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Algeria's Support for the Political and Military Struggle in South Africa Against Racial Discrimination

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Abstract :

This study aims to highlight the political and military struggle in South Africa against racial discrimination, also known as Apartheid. The national liberation movement and the struggle in South Africa are closely linked to the personality of the militant leader Nelson Mandela within the framework of the African National Congress (ANC). We examine the characteristics of the struggle in South Africa under this global leadership, as well as the extent of Algeria's contribution and its diplomacy in supporting African liberation movements in general, and the cause of the struggle in South Africa in particular. This falls within the framework of African solidarity and in accordance with the charters of the Algerian Revolution and the principles of Algeria's foreign policy.

Keywords: Apartheid, racial segregation, Nelson Mandela, African National Congress Party.

Introduction :

The Portuguese were the first to arrive in South Africa in the fifteenth century. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Dutch turned the region into a colony, later known as the Boer settlement. In 1806, the British seized control of the territory in the early nineteenth century. A war broke out between the Boers and the British settlers, lasting from 1899 to 1902. Following the defeat of the Boers, Britain recognized self-rule for Europeans, which led to the proclamation of the Union of South Africa in 1910. This union brought together the Cape and Natal regions on one side, and Transvaal and Orange on the other, within the framework of the British Commonwealth. However, the beginning of decolonization in Africa later placed the Union of South Africa in a difficult position due to its adoption of a system of racial discrimination within the country. From this perspective, this paper addresses the trajectory of the national liberation movement in South Africa against racial discrimination, represented by the leader Nelson Mandela. It also examines the role played by African states—particularly Algeria—and its diplomacy within the framework of the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity in eliminating the racist regime in South Africa. Based on the statements above, this study seeks to answer the following questions:- What is the nature and specificity of the struggle adopted by the South African national liberation movement against racial discrimination under the leadership of Nelson Mandela?.- To what extent did Algeria through its diplomacy contribute to supporting liberation movements in Africa in general, and the struggle against racial discrimination in South Africa in particular?.

1. Nelson Mandela:

The national liberation movement and political struggle in South Africa against racial discrimination became closely associated with the figure of Nelson Mandela. Who was this African leader?.

From the heart of South Africa's forests and vast natural landscapes emerged a man with dark skin and piercing eyes, who took upon himself the mission of liberating an entire people from all forms of humiliation, oppression, contempt, and degradation imposed by one of the most brutal systems known in human history.

It is impossible to summarize the life of a militant leader such as Nelson Mandela in a few words. He waged a long struggle against tyranny and racial discrimination and paid a heavy price, spending nearly three decades in prison—the most precious years of his life. Nevertheless, it is necessary to highlight the most important milestones of his journey.

Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela was born on July 18, 1918, into the royal Thembu family in the village of Mvezo, near Umtata, the capital of the Transkei region in South Africa (Mandela, 1994,p 03). He joined the African National Congress (ANC)

in 1944. In the late 1940s, he obtained a degree in law from the University of Johannesburg. In 1952, he was elected president of the African National Congress in the Transvaal region. In 1956, Mandela was arrested on charges of high treason, from which he was acquitted in 1961 (Ittihad al-Muhamin al-Arab ,pp 08-09).

In 1962, he left South Africa to meet African leaders who were attending a meeting of the Organization of African Unity in Addis Ababa. He was later arrested for leaving the country illegally and sentenced to five years in prison. In 1963 and 1964, Nelson Mandela was accused of carrying out acts of sabotage and was sentenced to life imprisonment. He was transferred to Robben Island Prison, located in the Cape Province, where he remained incarcerated until his release in February 1990. Following his release, he became President of the Republic of South Africa in 1994 (Lamrani,2013, pp 2,3,5).

2. The Concept of Apartheid:

The term apartheid first appeared in South Africa in 1944 and was formulated by Dr. D. F. Malan, leader of the National Party (al-Maw'id, 2002, pp17-18). The word apartheid means "separation" or "segregation." After the Second World War, the concept was officially adopted into South Africa's political vocabulary (Cornevin, 1982, p 83).

In 1948, the South African government adopted apartheid as the official title of its political program. The policy aimed to preserve the purity of the white race while guaranteeing its political, economic, and social privileges through the enactment of specific legislation. Apartheid represented an official isolation of communities living within the same geographical space through forced division. This system was imposed from above and did not stem from personal choices or voluntary relations between whites and blacks. Rather, apartheid constituted a political institution designed to enforce white domination and maintain control over the political and social structures of the country (Isbir, 1985, p 59).

African historian Joseph Ki-Zerbo noted that the South African government adopted apartheid in order to isolate each race and tribe within designated territories and to separate whites from blacks in a radical manner (Isbir, 1985, p 60).

Based on this system, the apartheid policy adopted by the South African government relied on dividing the population according to skin color. White settlers enjoyed numerous privileges in all fields, Asians occupied a second-level status, while Black people—despite being the indigenous majority and the rightful owners of the land—were deprived of the rights enjoyed by other groups (Allah al-Jamal & Ibrahim 2002, p 364).

