

RESEARCH ARTICLE

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The Project of Cultural Awareness in the Concerns of the Writers of the Association of Algerian Muslim Ulama in Light of the Second Edition of Al-Basa'ir Newspaper 1947-1956 – Issues and Positions –

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Abstract:

The French colonial administration, in its quest to secure its enduring presence in Algeria, instituted a profoundly racist policy that permeated all aspects of life. However, it devoted particular attention to the cultural domain, seeking to undermine Algerian national identity through an aggressive “Francization” strategy, systematically eroding the Arabic language and the Islamic faith. In response to these adverse conditions, a distinguished group of Algerian scholars arose, heeding the imperative of the moment, and founded a reform movement known as the Association of Algerian Muslim Ulama. This association was committed to embodying its principles and realizing its objectives through diverse strategies. Alongside the establishment of educational institutions, it employed additional

instruments—most notably newspapers—to broadcast its reformist vision and reach the widest segments of society, with a particular focus on cultural formation, education, and public awareness. This is clearly manifested in the pages of the second edition of the newspaper “Al-Basa’ir,” which emerged as the foremost media platform resisting the colonial narrative aimed at destabilizing Algerian identity between 1947 and 1956.

Keywords: Association of Muslim Ulama; Algeria; French colonialism; Al-Basa’ir newspaper; cultural issues.

Introduction:

The French colonial administration systematically targeted the Algerian individual at the core of his spiritual and cultural being, as well as the entirety of his civilizational structure,

by launching assaults against religious and cultural institutions, especially those related to education. This policy of colonial effacement was met by a determined reformist response, seeking both to counter colonial designs and to elevate the Algerian nation. The Association of Algerian Muslim Ulama, founded in 1931, assumed a central role in this movement.

Among its foremost objectives was the preservation of the fundamental components of Algerian society, and to achieve this, it made use of all available resources, including the press, epitomized by the second edition of *Al-Basa'ir* newspaper. This revival coincided with the Association's return to public activity in 1947. Prior to addressing the major themes representing the cultural awareness project of the Association of Algerian Muslim Ulama, it is essential to introduce its principal organ during this period: the second edition of *Al-Basa'ir* newspaper.

First: *Al-Basa'ir* Newspaper (Second Edition): 1947-1956—Establishment and Objectives

Following the conclusion of the Second World War, Algeria's political landscape witnessed a notable resurgence among the leaders of the national movement, including the Association of Algerian Muslim Ulama, which regained its vitality after the release of its president, Sheikh Al-Bashir Al-Ibrahimi. Sheikh Al-Ibrahimi played a pivotal role in reviving the second edition of *Al-Basa'ir* newspaper after an absence of nearly nine years, assuming the position of editor-in-chief and acquiring publishing rights.

The second edition of *Al-Basa'ir* was issued weekly in Arabic, under a renewed slogan: "Arabism and Islam." The inaugural issue was published on 7 Ramadan 1366 AH, corresponding to July 25, 1947. The first nine issues appeared each Friday, after which the publication day shifted to Monday from the tenth issue through issue 211, before reverting to Friday. The newspaper was published continuously for nearly nine years, producing a total of 316 issues, with the final issue released on April 6, 1956.¹

¹ The editors of the newspaper attributed this change to severe postal and printing obstacles, including an acute shortage of paper, leaving only enough to publish six pages. See: *Al-Basa'ir*

newspaper, "To the Readers," Issue 9, Friday, October 3, 1947, p. 1.

It is significant to emphasize that the revival of the second edition of Al-Basa'ir represented both an extension and a continuation of the reformist path established by the first edition, as articulated by Sheikh Al-Bashir Al-Ibrahimi in the inaugural editorial of the first issue: "Here is Al-Basa'ir returning once more after a long absence, just as the sun returns to shine after setting, and as the tree returns to leaf after being stripped bare."² Al-Ibrahimi further described Al-Basa'ir as "one of the four silent tongues of the Association of Ulama, tongues that overflowed with divine wisdom drawn from the words of God and His Messenger, and that struck sparks against the proponents of falsehood and those who disrupt. Whenever oppression silenced a tongue, truth unsheathed another tongue that neither dulled nor failed." These remarks make it evident that the second edition of Al-Basa'ir functioned as:

- The official spokesperson for the Association, articulating its thought and orientation.

