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OLGA BIBIKOVA. HARKI – A NON-HEALING WOUND OF THE ALGERIAN PEOPLE

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Abstract. The French government finally decided to fulfill its obligations to the descendants of the Harki, Algerians who served France during the colonial period. We are talking about the implementation of the Evian Agreements (03/18/1962) and ensuring the rights of the descendants of the Harki living in France.

On February 23, 2022, France adopted a law recognizing its obligations with respect to Harkis in accordance with the Evian Agreements. These agreements were signed between France and Algeria on March 18 1962 in the town of Evian-les-Bains on the southern shore of Lake Geneva to commemorate the end of the Franco-Algerian War (1954–1962).

An uninitiated person will certainly be surprised that an interstate document signed 60 years ago is being corrected and supplemented only now. Algeria is celebrating the sixtieth

anniversary of its independence this year. The fact is that the provisions of the new law provide for compensation for damage caused by Harkis, as stated in the document, "due to non-compliance with the conditions of their admission in France."¹ The history of these people remains one of the main problems of collective memory associated with the Algerian War of Independence and the colonial presence of France in North Africa.

In Algeria, Harkis are a category of the local population who, during the period of French colonization, worked in administrative bodies, voluntarily or involuntarily served in various units of the French army.

The problem discussed in the article is known to countries where colonialists were present for a long time or there was foreign domination, because after independence, people who served the colonialists were almost always subjected to repression.

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The French conquest of Algeria began in 1830 under the pretext of fighting North African pirates². In fact, the reason was the deterioration of relations that began after France refused to pay for food (bread, corned beef), as well as leather, which were supplied on credit from Algeria to revolutionary and Napoleonic France. The conflict between the ruler of Algeria Hussein the 3d³ and the French consul in 1827 became the culmination. In response, Paris staged a three-year naval blockade of the Algerian coast. This was not enough, and then France sent troops to Algeria.

As noted by Y. Rubinsky, head of the Center for French Studies at the Institute of Europe of the Russian Academy of Sciences, "in most of its colonies, Paris was limited to the creation of a French administration. Algeria was a completely different matter"⁴. The fact is that the local population did not

want to submit, but the French managed to bribe the local feudal lords. Some of them have embraced French culture and even adopted Catholicism. This population group was called “evolves”, i.e. “evolved”.

For the convenience of managing the controlled territory, the French attracted Algerians who, due to impoverishment, agreed to serve in administrative bodies. Police units were also created to maintain order. As a rule, they were subordinate to the local administration.

Helene Aldeger, a researcher on the fate of Harkis, notes that the reasons for Harki's work in the French administration and service in military units “are diverse and do not indicate absolute support for the idea of French Algeria.”⁵ That is, we are talking about the fact that people served France, to put it mildly, not always voluntarily. What motivated the Algerians to cooperate with the French colonial authorities? It must be remembered that the French, having come to Algeria, stayed in this country for more than 100 years – from 1830 to 1962. In 1834, France annexed Algeria, it officially became part of France. Therefore, several generations of Algerians born under the French colonial regime perceived the situation as the status quo and adapted to the prevailing conditions. This was evidenced by the fact that French, without having the status of the official language of the country, is still necessarily studied in the country's schools. And today it is spoken by more than half of the population of Algeria.

In France, the word Harkis is pronounced as “arki” or “arkis” (Harkis – “H” is not read). The term was formed from the Arabic word هاركا - haraka - movement (in the sense of “mobile group”). This term is used to describe all North Africans (mainly Algerians) who were forced to cooperate with the French during the colonial period. Harkis are auxiliary formations that include moghaznis - local police detachments, self-defense groups, territorial units and special detachments of reservists.

Subsequently, they were involved in the French army in the period from 1957 to 1962.

In Algeria, the term Harkis has become synonymous with traitor and accomplice. Therefore, this word is often used in a negative way⁶.

According to the law adopted in 1865, Algerians were conscripted into the French armed forces. As a result, already in the First World War, there were special Algerian units in the French troops – tirailleurs, gums, tabors, spags⁷. Subsequently, these troops were used in Indochina.

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During the Second World War, demands for autonomy or independence intensified in Algeria. Gradually, the protest against the foreign government spread throughout Algeria. The brutality shown during the suppression of the riots shocked the country. Until 1954, several uprisings took place in Algeria, on November 1, 1954, the National Liberation Front (FLN) was established, whose goal was to achieve the country's independence by armed means.

Against the rebellious people, France threw its army, which included Algerian militias. The resistance of the local population was accompanied by periodic rebellions. The fact is that land was taken from the local population and transferred to European colonists. During the period from 1850 to 1934, more than 40% of cultivated land became the property of Europeans⁸.

