRT, and ICRC delegates Jean de Preux and Pierre Gaillard presided over the occasion, which lasted just under one hour. Roughly sixty members of the international press and radio were on hand to witness the French soldiers returning to their families.⁸² According to the GPRA press statement, an unidentified representative of the political organization told the crowd that this occasion was a result of the 3 October decree and was not contingent upon the release of Algerian POWs by the French.⁸³ This effort demonstrated the commitment of the GPRA, the CRA, and the CRT to work together and to distance themselves from the colonial administration’s accusations that the FLN was a terrorist group. The GPRA, in its infant stages, facilitated this event and successfully coordinated various Algerian organizations, signaling a renewed interest in incorporating CRA work into the broader nationalist political strategy.

Additional prisoner releases throughout North Africa followed the initial one in Tunisia. On 3 November 1958, Colonel Amirouche (‘Amirush), the influential leader of Wilaya III, supervised the ALN release of six French soldiers in Kabylia.⁸⁴ Muhammad Yazid, GPRA minister of information, wrote a memo from Cairo one week later saying “these six French prisoners publicly recognized, in declarations that were reproduced

by the French press on 5 and 6 November, that they were well treated by the ALN.” Yazid remarked that “global opinion will not fail to realize that this new release of French prisoners is taking place at a moment when the French Government is violating international laws of war more than ever.”⁸⁵

In Morocco, as in Tunisia and Algeria, an ICRC delegation assisted ALN officials and the CRA in a prisoner-release ceremony, held during the second week of December 1958. According to “Nadir,” a GPRA external-affairs representative, the nationalists counted on “the maximum amount of publicity,” and, if possible, the coverage should underscore that the Algerians’ actions reflected their government’s respect for the laws of war, which the French army violated daily. This latest release was indicative of new humanitarian gestures that would define future GPRA, FLN–ALN, and CRA politics.⁸⁶ In two short months, the GPRA and CRA worked with the CRT, Moroccan officials, and ICRC intermediaries in three Maghribi countries. These ceremonies provided a stark contrast to the images and stories about Algerian barbarism published in the French press. They were meant also to serve as “positive gestures” that “clearly expressed” the desire to “unilaterally humanize the conflict.”⁸⁷ The Algerian leaders wanted to present themselves as operating according to international humanitarian principles.

Building upon the success of the prisoner-release ceremonies, the GPRA, the CRA, and the FLN–ALN focused on publicizing the plight of Algerian refugees to broaden their strategy for soliciting financial and material aid and garnering international sympathy for their anticolonial struggle. The French government had begun creating *regroupement* centers in Algeria as early as 1955 in an effort to pacify the countryside. The number of *regroupement* centers increased dramatically after 1957, when they were systematically implemented as part of French military strategy. Three years into the war, there were almost 240,000 Algerian civilians living in 382 temporary and permanent centers. By early 1960, there were approximately 1.5 million Algerians living in over 1,700 centers, and later that year nearly one-fourth of the Algerian people had been forcibly resettled into them.⁸⁸ During the course of the French army’s efforts to relocate the indigenous population within Algeria, several hundred thousand became refugees in Morocco and Tunisia. By 1959, over 200,000 Algerians had fled their homeland and were in need of food, clothing, and medicine.

The CRA began producing pamphlets and memos detailing the plight of these refugees. One publication, titled “Les réfugiés algériens,” included graphic images of refugees and the deplorable conditions in which they lived due to the destructive nature of French military action.⁸⁹ The pamphlet called on readers to recognize common human characteristics and to get involved in the CRA relief effort. The Algerian national society took full advantage of the ICRC network and circulated its materials to as many national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies as it could contact. CRA publications were a direct rebuttal of French accusations of Algerian brutality and provided compelling evidence that France had violated international law. This new phase of Algerian propaganda aimed to publicize the war; familiarize the world with Algerian refugees; demonstrate severe financial, medical, and material need; and ask for aid. The CRA refined this method of solicitation and received millions of dollars during the second half of the war.