² Muhammad Al-Bashir Al-Ibrahimi, "Introduction," Al-Basa'ir newspaper, Issue 01, Friday, July 25, 1947, p. 1.

³ Ghaniya Jamal, Al-Basa'ir Newspaper and Its Reformist Role, Second Series 1947-1956, Master's Thesis, College of Fundamentals of Religion, Sharia, and Islamic Civilization, Emir

- With a direction and reference point rooted in Islam, derived from the Book of God and the Sunnah of His Prophet.
- Purposed to strike directly at those who propagate falsehood and disrupt, serving both defensive and offensive objectives.³

A similar perspective was expressed by Farhat Djeradji, who stated: "Al-Basa'ir newspaper is the newspaper of correct principles and sound ideas. It is one of the pillars upon which the message of the Association of Ulama is founded. The latter is the only body upholding Islam and the Arabic language in Algeria, bearing the banner of Arabism throughout the land. It is incumbent upon it to spread Arabic eloquence and expression, working to disseminate them in its writings, speeches, newspapers, and publications. There is no blame in issuing its newspaper in clear and eloquent Arabic."⁴

Abdelkader University for Islamic Sciences, Constantine, 2003-2004, p. 120.

⁴ Farhat Ben Derradji, "Arabic Expression: The Motto of Al-Basa'ir," Al-Basa'ir newspaper, Issue 03, Friday, August 8, 1947, p. 25.

The return of Al-Basa'ir was warmly welcomed by its supporters after a prolonged absence. Saleh Bougzal commented: "Al-Basa'ir, since its first appearance until its hiatus, was the sole newspaper truly and sincerely defending Islam, Arabic, and Algeria, enlightening its readers with free thought and sound opinions. That is why the sorrow of reformers at its disappearance was as great as their joy at its return."⁵ The Association of Ulama notably made religion and knowledge the instruments for achieving the loftiest aim—serving and uplifting the nation—a commitment reflected in its focus on religious,⁶ educational, and cultural domains.

Second: The Issue of Defending Islam and Its Institutions in the Concerns of the Second Edition of Al-Basa'ir

Islam stands as the genuine foundation upon which reformers in the Islamic world relied to advance their reformist

vision, with the majority of their concepts rooted in its teachings—exemplified by figures such as Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and his student Muhammad Abduh, whose influence was pivotal in shaping the reformist movement in Algeria. It should be noted that the Association of Algerian Muslim Ulama adhered to this widely accepted paradigm, with Islam serving as the essential guiding principle underpinning the construction of the intended civilizational framework. The association maintained a clear awareness of the necessity of this principle in their transformative project, inspired by the notion that "the latter part of this nation will only be reformed by what reformed its beginning."⁷

In Ibn Badis's perspective, Islam constitutes a path of guidance and a comprehensive social system that regulates worldly affairs as well as the requirements of the Hereafter. In its

⁵ Saleh Bougzal, "The Return of Al-Basa'ir," Al-Basa'ir newspaper, Issue 05, Friday, September 5, 1947, p. 7.

⁶ Some have asserted that the Association of Muslim Ulama could not lead a revolution to eliminate colonialism entirely, as its methodology and approach to the Algerian crisis was mere rhetoric—advocating reform without calling for its eradication. For further perspectives, see: Medjaoued Mohamed, *Les Oulémas: Du*

Réformisme A La Révolution Et De Medersa A L'ALN, *Revue D'histoire Maghrebine*, No. 143, October 2011, Tunis, p. 47.