Over time, especially after the Second World War, anti-colonial sentiments grew stronger, resistance to foreign presence took on organized forms. As former French President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing (1974–1981) wrote, "France, seized by the throat by the events in Algiers and having lost all hope of regaining control of them,"⁹ was forced to admit the collapse of its colonial empire. On September 16, 1959, the President of France recognized the right of the Algerians to self-determination. Under

these conditions, during 1960, the French colonies gained independence: Eastern Cameroon, Togo, Madagascar, Dahomey, Niger, Upper Volta, Chad, Ivory Coast, Central African Republic, Congo, Gabon, Senegal and Mauritania. On January 8, 1961, a referendum was held, which approved the policy of President de Gaulle, aimed at the self-determination of Algeria. On March 18, 1962, the Evian Accords were signed, and on July 3, the independence of Algeria was proclaimed. The conclusion of the Evian agreements provided for the withdrawal of French troops from Algeria. General Ailleret, commander of the French forces in Algiers, advocated the repatriation of the Harkis. He was supported by many of the military, who understood that if they remained in Algeria, the Harkis could be subject to retribution from the side, primarily the Algerian National Liberation Front (FLN), which led the resistance to the French colonialists. However, Paris rejected a proposal for mass repatriation of the Harkis, who were traditionally called "collaborators" by the French left, who were generally in favor of Algerian independence. On April 15, 1962, the French Ministry of the Armed Forces ordered the disarmament and disbandment of all Harki units. In fact, only about 60,000 Harkis were able to leave for France. The Evian Accords forbade the French military from interfering with the Harkis repatriation process, but some military officers facilitated their departure. On May 16, 1962, the Minister of State for Algerian Affairs ordered the punishment of those who facilitated the repatriation of Algerians. The French government did not want to burden itself with taking care of the Harqis, especially since the number of Harkis in Algeria increased significantly towards the end of the colonial period. Naturally, only those who worked in the administration were able to leave for France and knew how not to miss this opportunity. Prominent Francophiles, politicians and military professionals were repatriated without problems.

60,000 Harkis were able to cross over to the metropolis, along with those who were called "pieds-noirs" (black-footed),

repatriates of European origin. This name meant Franco-Algerians, i.e. immigrants from France of different ethnic (French, Italian, Spanish, Maltese, Jewish, etc.) origin, whose ancestors once settled in this French colony. Subsequently, for many of them, born in Africa, moving to France meant a radical change in lifestyle. Living in Africa, they, being distanced from the local population and protected by French laws, nevertheless made a great contribution to the development of the Algerian economy. Their rights were guaranteed by a special decree adopted on October 24, 1870. The so-called Crémieux decree provided for the granting of metropolitan citizenship to non-Arabs (Europeans and Jews) living in French Algeria. In the 21st century historians have appreciated this decree as another means of France's colonial strategy. It was important for the colonizers to "prioritize, segment and divide the Algerian population in order to better control and subdue it"¹⁰. The Jews were the indigenous inhabitants of the North African countries; for a long time they lived without conflict in a Moslem environment. But after the proclamation of the Jewish state of Israel, there was a surge of Moslem anti-Semitism in almost all Arab territories. Subsequently, famous personalities came out of the Franco-Algerian environment: economist Jacques Attali, Nobel laureate and writer Albert Camus, Marshal of France Alphonse Juin, fashion designer Yves Saint Laurent and many theater and cinema figures.

The departure of the French from Algeria took place in the context of a clash of different opinions of the indigenous population. Some were in favor of supporting the National Liberation Front and, consequently, for the independence of Algeria, others believed that Algeria had already become part of France, so the departure of the French from the country would negatively affect its development. Among a significant part of the French colonists, as well as the military, it was widely believed that de Gaulle thus "betrayed France."

The consequence of the French withdrawal from the country was that between 55,000 and 75,000 Harkis were disarmed and left to fend for themselves in Algeria. Later it became known that on October 29, 1961, during secret negotiations with representatives of the FLN in Basel, France put forward the principle of non-retaliation, according to which the Algerian state would refrain from any sanctions against Moslems loyal to France. The Algerian side did not fulfill its promises. As a result, "they became victims of mass repression ... were marginalized, were ostracized, became victims of racism ... France renounced them, was ashamed, using them for its own purposes."¹¹

A mass of illiterate village boys from disbanded military units remained in the country, not suspecting that they (and their families) would be punished by their compatriots.