The CRA sent a “call on behalf of refugees” to Arab allies in Damascus, Beirut, Baghdad, Khartoum, Amman, Benghazi, and Jeddah, imploring them to apply pressure on their governments and on social organizations in their countries. The plea described

refugee conditions in Morocco and Tunisia and asserted that "more than 300,000 Algerians, 50 percent of whom are children, 35 percent women, and 15 percent elderly individuals," lived across the borders. The Moroccan and Tunisian governments had made significant relief contributions, but they could not provide aid sufficient to meet the need.⁹⁰ Therefore, the CRA was calling on concerned Arab neighbors to respond and send donations.

The fundraising campaign succeeded in raising funds from across the Arab world; donations came in all materials and amounts and were sent to CRA offices in Tunis and to the Moroccan and Tunisian Red Crescent societies. The Libyan Red Crescent's Central Committee sent \$25,000 for child refugees in combat zones.⁹¹ Jordan sent approximately 80,000 Swiss francs to the CRA office in Tangiers.⁹² Syria sent 60,000 French francs worth of flour and cornmeal.⁹³ Donations to the CRA for refugee aid continued to arrive through 1962: Tunisia sent over 200 kilograms of medication and several shipments of clothes⁹⁴; Jordan sent more than 5,000 pieces of clothing⁹⁵; and Lebanon sent thirty-two million francs worth of medication,⁹⁶ to name just a few of the Arab nations that participated in the war relief effort.

But even more telling of the CRA's aid solicitation success was the extent to which countries and organizations outside the Arab world responded to its calls for help. Countries such as Italy and Portugal began sending clothes, blankets, milk, and cloth as early as 1958, as did Japan, Canada, Chile, and Norway.⁹⁷ The Turkish Red Crescent donated thirty tons of sugar and medicine.⁹⁸ North Vietnam sent medicine and rice to the Casablanca office.⁹⁹ The East German Red Cross contributed 250,000 marks worth of medication for refugees in February 1958.¹⁰⁰ French military intelligence even noted that the CRA received donations from nations such as China and Sweden, including medication, money, and bed covers.¹⁰¹ International organizations also increased their aid after 1959.¹⁰² In November and December 1960 alone, the CRA received seventy-five kilograms of "personal effects" from Italy and 410 kilograms of medication and general supplies from Switzerland.¹⁰³ In 1961, aid continued to stream into CRA offices from diverse organizations; the Indian Congress Committee sent 550 cotton blankets, 427 pounds of tea, and 1,000 vials of penicillin to Tunis, and the Vatican pledged \$100,000 for refugee relief work.¹⁰⁴ The ICRC made large donations to the CRA throughout the war, especially after 1958. The global response is a powerful indicator of the CRA's success in constructing a compelling humanitarian message that went beyond Arab alliances and anticolonial movements.

CONCLUSION

The Algerian nationalist leadership created a formidable set of complementary health organizations that permitted them to engage in domestic and international outreach, proving the existence of a vibrant world beyond the French colonial state that was able to transcend national boundaries and interests. During the first half of the war, the FLN-ALN Services de Santé offered a counterpoint to colonial medical services and enabled nationalists to promote a state welfare agenda. In 1957, nationalists founded the Algerian Red Crescent, which not only provided an institutional link between Algerian political leaders, military officials, and medical personnel but also helped to develop and refine wartime strategies. By associating itself with the ICRC, emphasizing French torture,

staging prisoner-release ceremonies, and publicizing the plight of Algerian refugees to garner aid, the CRA appropriated universal discourses of health and humanitarianism to reshape international perceptions of Algerians and their war for national liberation. This article has aimed to situate their efforts within a broader history of decolonization and international humanitarianism and to contribute to rethinking the process through which political claims were made at the end of empire.

NOTES

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¹Centre d'Archives Outre Mer (hereafter CAOM) 81f 528, Ministère d'État chargé d'Affaires Algériennes, Croissant Rouge Algérien, "Aspects de la Révolution Algérienne," n.d.