⁷ Ziloukha Bouguera, *The Sociology of Religious Reform in Algeria: The Association of Muslim Ulama as a Model*, Master's Thesis, College of Social and Islamic Sciences, Hadj Lakhdar University – Batna, 2008-2009, p. 128.

essence—as understood by the Imams of the Salaf—Islam represents a serious and coherent effort to harmonize nature with humanity, and to balance the material and spiritual dimensions of human life. Ibn Badis articulated this vision through his well-known declaration, “For whom do I live?” to which he replied, “I live for Islam⁸.” He further clarified this position by stating: “It is the religion with which God has blessed us; we have learned that it is the religion of humanity, that there is no salvation or happiness for it except through Islam, and that its service cannot be realized except on the basis of its principles. Benefit can reach it only through this path... We would not have been who we are except for Islam, to which we owe allegiance, for which we live, and for which we act. This is the meaning of my statement: I live for Islam.”⁹

France was fully aware that the continuation of its presence in Algeria was contingent upon eradicating the spirit that unified Algerians, endowed them with self-confidence, and granted

them the capacity for resistance—and that spirit was Islam. Islam constituted the very fabric and essence of Algeria, the symbol of its existence and the secret of its survival; it was the force that shielded it from fragmentation and dissolution.

For this reason, colonial aggression was directed at Islam from the very first moment of occupation. Al-Bashir al-Ibrahimi described this reality by stating: “The filthy colonialism arrived in Algeria bearing the sword and the cross—one for conquest, the other for consolidation. Had it confined itself to worldly matters, it might have been said that such is the nature of predatory colonialism, driven by its appetite for pleasures. But it was Christian religious colonialism that confronted Islam from the first day... interfering in its rituals with restriction and severity, all imbued with a Roman Christian spirit radiating hatred and revenge.”¹⁰

It should be emphasized, when examining the second edition of Al-

⁸ Abdelhamid Ibn Badis, “Homeland and Patriotism,” *Al-Shihab Magazine*, January 1937. See: *The Works of Imam Abdelhamid Ibn Badis*, prepared and compiled by Ammar Talbi, vol. 10, coll. 12, Algerian Publishing Company, Algiers, 1997, pp. 424, 427.

⁹ *Al-Basa'ir* newspaper, Issue 226, Friday, April 17, 1953, pp. 1, 2.

¹⁰ Muhammad Al-Bashir Al-Ibrahimi, “The Three Religions in Algeria,” *Al-Basa'ir* newspaper, Issue 13, Monday, November 10, 1947, p. 1.

Basa'ir, that it devoted sustained attention to the defense of Islam and its teachings. The abundance of articles addressing this issue provides clear evidence of this orientation. Sheikh Al-Bashir al-Ibrahimi was among the most prominent contributors to this debate, authoring a well-known series of articles on the separation of the Islamic religion and its institutions from governmental control.

In this regard, researcher Muhammad Djeradji notes that Sheikh Al-Bashir al-Ibrahimi wrote approximately thirty-eight articles on this subject, all centered on defending Islam and demanding that the colonial administration abstain from interfering in Islamic affairs, while insisting that the Islamic faith be left to its Muslim adherents. The religious and cultural significance of this issue is reflected in its consistent placement on the front page of Al-Basa'ir. Al-Ibrahimi's writings on this topic in the second edition of the newspaper extended over nearly seven years, beginning with issue 11 on Monday, October 20, 1947, and continuing until issue 235 on Friday, July 3, 1953.¹¹

¹¹ Muhammad Djeradji, *Islam in Algeria During the Colonial Era Through Imam Muhammad Al-*

When viewed from a narrow angle, this issue may appear to be purely religious; however, in reality, it extends far beyond that scope, encompassing multiple dimensions of life. The most relevant dimension in this context is the cultural sphere. Defending the principle of separating Islamic religion from colonial authority was, in effect, a defense of Islamic institutions, foremost among them the mosque. The mosque was regarded as the spiritual nucleus of religious education, which the Association sought to reclaim from colonial control in order to restore its authentic function.