In April 1962, the Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic, wishing to prove itself, published a directive regarding Harkis, according to which they should be controlled locally and registered on a "black list". Already on July 5, the hunt for Harkis began. These people were first arrested, then sent to detention centers, tortured, and then executed. The local population took part in the repression, humiliating, torturing and lynching those who helped the French. *Le Monde* of November 13, 1962, reported the killing of 10,000 Harkis between March 18 and November 1 alone. In total, as historians have stated, at least 80 thousand people were killed.¹²

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Having moved to France, repatriates from Algeria, pieds-noirs, Algerian Jews and Harkis gradually began to move on to the search for identity, but soon a heterogeneity of arrivals revealed itself, for in fact they were connected only by Algeria and 1962. Those Harkis who managed to move to France were placed in special settlements where barracks were hastily built or those

camps that remained after the German occupation. Characteristically, the authorities sought to disperse families from one village in order to avoid creating any social structures. In 1963, there were 75 villages, mostly located in the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur region. The authorities sought to disperse the Algerians, settling them in 25 families in a remote province. Most of the Harkis were involved in the system of the National Forestry Administration, where they were engaged in the maintenance of forest areas: planting and cutting trees and shrubs, fighting forest fires, protecting the environment.

It is believed that today the number of descendants of the Harqis, still living in camps in southern France, is about 500,000 people. Since 1974, the younger Harki generation, already born in France, began to hold hunger strikes and protest marches in order to draw the attention of the authorities to the plight of this category of the population. Their parents had difficulty integrating in France. The common man equated them with North African immigrants, although their former compatriots rejected them, despite the fact that the President of Algeria, Abdelaziz Bouteflika, stated in 2005 that "Harki children are not responsible for the actions of their parents." Earlier, in December 1999, criticizing their living conditions in France, he ruled out their return to Algeria, stating that "Algeria is not their country"¹³. The law of 1974 secured the status of war veterans for the Harkis living in the French Republic. Ten years later, 15,000 ex-Harki families were paid 110,000 francs each as a one-off compensation¹⁴.

In the summer of 1975 there were uprisings among the inhabitants of the Bia and Saint-Maurice-l'Ardoise camps, as well as in several logging villages. The authorities took action: the activists were resettled in other camps for Harkis. However, the dispersal policy did not help. Eventually, in August 2003, the government declared Harkis Remembrance Day on September 25th. On that day, President Jacques Chirac acknowledged that in 1962 "there were massacres committed in Algeria, which

affected both the military and civilians, women and children, and which will forever leave the mark of barbarism. They must be recognized.”¹⁵ Since then, on September 25, France pays tribute to the role played by the Harkis during the Algerian War. During the reign of President Chirac, a memorial plaque in honor of Harkis was opened in the Hall of Honor of the House of Invalids. A similar memorial plaque was installed in 27 French prefectures. Another step towards meeting the rights of the Harkis was taken in 2005 when the Harkis Benefit Act was passed.¹⁶ The Law of 23.02. 2005 set out conditions for compensation to the Harkis in gratitude for their service and recognition of their suffering. However, Harki public organizations did not agree with some of the wording of the law. Nicolas Sarkozy, the 23rd President of France, went to the Rivesaltes camp in April 2012 (a month before the end of his presidential term), where since 1962 several thousand Harkis have lived. To his credit, he was the first president to visit a Harkis’ camp. His rival François Hollande, who also fought for the presidency, solemnly promised in one of his election speeches to recognize (if he would be elected) France’s responsibility for the fate of the Harkis.¹⁷

F. Hollande fulfilled his promise on September 25, 2016, by recognizing the responsibility of the French governments for this sad episode in the national history. He stated abandoning Harkis by the French governments, the result of which was a massacre of those who remained in Algeria, and those who managed to move to France found themselves in inhuman conditions.¹⁸

At the end of September 2018, the Secretary of State under the French Minister of War J. Darriès announced the allocation of 40 million euros as material assistance to the Harkis and their descendants for the next four years. E. Macron, in turn, ordered to award more than twenty veterans of the Harkis with the Order of the Legion of Honor.

However, the social status of Harkis, unemployment, low level of education contributed to the fact that this category of the

French population remained at the very bottom of the social ladder. The increased self-awareness of the new generations of Harkis, already born in France, strengthened the solidarity of the Harkis living in different localities. This led to the creation of organizations that primarily sought to prove the role of their ancestors in the history of France.

All researchers of this situation note that the morbidity of this problem is fed by the hostility that exists between the Harkis and Algerian immigrants. The conflict between the Harqis and the Algerians is passed on to the next generations. In Algeria, the problem of Harkis is also not forgotten. President Bouteflika (09/2/2005) recognized the practice of killing the relatives of those Harkis who served the French as a mistake. Somewhat earlier (06/16/2000), during an official visit to France, Bouteflika stated that the people of Algeria were “not yet ready” to accept the return of the Harqis to Algeria.¹⁹ In 2012, the Algerian newspaper *El Watan* published the results of a survey, according to which more than 84% of Algerians supported the point of view that “it is impossible to forgive the Harkis...”.

In an open letter published on 07/04/2021, Republican MP Julien Aubert and 32 other MPs called on Emmanuel Macron to “make a decisive gesture of gratitude to the descendants of those who gave their lives or dedicated themselves to France” and pay the Harkis and their descendants special compensation in addition to the already existing allowance. In response, Macron promised to introduce a bill recognizing the responsibility of the state to the Harkis and providing for “damage” for the fate which they have suffered for decades.