²Sunil Amrith, *Decolonizing International Health: India and Southeast Asia, 1930–65* (New York: Palgrave, 2006), 10. Gyan Prakash makes a similar argument in *Another Reason: Science and the Imagination of Modern India* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999), chap. 5.

³Important scholarship analyzing the international diplomatic dimensions of the Algerian conflict includes Matthew Connelly, *A Diplomatic Revolution: Algeria's Fight for Independence and the Origins of the Post-Cold War Era* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Hartmut Elsenhans, *La guerre d'Algérie 1954–62: La transition d'une France à une autre, le passage de la IV^{ème} à la V^{ème} République* (Paris: Éditions Publisud, 1999); Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); and Jeffrey James Byrne, *Pilot Nation: Revolutionary Algeria in the Third World's Vanguard* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming). Algerian literature on the war tends to stress the significance of the international arena to the nationalists' political strategy. See, for example, Mohammed Harbi, *Aux origines du FLN* (Paris: Christian Bourgois, 1975); idem, *Le FLN: Mirage et réalité* (Paris: Éditions Jeune Afrique, 1980); idem, *Les archives de la révolution algérienne* (Paris: Éditions Jeune Afrique, 1981); idem and Gilbert Meynier, *Le FLN, documents en histoire, 1954–1962* (Paris: Fayard, 2004); Ali Haroun, *La 7^{ème} wilaya. La guerre du FLN en France, 1954–1962* (Paris: Seuil, 1986); and Gilbert Meynier, *Histoire intérieure du FLN, 1954–1962* (Algiers: Éditions Casbah, 2003). For recent French scholarship emphasizing the significance of military and judiciary abuses, see Raphaëlle Branche, *La torture et l'armée pendant la guerre d'Algérie* (Paris: Gallimard, 2001) and Sylvie Thénault, *Une drôle de justice: Magistrats dans la guerre d'Algérie* (Paris: Éditions La Découverte, 2001).

⁴The global context of the war remains crucial to understanding how the FLN diplomatically defeated the French and forced them to leave in 1962. Matthew Connelly's work has shown the strategic significance of the Cold War to the Algerian war, including in the domain of public health. Matthew Connelly, "The Cold War in the Longue Durée: Global Migration, Public Health, and Population Control," *Cambridge History of the Cold War: Endings*, ed. Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 466–88. This article addresses the internationalization of the Algerian war through health care, but the full role of the Cold War is beyond its scope.

⁵The internal leadership, which included influential figures such as Abane Ramdane ('Aban Ramadan) and Amar Ouamrane ('Ammar 'Umrane), focused its efforts on military action within Algeria. Ahmed Ben Bella and Hocine Ait Ahmed (Husayn Ait Ahmad) headed the external leadership from Cairo and concentrated on international political outreach. For further explanation of various nationalist factions, see Services Historiques de l'Armée de Terre (hereafter SHAT), 1H/2582 Armée de Libération Nationale (ALN), "La Génèse et l'évolution du FLN/ALN," no date [1956]; Harbi, *Le FLN: Mirage et réalité*, 96–107, 115, 389; Omar Carlier, *Entre nation et jihad: Histoire sociale des radicalismes algériens* (Paris: FNSP, 1995); Claude Collot and

Jean-Robert Henry, eds., *Le mouvement national algérien: Textes 1912–1954* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1978); Haroun, *La 7ème wilaya*, 5–27; James McDougall, *History and the Culture of Nationalism in Algeria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); and Benjamin Stora, *Messali Hadj, pionnier du nationalisme algérien, 1898–1974* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1988).

⁶Harbi, *Le FLN: Mirage et réalité*, 170.

⁷Charles-Robert Ageron, *Histoire de l’Algérie contemporaine: Tome II, de l’insurrection de 1871 au déclenchement de la guerre de libération (1954)* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1979), 538–40.

⁸Wounded ALN soldiers were often forced to improvise and treat themselves and each other with only alcohol and mercurochrome. Commandant Si Azzedine, *On nous appelait fellaghas* (Paris: Éditions Stock, 1976), 78; Mohamed Teguaia, *L’armée de libération nationale en Wilaya IV* (Algiers: Éditions Casbah, 2002), 71.

