

Lesson 3: The Rise of Nationalist Movements (1945–1954)

The text:

After the tragic events of May 8, 1945, in Sétif and Guelma, many Algerians realized that peaceful protests and negotiations would not bring independence. The massacres showed the true face of the French colonial regime and created a new sense of national consciousness among Algerians.

Between 1945 and 1954, different political groups appeared, each trying to find a way to end colonial rule. The most important among them were:

- The MTLA (Movement for the Triumph of Democratic Liberties), led by Messali Hadj, who demanded complete independence.
- The UDMA (Democratic Union of the Algerian Manifesto), led by Ferhat Abbas, who at first called for equality and reforms within the French system before supporting independence.
- The Association of Algerian Ulema, led by Sheikh Ben Badis, which focused on cultural and religious identity, education, and defending the Arabic language and Islamic values.

Although these groups had different strategies, they shared one dream — a free and independent Algeria. They organized meetings, published newspapers, and raised awareness among the people. The French government, however, responded with repression, arrests, and censorship.

By the early 1950s, many young activists became frustrated with political discussions and decided that armed struggle was the only solution. Secret groups started to prepare for revolution. Finally, their efforts led to the historic outbreak of the Algerian War of Independence on November 1st, 1954.

This period, therefore, represents the transition from political activism to revolutionary action, and it played a key role in shaping the leaders and ideas of the coming liberation movement.

1. Vocabulary

Word / Expression	Meaning
National consciousness	Awareness of belonging to a nation
Repression	Harsh control or punishment by authorities
Activist	A person who works for political or social change
Censorship	Control or limitation of information or media
Revolution	A complete change, often through force

2. Comprehension Questions

1. What happened after the Sétif and Guelma massacres?
2. Which organizations were created to fight colonial rule?

3. Who led the MTLD and what did it demand?
4. What was the main focus of the Association of Algerian Ulema?
5. How did the French authorities react to nationalist movements?
6. Why did some young Algerians choose armed struggle?
7. When did the Algerian War of Independence finally begin?
8. Why is the period 1945–1954 important in Algerian history?

3. True or False

1. After 1945, Algerian political groups used only violence to fight colonial rule.
2. Religion and culture played a role in strengthening Algerian identity.
3. The French colonial authorities encouraged Algerians to form political parties.
4. Newspapers and education were used to raise political awareness.
5. All Algerian leaders agreed on the same methods to achieve independence.
6. The early 1950s were marked by a shift from words to action.
7. The idea of independence was completely new in 1954.
8. Women had no influence at all in the early nationalist movement.

4. Fill in the blanks

Use these words: (repression – independence – revolution – nationalism – awareness)

1. The massacres of 1945 increased the people's political _____.
2. The goal of all movements was to gain _____.
3. The French government answered with violence and _____.
4. Many Algerians believed only a _____ could end colonial rule.
5. The rise of _____ created unity among Algerians.

5. Discussion Questions

1. Do you think peaceful protests are enough to achieve freedom under colonization? Why or why not?
2. How did education and religion help keep the Algerian identity alive?
3. Which leader or movement do you think had the greatest influence during this period?