

03/12/2024,

The xenophobia towards Algerian immigrants after Algerian Independence in 1962.

After Algeria gained independence from France in 1962, Algerian immigrants faced a hostile climate in France. The hate towards Algerian immigration, rooted in socio-economic tensions and historical conflicts, persists even among the children of these immigrants born in France.

Algeria had been colonized by France for 132 years, and its independence was achieved through a brutal eight-year war. Following the war, many Algerian workers migrated to France to escape the war-torn, politically unstable, and economically underdeveloped country.

Arrival of Algerian immigrants from Algiers to Marseille, March 1962 :

The Evian agreements of 1962, which ended the war between Algeria and France, granted certain rights to French and Algerian citizens. Article 7 ensured that Algerians in France had the same rights as French citizens, except for political rights. Following Algeria's war-torn state, over three million Algerians migrated to France between 1962 and 1973 to work.¹

However, this Algerian immigration was met with a degree of wariness and rejection by the French population, fuelled by media propaganda conveying the idea that Algerians were terrorists and barbarians.

Manifestations of xenophobia towards Algerian immigrants and protests :

Manifestations of hostility towards Algerian immigrants ranged from stigmatization to physical violence.

We can mention discrimination in relation to low paid employment and few job opportunities with low-skilled and back-breaking work.

This hostility manifested in discrimination and physical violence, particularly in low-paid, menial jobs with limited opportunities.

¹ « Algériens, des bras pour la France. In *Le Monde* - Mars 1997 ». Benjamin Stora, <https://benjaminsora.univ-paris13.fr/index.php/articlesrecents/88-algeriens-des-bras-pour-la-france-in-le-monde-23-mars-1997.html>.

Research by Emilia Ene Jones² revealed that job applicants with Arabic names were less likely to be hired compared to those with French-sounding names, even with lower qualifications. Algerian immigrants also faced housing discrimination, being placed in poor, segregated accommodations on the outskirts of towns.

Media figures, like Jean-Marie Le Pen in 1986 and Nicolas Sarkozy in 2005, further fueled anti-Algerian sentiment through their speeches on immigration.

We can also talk about police abuse towards Algerians, for example the massacres of 17 October 1961, when the police, under the orders of Maurice Papon, drowned between one hundred and three hundred Algerian demonstrators in the Seine in Paris.³

Tag mentioning “here we drown the Algerians” in reference to the massacres of 1961 :



Source : Scènes de corps d'Algériens noyés dans la Seine: Crime imprescriptible! 17 octobre 2021, <https://www.lexpressquotidien.dz/2021/10/17/scenes-de-corps-dalgeriens-noyes-dans-la-seine-crime-imprescriptible/>.

According to a 2021 report by the French National Consultative Commission on Human Rights, racist attacks on the Arab community have been on the increase since 1992, rising from 242 to 1636 in 2022.⁴

The Malik Oussekin affair, depicted in the film *Nos Frangins* by Rachid Bouchareb,

²Jones, Emilia Ene. *Discriminations à l'embauche des jeunes en Ile de France : un diplôme plus élevé compense-t-il une origine maghrébine ?* report, 1 décembre 2010.

[*Discriminations à l'embauche des jeunes en Ile de France: un diplôme plus élevé compense-t-il une origine maghrébine?*](#)

³« Le 17 Octobre 1961: “l’une des plus grandes rafles de l’histoire française” ».

<https://www.trtfrancais.com/debats/le-17-octobre-1961-lune-des-plus-grandes-raffes-de-lhistoire-francaise-10574730>.

⁴ Caroline Renaux, RFI. (2023, 13 octobre). “Quarante ans après, que reste-t-il de la marche des Beurs ?”

[bing.com/ck/a?!&pp=31a94e7442984db3a915481328eccc3afc6da7c840a919645071b329ba8a3c1JmltdHM9MTczMjc1MjAwMA&ptn=3&ver=2&hsh=4&fclid=3f9bd8df-7382-65d2-0da1-cde272c56416&psq=Caroline+Renaux%2c+RFI+\(2023%2c+13+octobre\).+“Quarante+ans+après%2c+que+reste-t-il+de+la+marche+des+Beurs+%3f”&u=a1aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cucmZpLmZyL2ZyL2NvbW5haXNzYW5jZXMvMjAyMzEwMTMtcXVhcmFudGUtYW5zLWFWciVDMYVBOHMtcXVILXJlc3RILXOtaWwtZGUtbGEtbWFyY2hlLWRLcy1iZXVycw&ntb=1](https://www.bing.com/ck/a?!&pp=31a94e7442984db3a915481328eccc3afc6da7c840a919645071b329ba8a3c1JmltdHM9MTczMjc1MjAwMA&ptn=3&ver=2&hsh=4&fclid=3f9bd8df-7382-65d2-0da1-cde272c56416&psq=Caroline+Renaux%2c+RFI+(2023%2c+13+octobre).+“Quarante+ans+après%2c+que+reste-t-il+de+la+marche+des+Beurs+%3f”&u=a1aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cucmZpLmZyL2ZyL2NvbW5haXNzYW5jZXMvMjAyMzEwMTMtcXVhcmFudGUtYW5zLWFWciVDMYVBOHMtcXVILXJlc3RILXOtaWwtZGUtbGEtbWFyY2hlLWRLcy1iZXVycw&ntb=1)

highlights the tragic death of Algerian student Malik Oussekin, who was beaten to death by the police on December 6, 1986, following a demonstration about a university bill. The film exposes the government's cover-up and the widespread hatred towards Algerians and Arabs.⁵

In response to such xenophobia, movements like the Marche des Beurs emerged, with young North Africans marching from Marseille to Lyon in 1983 to protest racism and socio-economic discrimination.⁶

Algerian immigrants in France also faced psychological and physical hardships, including marginalization, isolation, and dangerous jobs, which led to mental health issues and physical illnesses, as described by Bernard Urbani and Tahar Ben Jelloun⁷ in his article 'Et pourtant c'est en France que je vis' (And yet I live in France).

Conclusion :

These Algerian immigrants left their country to settle in France before 1962 but this phenomenon became more pronounced after 1962. Their arrival, driven by the war and economic struggles, was met with wariness and discrimination, which hindered their integration.

The psychological effects of this stigma led to social isolation, guilt, and nostalgia for their homeland. Despite these challenges, social movements like the "Marche des beurs" and the work of associations have fought against racism and raised societal awareness.

Ultimately, the history of Algerian immigrants in France highlights the complex issues of identity and integration.

Rayan Hanine - Master student in International and Intercultural Negotiation specialized in the Middle East and North Africa at Aix-Marseille University and Galatasaray University.

miGoSur

Jean Monnet Chair of Migration Governance for Sustainability and Resilience

⁵ « Le 6 décembre 1986, la mort de Malik Oussekin | INA ». *ina.fr*, <https://www.ina.fr/ina-eclair-actu/le-6-decembre-1986-la-mort-de-malik-oussekin>.

⁶ « EN IMAGES. Il y a 30 ans, la Marche des Beurs ». *Le Nouvel Obs*, 15 octobre 2013, <https://www.nouvelobs.com/galeries-photos/photo/20131014.OBS1061/en-images-il-y-a-30-ans-la-marche-des-beurs.html>.

⁷ Urbani Bernard 2012, *lasemaine.fr* "Et pourtant c'est en France que je vis" Racisme et hospitalité dans Hospitalité française et Entretien avec Monsieur Saïd Hammadi ouvrier algérien de Tahar Ben Jelloun"