⁹Mohammed Benaïssa Amir, *Contribution à l’étude de l’histoire de la santé en Algérie: Autour d’une expérience vécue en ALN Wilaya V* (Algiers: Office des Publications Universitaires, 1986), 109.

¹⁰“Actes de la Journée Commémorative du 19 mai 1956: Journée de l’étudiant,” *Bulletin d’Information de la Faculté de Médecine d’Alger*, 19 May 2007, 3.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Ahmed Benkhaled, *Chroniques médicales algériennes: Les années de braise* (Algiers: Editions Houma, 2004), 24.

¹³Mostefa Khiati, *Histoire de la médecine en Algérie* (Algiers: Editions Anep, 2000), 28.

¹⁴Meynier, *Histoire intérieure du FLN*, 497.

¹⁵Bensalem Djamel-Eddine, *Voyez nos médecins: Chroniques de la Zone I, Wilaya III* (Algiers: Entreprise National du Livre, 1984), 17–24. In 1956, the FLN divided Algeria into six *wilāyāt* or provinces for organizational purposes; they were Wilaya I (Aurès region), Wilaya II (North Constantine region), Wilaya III (Kabylia region), Wilaya IV (Algiers region), Wilaya V (Oran region), and Wilaya VI (Sahara and the surrounding area).

¹⁶Interview, Jeanine Belkhodja, 25 March 2007, Algiers. Between 2007 and 2009, I conducted interviews in Algiers with seven Algerian physicians (six men and one woman) who practiced medicine during the war. Some names have been changed.

¹⁷“ALN forme ses cadres: Des infirmiers d’élite,” *El Moudjahid* 2, 15 January 1959, 130–31.

¹⁸The sixteen men in attendance were Youcef Zighoud (Yusuf Zighud), Lakhdar Ben Tobbal (Lakhdar bin Tubbal), Mustafa Benaoua (Mustafa bin ‘Awda), Brahim Mezhoudi (Brahim Mazhudi), ‘Ali Kafi, Rouibah Hocine (Ruwibah Husayn), Krim Belkacem (Karim Balqasim), Said Mohammedi, Colonel Amirouche (‘Amirush), Kaci Hamai (Qasi Hamai), Amar Ouamrane, Saddek Dehilès (Sadiq Dihilas), M’Hamed Bouguerre (Muhammad Bukir), Ali Mellah, Abane Ramdane, and Larbi Ben M’Hidi (al-‘Arabi bin Mhidi). Meynier, *Histoire intérieure du FLN, 1954–1962*, 191.

¹⁹Benkhaled, *Chroniques médicales algériennes*, 34–37.

²⁰Amir, *Contribution à l’étude de l’histoire de la santé en Algérie*, 118–27.

²¹SHAT/IH 1681/2, FLN Service de Santé and SHAT/2582/1, Armée de Libération National contain letters and reports seized by the French military during tactical operations and from the bodies of dead Algerian combatants that indicate a level of precision in reporting the number of sick and wounded. ALN service directives dictated rudimentary skills it expected medical personnel to perform and issued instructions for how this information was to be sent from sectors, regions, and zones. Apart from these two files and statements in some Algerian memoirs that such a medical hierarchy existed, there is little evidence to suggest that the FLN–ALN medical division was able to operate this efficiently.

²²Interview, Khalid Khatib, 10 June 2009, Algiers.

²³Interview, Mustafa ‘Amirush, 23 June 2009, Algiers.

²⁴Interview, Khalid Khatib, 10 June 2009, Algiers.

²⁵Amir, *Contribution à l’étude de l’histoire de la santé en Algérie*, 109.

²⁶SHAT/IH 1691/2, FLN Service de Santé, Organisation du service de santé rebelle, Letter from French Army General, Raoul Salan, to the inter army Superior Command, 10ème Région Militaire, 1 June 1957, Algiers.