Sheikh Al-Bashir al-Ibrahimi held that if mosques were placed in the hands of their rightful custodians, they could provide religious education to a far greater number of the nation's youth than all existing study halls combined. He illustrated this point by referring to the city of Constantine, stating: "This matter does not concern a specific individual or a particular body; rather, it concerns the nation and its sons in general, and the city of Constantine in particular, whose dignity and reputation do not permit that the Algerian nation come to it seeking

Bashir Al-Ibrahimi, previous reference, pp. 21-27.

knowledge, only to depart like the expelled, merely because there are no available study spaces, while the nation's mosques stand empty, deprived of their greatest function: education.”¹²

The Association firmly rejected any governmental involvement or influence over Arabic religious education within mosques for a clear reason:¹³ “Everything fulfilled by the mosque—in its Islamic wisdom—is the establishment of the state of the Qur’an, the building of the school of the Qur’an, and the raising of the banner of the Qur’an... The mosque does not fulfill its role, nor does it become a school of the Qur’an, unless it is built by the people of the Qur’an, inhabited according to the methods of the Qur’an, and defended against every aggressor.”¹⁴

Third: Al-Basa’ir Newspaper and the Question of the Arabic Language

¹² Muhammad Al-Bashir Al-Ibrahimi, “Separation of Religion from Government (3),” Al-Basa’ir newspaper, Issue 87, Monday, July 18, 1949, p. 1.

¹³ Muhammad Al-Bashir Al-Ibrahimi, “Separation of Religion from Government (1),” Al-Basa’ir newspaper, Issue 75, Monday, 1949, p. 1.

The reformers had a deep appreciation for the pivotal role of the Arabic language in preserving the identity of the Algerian people. For this reason, they devoted considerable attention to the language, regarding it as a fundamental pillar of their reform program. The Arabic language, as the language of Islam, naturally held the position of the official religious language among Muslims.¹⁵

The subject of Arabic consistently received unwavering attention from the Association’s members and its publications, especially the second edition of Al-Basa’ir, which dedicated extensive coverage to issues related to Arabic in Algeria—its condition, the challenges it faced, its rights, and the obligations of its speakers. Al-Basa’ir itself served as a model, publishing in refined, eloquent Arabic, thereby representing the language of the Qur’an and Arab identity at their highest expression. Among the leading contributors on this topic were

¹⁴ Muhammad Al-Bashir Al-Ibrahimi, “Our Word About Government-Appointed Imams,” Al-Basa’ir newspaper, Issue 153, Monday, April 30, 1951, p. 1.

¹⁵ Muhammad Al-Bashir Al-Ibrahimi, “Among the Naked Truths,” Al-Basa’ir newspaper, Issue 01, Friday, July 25, 1947, p. 3.

Professor Baaziz bin Omar and Sheikh Al-Bashir Al-Ibrahimi, among others. The dedication and care extended to the Arabic language in the Association's newspapers arguably surpassed all other subjects.

The emergence of reformist newspapers led to the gradual revival of classical Arabic, even as it faced suppression, marginalization, and repressive colonial policies. Al-Ibrahimi likened the defense of the Arabic language at that time to the defense of violated honor, stating, "It was natural for a non-native speaker to stubbornly deny the virtues, beauty, and eloquence of Arabic, out of zeal for his own language and a desire not to see its literature diminished. The advocacy for languages is akin to the advocacy for honor."¹⁶

From the moment of its arrival in Algeria in 1830, French colonialism exerted relentless efforts to eradicate the nation's language and supplant it with French. The foundation of French

schools provided clear evidence of the intention to uproot the language of the Qur'an from the consciousness of Algerian youth, seeing it as an obstacle to the French cultural expansionist project.¹⁷