A clear illustration of racist ideology can be found in a statement made by the Prime Minister of South Africa, who declared: "We want to keep South Africa white, and that means one thing only: white domination. It is not enough for whites to govern or lead; they must dominate" (Isbir, 1985,p 60).

To further demonstrate the seriousness of apartheid, United Nations documents emphasized that apartheid constituted a threat to international peace and security due to its inhumane policies. Consequently, apartheid was condemned as a crime against humanity (Isbir, 1985, p 60).

3- Political Struggle in South Africa Against Racial Discrimination.

The political struggle in South Africa against racial discrimination became closely associated with the African National Congress (ANC)⁰, founded in 1912. The party initially adopted a political program characterized mainly by peaceful struggle. After the Second World War, a new generation of militants emerged at the head of the ANC, including Walter Susulu, Oliver Tambo⁰, and Nelson Mandela (Bakai ,2014, p116).

In 1949, the party adopted a new political program under the slogan "National Independence Instead of Justice." On this basis, effective struggle against apartheid began in 1952 through strikes and protests against the racist policies implemented by the South African regime (Bakai , 2014, p116).

The repressive laws enacted by the racist South African regime forced African communities to unite more closely through protests and demonstrations. This situation led the apartheid authorities to commit one of the most horrific massacres in South African history. On March 21, 1960, the Sharpeville Massacre took place in the town of Sharpeville, located approximately 50 kilometers from Johannesburg. During this massacre, South African police forces opened fire on peaceful African protesters, resulting in the death of 60 people and the injury of hundreds more (al-Khawand, 1996, p 359).

Following this event, the authorities in Pretoria imposed a ban on the African National Congress and the Pan-Africanist Congress and imprisoned several of their leaders. In response, the African National Congress established a secret organization known as Umkhonto we Sizwe ("Spear of the Nation") in December 1961, which became the armed wing of the party. This organization carried out a series of operations that included the detonation of approximately two hundred bombs, the seactions primarily targeted government installations and symbols of the apartheid regime, while deliberately avoiding harm to civilians, in order to maintain support among white and mixed-race members who were sympathetic to the African National Congress (Tisin Haridi,2008, p 258).

The reaction of the apartheid authorities in South Africa was manifested through the promulgation of the Sabotage Act, which stipulated prison sentences ranging from five years to life imprisonment for anyone involved in acts of sabotage (Bakai , 2014, P 117). In parallel with these measures, on June 2, 1964, the authorities issued life imprisonment sentences against prominent leaders of the African National Congress, including Walter Susulu, Govan Mbeki, and Nelson Mandela. They were transferred to Robben Island Prison, located in the Cape Province (Lamrani, 2013, p 3).

Despite the continued implementation of apartheid policies and the tightening of repression against the national liberation movement, the African National Congress persisted in its struggle. It carried out military operations from bases located in Mozambique and Zimbabwe, while also benefiting from significant military and diplomatic support provided by

Algeria (Bakai, 2014, P 117). It is worth noting that since 1984, Nelson Mandela had refused any conditional release that required prior commitments, particularly the renunciation of violence. Consequently, his release in 1990 came without any pledge to abandon armed struggle (Abd al-Nasir, 1996, p 52).

4- Algeria's support for the struggle cause against Apartheid in South Africa.

Since its creation, The Algerian Temporary Government announced its African orientation calling for African solidarity. In his first declaration, President Farhat Abbas said: "We seek free Africa, Accra Summit." This was an affirmation of the importance of African solidarity and the Revolution's need for it, especially after Africans at the Accra Summit showed a wonderful response to the Algerian Revolution. The Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic (GPRA) focused its foreign policy on "Africanizing" the Algerian issue. It worked to intensify contacts with activists, support the liberation camp, and attend African gatherings to utilize them in introducing the Algerian cause and calling for solidarity and unity among Africans. Thus, Africa turned into a field of fierce confrontation between the Algerian Revolution and European colonialism. Consequently, upon regaining independence, Algeria inherited a foreign policy experience gained during the armed struggle, which allows us to call this pattern of foreign policy "The African Policy of Algeria" (Abd al-Nasir, 1996, pp 88-89).

The seven years of armed struggle and the solidarity found by the Algerian Revolution made it feel a duty to support struggling peoples for independence. The war and its challenges led to the formation of a class of skilled diplomats who provided the Provisional Government with supporters and allies across the world. This experience made the Algerian state in 1962, despite being a newly born, possess greater diplomatic expertise than most recently independent countries. This qualified it to play important roles in African and global diplomacy (Manqalati, Tuati, 2009, pp 19-20).

As part of its support for African liberation movements, Algeria established the African Liberation Movements Department. This was a branch of the External Relations Office of the National Liberation Front (FLN), headquartered in what was known as "Villa Boumaraf" located on Ghermoul Street in the capital. This department, headed by the Mujahid Jelloul Malaika for several years, consisted of a group of offices that took care of African and international organizations present in Algeria regarding housing and all daily activities carried out by representatives of liberation movements residing in Algeria (Malayika, 2017, p 31). It is the one that handles all their demands and provides them with all necessary assistance. On the occasion of African Solidarity Day, celebrated on September 17, 1963, former Algerian head of state A. Ben Bella declared that there were between 900 and 1,000 African militants training in Algeria (Manqalati, Tuati, 2009, p 98).