²⁷Sandra Sufian, *Healing the Land and the Nation: Malaria and the Zionist Project in Palestine, 1920–1947* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2007). Sufian’s study focuses on Palestine under the British Mandate (1920–47) and argues that the anti-malaria campaigns supported by the Zionist movement were a deliberate effort to reshape both the physical bodies of Jews and the physical landscape of the land.

²⁸SHAT/1H 1691/2, FLN Service de Santé, Organisation du service de santé rebelle, FLN–ALN service notice from zone 1 captain, Mr. Lakhdar, 8 December 1956, Wilaya IV.

²⁹SHAT/1H 1691/D2, FLN Service de Santé, Organisation du service de santé rebelle, 1957–1960, Report on social conditions written by ALN medical assistant in Wilaya IV, Zone 1, 7 February 1957.

³⁰SHAT/1H 2582/1, Armée de Libération, October 1956 Monthly report, Wilaya IV, no author.

³¹Djamel-Eddine, *Voyez nos armes, voyez nos médecins*, 97.

³²*Ibid.*, 98–99.

³³Historians of medicine have made similar arguments about Egypt and Zambia. See Omnia El Shakry, *The Great Social Laboratory: Subjects of Knowledge in Colonial and Postcolonial Egypt* (Palo Alto, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2007), 6, 17; and James Ferguson, *Expectations of Modernity: Myths and Meanings of Urban Life on the Zambian Copperbelt* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1999).

³⁴Meynier, *Histoire intérieure du FLN*, 497.

³⁵“Une promotion d’infirmières algériennes au Caire,” *El Moudjahid* 2, 8 December 1958, 98.

³⁶“Actualité et point de repère: Des blessés de l’ALN partent pour l’URSS et la Tchécoslovaquie,” *El Moudjahid* 2, 31 August 1959, 441; “Le Litva emporte nos blessés vers Odessa,” *El Moudjahid* 3, 73, and 24 November 1960, 319; “Actualité: Pour nos blessés,” *El Moudjahid* 3, 15 April 1961, 459.

³⁷Interview, Jeanine Belkhodja, 25 March 2007, Algiers.

³⁸“Actualité et point de repère,” 441.

³⁹Connelly, *A Diplomatic Revolution*; Westad, *The Global Cold War*.

⁴⁰“What is the ICRC’s relationship with national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies?” <http://www.icrc.org/eng/resources/documents/misc/5fmjhl.htm> (accessed 15 June 2012). Histories of the organization include Nicholas Berry, *War and the Red Cross: The Unspoken Mission* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1997); David Forsythe, *The Humanitarians: The International Committee of the Red Cross* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005); and Ian Reid, *The Evolution of the Red Cross* (Geneva: Henry Dunant Institute, 1975).

⁴¹CAOM/GGA/1K/678, French Red Cross reports, 1942–1957.

⁴²Archives Nationales d’Algérie (hereafter ANA) GPRA/78(i), “Plan du Travail du CRA établi à l’Intérieur de CCE,” Internal Algerian Red Crescent signed by Hadj Omar Boukli-Hacène, CRA President, Comité Centrale, Tunis, 26 September 1957.

⁴³CAOM/GGA/81F/1650, Aide médicale et sociale, Report on the “Conventions entre Délégation Régionale des Amitiés Africaines en Algérie et la Délégation Générale de la Croix-Rouge Française en Algérie,” 1953.

⁴⁴CAOM/GGA/1K/678, French Red Cross reports, 1942–57, Letter from the Prefect, Cabinet Director, Jacques Pernet, to the Algiers Prefecture, 21 April 1956, Algiers.

⁴⁵Archives de la Croix-Rouge Française (hereafter CRF), Rappports sur les activités de la Croix-Rouge Française en Algérie, 1954, 1955.

⁴⁶*Vie et Bonté, Organe Officiel de la Croix-Rouge Française*, no. 69, September–October 1955, 16–17.

⁴⁷CAOM/GGA/12CAB/150, Rappports sur les activités de la Croix-Rouge Française en Algérie, 1956, and CRF, Rappports sur les activités de la Croix-Rouge Française en Algérie, 1957.