The intensity of French antagonism toward the Arabic language was met with equally resolute efforts by Al-Basa'ir's writers to defend and elevate it, inspired by its venerable heritage and deep roots in Algeria. Arabic was not an imported or foreign element; rather, it belonged inherently to its defenders, firmly anchored in the nation's past, interconnected with its present, and projecting into its future.¹⁸

The situation of Arabic in universities and French educational institutions led to the assessment made by Sheikh Baaziz bin Omar concerning the adverse fate of Arabic under the French educational system: "The Arabic language in Algeria is wronged, wronged by the dominant foreigners who treated it in a way that excluded it

¹⁶ Muhammad Al-Bashir Al-Ibrahimi, "Statement from the Administrative Council of the Association of Muslim Ulama," Al-Basa'ir newspaper, Issue 51, Monday, September 27, 1948, p. 1.

¹⁷ Abdelkrim Ben Aarab, "The Educational System in Colonial Algeria," Al-Mi'yar Journal, Issue 10, Publications of Emir Abdelkader

University for Islamic Sciences, Constantine, September 2005, p. 574.

¹⁸ Muhammad Al-Bashir Al-Ibrahimi, "The Arabic Language in Algeria: A Free Woman with No Rival," Al-Basa'ir newspaper, Issue 41, Monday, June 20, 1948, p. 1.

from all areas of life, administrative and otherwise, and deprived it of its right as the language of general education in its own land, to the extent that any discussion of the matter deliberately ignores its existence. It is absent from the general education budget and, in particular, has been relegated below even the status and recognition granted to foreign languages. It is also wronged by some of its own, who contribute to this abnormal situation by their unjust treatment of it.”¹⁹

El-Fodhil El-Warthilani depicted the ordeal of the Arabic language in its homeland and the suffering endured under the colonial authorities and their laws: “They decided to direct the first harsh blow against the Arabic language, the symbol of the nation’s dignity and its continued existence.”²⁰ They issued a law making French the only official language in Algeria and made it the language of schools and all public transactions. Worse still, they passed another law considering Arabic

a foreign language among its own people, only allowing it to appear in mosques and zawiyas, closing all other doors of public life to it.”²¹

This reality was confirmed by Larbi Ould Khalifa, who remarked, “During that unjust period, the occupation authorities considered Arabic a foreign language in its very homeland. All that remained for it were the mosques, cemeteries, the record books of Muslim judges, and Qur’anic schools, which, in reality, were under strict surveillance and in a constant state of siege.”²²

Fourth: Al-Basa’ir Newspaper and Issues of the Nation and Nationalism

In accordance with its objectives and guiding principles, the Association of Muslim Ulama placed the defense of the homeland and all matters related to it and its people at the forefront of its priorities. The issue of the nation and nationalism was of utmost significance to Imam Abdelhamid and his associates, at a time when the very

¹⁹ Baaziz Ben Omar, “The Course of General Education in Algeria,” *Al-Basa’ir* newspaper, Issue 237, Friday, July 17, 1953, p. 1.

²⁰ Al-Fodhil Al-Warthilani, *The Rebellious Algeria*, Dar Al-Houda Publishing, Ain M’lila, Algeria, 2009, p. 97.

²¹ Baaziz Ben Omar, “The Revival of the Arabic Language in Algeria,” *Al-Basa’ir* newspaper, Issue 127, Monday, July 24, 1950, pp. 1-2.

²² Larbi Ould Khalifa, *The Cultural Question and Issues of Language and Identity*, no edition, Thala Publishing House, Algiers, 2007, p. 186.

terms “nation” and “nationalism” were deemed criminal and their utterance posed real danger, with only a select few possessing true awareness of their meaning. The writings of the reformist press offer the clearest testimony to this historical reality.²³

Belonging to Algeria, as conceived by the reformers, can only be genuinely achieved through a connection to the foundational elements of national identity—by liberating the nation from all forms of ignorance and equipping the people with education, imparting to them the Arabic language, their national history, and the tenets of their faith. An Algerian’s true sense of belonging is found not in the identity card issued by the colonial administration nor in citizenship acquired through naturalization, but in attachment to the homeland, which enables one to engage fully with the values of his Arab-Muslim society.