The cause of South Africa received significant support from Algeria and its diplomacy, which gave great importance to the issue of supporting the national liberation movement in South Africa, represented by the African National Congress (A.N.C.) and the Pan Africanist Congress (P.A.C.). Accordingly, Algeria believed that the restoration of sovereignty in Africa remained incomplete as long as South Africa had not regained its sovereignty (Bakai, 2014, pp 94, 119).

Nelson Mandela undertook a tour of some North African countries in 1962. When he arrived in Algeria, he was received by Dr. Chawki Mostefai, head of the Algerian mission in Morocco, who wisely explained to his guest that freedom fighters needed a strong military base outside their countries, as well as offices abroad to mobilize international diplomatic support, and that Algeria is always ready to train Africans after independence (Sa'idi, 2013, p 2).

Mandela observed Algerian freedom fighters in the city of Oujda near the Algerian border as they performed a parade celebrating the return of their leader, Ahmed Ben Bella, who had been released from a French prison. Ahmed Ben Bella explained in a short speech that the freedom of Algerians would be meaningless as long as Africa remained in the grip of imperialism. Mandela was amazed by the gathering of the Algerian masses and was moved by the military display of the Algerian army, which was born in the midst of the battle against France (Benaoun, 2013, p 9).

Sources mention that the leader Nelson Mandela received military training in Algeria, and his visit was surrounded by complete secrecy, based on orders issued by the late President Houari Boumediene and that was for security reasons (Bakai, 2014, p 120). Mandela praised Algeria's role in the liberation of Africa in general, and its support for the South African cause in particular, on many occasions, saying: "Algeria was and will remain a fortress of revolutionaries, and a strong support for all peoples struggling for justice and freedom'. Its authentic positions translated into providing direct support and contributions to the liberation of the African continent. Indeed, the support of the Algerian Revolution and its Liberation Front was great, strong, and effective, and all African peoples will remember with pride the pioneering role of Algeria in liberating them from colonialism, and they value its efforts in unifying and solidifying the continent, its peoples, and its advancement in development and the economy" (Manqalati, Tuati, 2009, p 6).

International organizations, such as the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity (OAU), formed a space that enabled Algerian diplomacy to assert its presence by supporting liberation movements and issuing political regulations that condemned the practice of the white minority apartheid in South Africa. Algerian diplomacy also sought to search for the necessary political mechanisms to impose sanctions on the racist South African regime and isolate it from the international arena. On this basis, Algerian diplomacy—represented by its Foreign Minister, Mr. Abdelaziz Bouteflika, who chaired the 29th session of the General Assembly of the United Nations—was able to expel the representative of the racist South African regime from the General Assembly in November 1974 (Bakai, 2014, pp 95-96). Algeria was always emphasizing the diplomatic and consular boycott of the racist South African regime and its expulsion from various international organizations. Algeria also sought to influence the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) to stop arms sales to the racist regime of South Africa (Bakai, 2014, pp 120-121).

As a result of the isolation of the racist South African regime, the 1980's witnessed contacts between white businessmen and the leadership of the African National Congress (ANC). The two parties met in Lusaka, and Mandela was released in February 1990, and political parties were allowed to operate. In June 1991, the government of Frederik de Klerk⁰ announced the abolition of apartheid to begin the stage of negotiations between the government and the political parties that led to the organization of elections on April 27, 1994. The African National Congress won, and the leader Nelson Mandela was elected President of the country by the Parliament (Bakai, 2014, p121).

Conclusion :

In the end, a series of observations and conclusions can be summarized as follows:

- The liberation movement in South Africa shares many points with the Algerian Revolution. The first point is that both are liberation movements that rely on the broad masses, and the second point is that colonialism in both countries was colonial settling.
- Algeria's African policy is a continuation of the national struggle, and the African orientation of Algeria forms a fundamental axis in its foreign policy, which aims to achieve the unity of the African continent in particular and the Third World in general.
- The successes achieved by the Algerian Revolution and its African and global resonance gave it a brilliant reputation, to the extent that it became a model for African and global liberation movements.
- Algeria succeeded in expelling the South African apartheid regime from the United Nations General Assembly resulted in achieving two main goals in the issue of the Algerian contribution to supporting the national liberation movement in South-Africa. The first intensifying the struggle against that regime as well as contributing to its international isolation
- Despite the Western countries' use of the right of "Veto" and their hesitation of implementing a policy of boycotting the racist regime in South-Africa, Algerian diplomacy continued to support liberation movements in international forums to isolate the apartheid regime.
- It can be said that Algeria's contribution in this context achieved political and economic objectives, as the sanctions imposed on the regime of Pretoria negatively affected it, leading to its weakening and forcing it to reconsider its policies and accept negotiations with the national liberation movement, which ultimately succeeded in regaining sovereignty.

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