⁴⁸CRF, Rappports sur les activités de la Croix-Rouge Française en Algérie, 1957.

⁴⁹CRF, Rappports sur les activités de la Croix-Rouge Française en Algérie, 1957 and 1958.

⁵⁰These news sources repeatedly published articles about CRF visits to French military and civilian hospitals. Often CRF nurses would pose alongside injured French soldiers, and the caption would describe the rejuvenating nature of their visits. Around Christmas, the CRF made an extra effort to visit hospitals around the country and hand out gifts to the French soldiers.

⁵¹Mustapha Makaci, *Le Croissant Rouge Algérien* (Algiers: Éditions Alpha, 2007), 82. This work draws on the author’s experiences and on notes he took in the late 1950s and includes an annex with invaluable CRA documents, correspondence, and pictures from the war years.

⁵²*Ibid.*, 82–83.

⁵³ANA/GPRA/78(i), “Plan du Travail du CRA établi à l’Intérieur de CCE.”

⁵⁴Algerian leaders in Tetouan, Morocco first contacted Boumediène Bensmaine and pharmacist Merad Abdellah (Murad ‘Abdallah) to compile a report entitled “The Algerian Red Crescent Organization.” This organization was modeled on the Tunisian Red Crescent. Farouk Benatia, *Les actions humanitaires pendant la lutte de libération* (Algiers: Éditions Dahlab, 1997), 80.

⁵⁵Makaci, *Le Croissant Rouge Algérien*, 84.

⁵⁶International Committee of the Red Cross Archives (hereafter ICRC) BAG/210/008/001, Prisonniers français en mains rebelles, 1956–57, Report from ICRC representative, Pierre Gaillard, regarding his meeting with CRA representative and Geneva delegate, Dr. Bentami, Geneva, 15 October 1957.

⁵⁷El-Shakry, *The Great Social Laboratory*, 14. Frederick Cooper has shown how African laborers made effective claims by seizing “the new discourse of [French and British] administrators and [turning] assertions of control into demands for entitlements: if colonial officials wanted Africans to work like their idealized European workers, they should pay them on a similar scale and bargain with them in good faith.” Frederick Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society: The Labor Question in French and British Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 3.

⁵⁸Benatia, *Les actions humanitaires pendant la lutte de libération*, 255.

⁵⁹Ibid., 80. Morocco and Tunisia had already established emergency care committees in early 1957 to assist the massive influx of Algerian refugees into their respective territories. However, the committees’ funds were insufficient to meet the level of care and assistance the refugees required. ANA/GPRA/78(h), Rapport Général d’Activité du CRA, Cairo, 1957.

⁶⁰The international political dimension is also outlined in an early CRA work plan written by unnamed CCE members in 1957. ANA/GPRA/78(i), “Plan du Travail du CRA établi à l’Intérieur de CCE.”

⁶¹Makaci, *Le Croissant Rouge Algérien*, 82.

⁶²ANA/GPRA/78(h), Rapport Général d’Activité du CRA, Cairo, 1957.

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴Benatia, *Les actions humanitaires pendant la lutte de libération*, 81.

⁶⁵Quoted in *ibid.*, 265.

⁶⁶ICRC/BAG/210/008/003, Confidential report on the Algerian Red Crescent written by Claude Pilloud, Rabat, 18 March 1957.

⁶⁷Ibid.

⁶⁸Husayn Ait Ahmad, Rabah Bitat, Muhammad Khidir, and Muhammad Budiyaf.

⁶⁹See Henri Alleg, *La question* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1958); Branche, *La torture et l’armée pendant la guerre d’Algérie*; and Marnia Lazreg, *Torture and the Twilight of Empire: From Algiers to Baghdad* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2008).

⁷⁰Connelly, *A Diplomatic Revolution*, 4.