It is thus evident that the nation’s cause was a central priority for the Association of Muslim Ulama during this era. While it might be argued by some that the Association did not

assume prominent positions on this question, unlike certain political parties, the truth is that the Association elevated the cause of the nation and nationalism to a matter voiced by every reformer, and all of its endeavors—particularly in the cultural domain—were devoted to serving the homeland and reviving a sense of national belonging in the hearts of its sons.

On this basis, the Association commenced its revivalist movement and remained steadfast in its approach, utilizing its diverse means to spread its ideas and awaken both society and public opinion from their lethargy²⁴. This dynamic was clearly reflected in the second edition of *Al-Basa’ir* (1947–1956), where, despite the broad range of topics treated in its articles, the final emphasis of every issue consistently returned to serving the nation.

True patriotism, as expressed by Omar Al-Arabawi, is realized “in striving to elevate the status of the nation. If this is accompanied by sincere emotion, it benefits the entire country, allowing its people to experience genuine

²³ Fatima Zahra Saidahm, “Imam Abdelhamid Ibn Badis’ Methods of Confronting the Policy of Assimilation,” *Kan Historical Journal*, Issue 18, December 2012, p. 135.

²⁴ Al-Khatib Ahmed, *The Association of Muslim Ulama and Its Reformist Impact*, no edition, National Book Institution Publications, Algiers, 1985, p. 173.

happiness, to live in dignity and pride, and to fulfill their rights and national duties, recognizing that all sons of the nation must share both joy and hardship.” For the nation to ascend, it must be established on a foundation of unity and solidarity: “Among the most important reasons and means for national progress are unity and mutual support among all its classes, individuals, and groups.”²⁵

This alone forms the glory of the nation, the axis of its happiness, and the way to success and prosperity for those who strive.” He maintains that one of the essential pillars of nationalism, through which nations flourish, is the advancement of national institutions such as educational establishments, and the facilitation of access to knowledge. Through these immense efforts and robust bonds, the homeland becomes a sight that inspires pride in all who observe and contribute to its welfare.²⁶

²⁵ Omar Al-Arabawi, “True Patriotism,” *Al-Basa’ir* newspaper, Issue 73, Monday, March 28, 1949, p. 6.

²⁶ Muhammad Al-Bashir Al-Ibrahimi, “The Algerian Youth as I Imagine Them in My Thoughts,” *Al-Basa’ir* newspaper, Issue 06, Friday, September 12, 1947, p. 6.

Recognizing that youth are the backbone and future of the nation, and out of a deep commitment to shaping a generation of positively engaged and effective young men, the Association, through *Al-Basa’ir*, devoted considerable attention to youth issues. Sheikh Al-Bashir Al-Ibrahimi directed the youth to adhere to three essential values, which serve as the cornerstone for building a generation capable of serving the nation: morals, knowledge, and patriotism²⁷. He envisioned the Algerian youth as follows: “I imagine him prioritizing his religion before his country, and his country before himself, regarding religion as the jewel and the nation as the shell; he is a diver after both, seeking to capture them together but knowing the difference in their worth. If he is seized by a passion for his homeland, let it not be as fervent as a pagan’s passion for his idol. Homelands are not served by following the path of the devil—O youth of Algeria, be thus and nothing else.”²⁸

²⁷ Muhammad Al-Bashir Al-Ibrahimi, “The Works and Stances of the Association of Muslim Ulama,” *Al-Basa’ir* newspaper, Issue 04, Friday, August 29, 1947, p. 2.

²⁸ Charles-Robert Ageron, *Contemporary History of Algeria*, trans. Issa Asfour, 2nd ed., D.M.J., Algiers, 1982, p. 142.