Sixty years after the end of the Algerian War of Independence, on March 23, 2022, the French Senate approved a bill (No. 2022-229) that formally apologized to the Algerian Harki soldiers who fought on behalf of the French colonial army. This paves the way for compensation for thousands of family members and descendants²⁰ who were forced to live in appalling conditions upon their arrival in France. This decision was the

culmination of measures taken by President Emmanuel Macron, who asked of the Harkis for forgiveness at a ceremony on September 20, 2021: "France has not paid its debt to the Harkis, their wives, their children after the war," he said, adding that ... the Harkis gave their strength, shed their blood for France.²¹

Notes

1. Macron announced the law on "recognition and reparation" for veterans of the Algerian war. 09.20.2021 // https://tass.ru/mezhdunarodnaya-panorama/12457715?utm_source=yandex.ru&utm_medium=organic&utm_campaign=yandex.ru&utm_referrer=yandex.ru.
2. Moslem piracy in the Maghreb has existed since the occupation of the region by the Arabs in the 7th century, after the reconquista in the 16th century the ranks of Mediterranean pirates were replenished by Moslems expelled from the Iberian Peninsula.
3. Hussein III, (c. 1765–1838) – the last Algerian day (ruler for life).
4. *Knyazev S.* "Economically profitable enterprise": how France occupied Algeria. 06/14/2020 // <https://russian.rt.com/science/article/754465-190-let-okkupaciya-alzhir>.
5. Qui sont les harkis? // <https://orientxxi.info/va-comprendre/qui-sont-les-harkis,5546>.
6. The famous French footballer of Kabyle origin, Zineddine Zidane, who was repeatedly called this word by his enemies, always explained that his parents moved to France back in 1952, i.e. before Algeria gained independence.
7. The names of the various types of troops of that period: arrows, light cavalry, etc.
8. Algerian War of Independence // https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Algerian_War_of_Independence.
9. *Giscard d'Estaing V.* The French. Reflections on the fate of the people. M., "Ladimir", 2004. P. 24.
10. Why was the Crémieux decree (granting Jews living in French Algeria the French citizenship) voted? // <https://www.quora.com/Why-was-the-Crémieux-decree-granting-Jews-living-in-French-Algeria-the-French-citizenship-voted-Why-did-it-not-include-the-other-indigenous-communities>.
11. Les harkis qui étaient ils? // <https://histoirecoloniale.net/les-harkis-qui-etaient-ils.html>.
12. The exact number of executed Harki in Algeria does not exist. According to some estimates, as a result of violent repression at the hands of the Algerians

themselves, who sought to avenge their relatives, from 75,000 to 150,000 people died.

13. Bouteflika: l'Algérie a été injuste avec les familles des harkis // <https://histoirecoloniale.net/Bouteflika-l-Algerie-a-ete-injuste.html>.
14. Macron announced a law on "recognition and reparation" for veterans of the Algerian war 09/20/2021 // https://tass.ru/mezhdunarodnaya-panorama/12457715?utm_source=yandex.ru&utm_medium=organic&utm_campaign=yandex.ru&utm_referrer=yandex.ru
15. Harki, those forgotten soldiers of France whose integration was difficult - // <https://www.lefigaro.fr/actualite-france/2016/09/25/01016-20160925ARTFIG00156-les-harkis-ces-soldats-oublies-de-la-france-dont-l-integration-a-ete-difficile.php>
16. Harki, those forgotten soldiers of France whose integration was difficult - // <https://www.lefigaro.fr/actualite-france/2016/09/25/01016-20160925ARTFIG00156-les-harkis-ces-soldats-oublies-de-la-france-dont-l-integration-a-ete-difficile.php>
17. Harki, those forgotten soldiers of France whose integration was difficult - // <https://www.lefigaro.fr/actualite-france/2016/09/25/01016-20160925ARTFIG00156-les-harkis-ces-soldats-oublies-de-la-france-dont-l-integration-a-ete-difficile.php>
18. François Hollande reconnaît "l'abandon des harkis" par la France. 09/25/2016 // <https://www.marianne.net/societe/francois-hollande-reconnait-l-abandon-des-harkis-par-la-france>.
19. Bouteflika répond à Chirac le Parisien.fr, 18.07.2000.
20. The law specifically stipulates the rights of women who accompanied their husbands to emigration. Widows are entitled to survivor benefits, including those who have settled in an EU country.
21. Le Sénat français officialise ses excuses aux harkis algériens et à leurs familles. 16.02.2022 // <https://www.dutcheastindiacompany.in/le-senat-francais-officialise-ses-excuses-aux-harkis-algeriens-et-a-leurs-families/>