⁷¹James McDougall, “Savage Wars? Codes of Violence in Algeria, 1830s–1990s,” *Third World Quarterly* 26 (2005): 117. These caricatures of violence persisted through the 1990s and were invoked to explain the civil conflict in Algeria. See Hugh Roberts, *The Battlefield, Algeria, 1988–2002: Studies in a Broken Polity* (London: Verso, 2003).

⁷²*France-Soir*, 12 May 1958, quoted in Thénault, *L’histoire de la guerre d’indépendance algérienne*, 160, see also 88.

⁷³Quoted in Alistair Horne, *A Savage War of Peace: Algeria 1954–1962* (New York: New York Review of Books, 2006), 330.

⁷⁴Henry Alleg’s 1958 publication of *La question* provided concrete evidence of French torture. Other personal accounts and observations of torture and general prison experiences in Algeria were published often in *Le Monde* and *Libération* from 1958 to 1960. One example is Denis Berger’s retelling of an encounter he had with an Algerian while detained. The Algerian prisoner told him he had been tortured with electricity, and Berger says he saw the long, thin scars covering the man’s body. “Un nouveau témoignage sur ‘La Gangrène,’” *Le Monde*, 12 December 1959. For other accounts of torture, see Amar Belkhdja, *L’affaire Hamdani Adda* (Taret, Algeria: Éditions Mekkloufi, n.d.); Branche, *La torture et l’armée pendant la guerre d’Algérie*; Jean-Luc Einaudi, *La ferme Améziane. Enquête sur un centre de torture pendant la guerre d’Algérie* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1991); Sylvie Thénault, *Une drôle de justice*; Pierre Vidal-Naquet, *La torture dans la République* (Paris: Minuit, 1972); and Rita Maran, *Torture: The Role of Ideology in the French–Algerian War* (New York: Praeger, 1989). Général Aussaresses, *Services Spéciaux: Algérie, 1955–1957* (Paris: Perrin, 2001) confirms many of the earlier accounts about torture.

⁷⁵*International Red Cross Handbook* (Geneva: International Committee of the Red Cross, 1983), 551.

⁷⁶ICRC/BAG/210/008/001, Prisonniers en mains rebelles, 1956–57, Report by ICRC representative, I. Zreikat regarding a meeting with CRA delegate, Dr. Bentami, 14 June 1957, Geneva, ICRC/BAG/210/008/001, Prisonniers français en mains rebelles, 1956–57, Report by ICRC representative Pierre Gaillard regarding a meeting with CRA representative, Dr. Bentami, 10 July 1957, Geneva.

⁷⁷ANA/GPRA/83(5), "Libération de prisonniers français par l'ALN 1958," Official notice from Ferhat Abbas, GPRA President, 14 October 1958, Cairo.

⁷⁸Ibid.

⁷⁹ANA/GPRA/83(5), "Libération de prisonniers français par l'ALN 1958," letter written by "Nadir" who worked for the Minister of External Affairs, 1 December 1958, Cairo, Emphasis added.

⁸⁰Ibid.

⁸¹The prisoners were Vincent Morales, Jacques Reléa, Jean Jacob, and Jean Vialaron.

⁸²*Le Monde* reported the release of these four French prisoners in the 19–20 October 1958 edition with an article titled "Le FLN annonce comme imminente la libération d'un groupe de prisonniers français: Deux délégués de la Croix-Rouge attendus à Tunis." It published a follow-up front page story on 21 October 1958 titled "Libérés par le FLN à Tunis: Quatre prisonniers français sont attendus ce soir à Paris."

⁸³"Pour le respect des lois de la guerre," *El Moudjahid*, 1 November 1958, 15. This article is accompanied by a picture of smiling French soldiers at the press conference.

⁸⁴Harbi, *Le FLN: Mirage et réalité*, 182–84, and Horne, *A Savage War of Peace*, 222.

⁸⁵ANA/GPRA/17(a), "Communiqué du M. I. Sous le titre: Libération des six prisonniers français par Amirouche," Cairo, 9 November 1958.

⁸⁶ANA/GPRA/83(5), "Libération de prisonniers français par l'ALN, 1958," Note from External Affairs representative, "Nadir," 1 December 1958, Cairo.

⁸⁷"Premier Décret du Gouvernement Provisoire de la République Algérienne," *El Moudjahid* 2, 10 October 1958, 15.

⁸⁸Pierre Bourdieu and Abdelmalek Sayad, *Le déracinement: La crise de l'agriculture traditionnelle en Algérie* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1964), 13; Keith Sutton, "Army Administration Tensions over Algeria's Centres de Regroupement, 1954–1962," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 26 (1999): 257. Sylvie Thénault estimates that nearly 400,000 Algerians lived in *regroupement* centers by early 1958. Thénault, *Histoire de la guerre d'indépendance algérienne*, 99. Also see Michael Cornaton, *Les camps de la guerre d'Algérie* (Paris: Harmattan, 1998); Keith Sutton, "Population Resettlement—Traumatic Upheavals and the Algerian Experience," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 15 (1977): 279–300; and idem, "Algeria's Socialist Villages—A Reassessment," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 22 (1984): 223–48.

⁸⁹CAOM/81f/528, Algerian Red Crescent Pamphlet, exact date unknown but likely published after spring 1959.

⁹⁰ANA/GPRA/78(j), Croissant Rouge Algérien, 1958–1962, "Appel du CRA aux pays Arabes," letter from Minister of Social Affairs, M. Benkhedda, to Minister of External Affairs, 10 November 1958.

⁹¹ANA/GPRA/78(d), Croissant Rouge Algérien, 1958–1962, "Besoins des Réfugiés Algériens," letter from Libyan Red Crescent, n.d. [late 1958].

⁹²ICRC/BAG/280/008/002, Secours demandés par le CRA, CICR, 1957–1963, Letter from ICRC representative, Pierre Gaillard, to ICRC delegate, de Traz, 23 January 1958, Geneva.

⁹³Makaci, *Le Croissant Rouge Algérien*, 163.

⁹⁴ANA/GPRA/98(a), Croissant Rouge Algérien, 1960–1961, Report on "Dons en nature reçus au CRA pendant la première quinzaine du mois janvier, 1961."

⁹⁵ANA/GPRA/53(3), Croissant Rouge Algérien, Letter to the Minister of External Affairs regarding donations for refugees, 1 October 1959, Cairo.

⁹⁶ANA/GPRA/34, "Expédition de médicaments de Beyrouth, 1961," Note d'Ait Chaalal, chef de la mission diplomatique au Liban, adressé au Ministre des Affaires extérieures au Caire, portant l'expédition des médicaments au profit du CRA, 5 June 1961, Beirut.

⁹⁷Makaci, *Le Croissant Rouge Algérien*, 163.

⁹⁸ANA/GPRA/107, Mission de Lakhhal (CRA) en Turquie, 1961, Compte rendu de la mission de Mostapha LAKHAL vice président du CRA relatif à son voyage effectuée en Turquie, 1961, Ankara, 3 September 1961.

⁹⁹ANA/GPRA/53(1c), MAE/MAS, Telegram from the Minister of External Affairs to CRA delegate in Rabat, 19 September 1959.

¹⁰⁰ICRC/BAG/280/008/002, "Secours demandés par le CRA, 1957–1963," Letter from ICRC delegate in Tunisia, J. P. Robert-Tissot, to the Director of the Assistance Bureau, Edward Windhall, 15 February 1958.

¹⁰¹ SHAT/1H 1755/1, Croissant Rouge Algérien, French report on CRA activity, 18 March 1958.

¹⁰² See Benatia, *Les actions humanitaires pendant la lutte de libération*.

¹⁰³ ANA/GPRA/98(a), CRA report, “Dons en Nature Reçus par le Croissant Rouge Algérien pendant la première quinzaine du mois de Novembre 1960.”

¹⁰⁴ ANA/GPRA/78(m), Correspondance émanant du Croissant Rouge Algérien, 1959–1962, Letter from CRA President, Benbahmed to the President of the National Committee, U.N. Dhebar, 11 January 1961, Tunis.