Perhaps the most compelling testament to the patriotism of the reformist scholars lies in their educational and cultural undertakings aimed at elevating the nation and its sons, guiding the community from the darkness of ignorance to the light of knowledge, and contributing to the national renaissance. The French historian Charles-Robert Ageron underscored the contribution of the reformist school in cultivating a national spirit, observing: “The schools of the Association of Muslim Ulama were schools of patriotism, where efforts were made to instill in students the greatness of this supreme ideal: ‘Life for Islam and Algeria.’”²⁹

On every occasion, Al-Ibrahimi addressed the rising generation, nurturing within them a profound love for the homeland and the spirit of patriotism. Among these occasions were his words directed to students studying abroad, whom he encouraged to seek knowledge in order to uplift the scientific and educational standards of their compatriots. In one of his articles in the second edition of *Al-Basa'ir*, he expressed a sentiment that truly

embodied his national devotion: “This homeland, the father of all, looks from behind this migration to revival, reconstruction, and the restoration of glory and the building of history... Nothing should distract you from loving your homeland except a tyrant, and nothing should deter you from mastering the means of benefit except someone even more unjust. Today, you are soldiers of knowledge; prepare yourselves to become tomorrow the soldiers of action. Your country is in need of a generation strong in body and spirit...”³⁰

For the reformers, knowledge stands as the cornerstone of nationalism. This principle held particular significance given the severe circumstances experienced under colonial rule, which imposed strict limitations on science and those dedicated to its pursuit. In such a context, hope was placed in the youth of the nation—especially those enrolled in Islamic institutes—to acquire knowledge as a means of serving their country. Al-Ibrahimi addressed this generation directly, stating: “You, our sons, are the pioneers of a scientific renaissance

²⁹ Muhammad Al-Bashir Al-Ibrahimi, “To My Sons, the Migrant Students in Pursuit of Knowledge,” *Al-Basa'ir* newspaper, Issue 09, Friday, October 3, 1947, p. 1.

³⁰ Muhammad Al-Bashir Al-Ibrahimi, “Three Frank Words,” *Al-Basa'ir* newspaper, Issue 54, Monday, October 25, 1948, p. 2.

whose time has come and whose dawn has broken, whose rain clouds have glistened. Knowledge—if you do not know—is the foundation of patriotism, the pivot of its wheel, the center of its circle, and the indicator of its sovereignty. You have no right over your country, but all the right is due to the nation; the most binding of its rights upon you is that you fulfill its demands with knowledge, enliven its corners with knowledge, and illuminate its darkness with knowledge.”³¹

It is significant that the Association selected religion and knowledge as the vehicles for achieving its loftiest aim: serving and elevating the nation. This unwavering commitment is clearly demonstrated in its focus on educational and cultural endeavors, which constitute the authentic expression of patriotism. Al-Ibrahimi articulated this sentiment to the nation, stating: “This remarkable scientific movement flourishing in Algeria is a solid foundation for true patriotism, and the correct guidance for the Algerian nation. Its ultimate aim is to

correct the underlying intellectual, spiritual, and mental foundations, and to strengthen the social pillars of religion, language, virtues, and morals. These are the enduring bases upon which patriotism in nations has always been built. This is a truth denied only by the obstinate or the ignorant.”³²

Recognizing that the advancement of colonized nations begins with unity among their sons, the reformers paid particular attention to this essential aspect. Al-Ibrahimi therefore appealed to party leaders, emphasizing the necessity of upholding national unity and declaring: “O leaders of the parties, you are accountable before God, before history, before the nation, and before the people. Place the interest of the nation before that of the party.” The Association, on multiple occasions, undertook sincere and persistent efforts to foster closer ties among the parties, to cultivate a spirit of brotherhood and tolerance, and to achieve a powerful unity that would bring together all efforts and

³¹ Muhammad Al-Bashir Al-Ibrahimi, “A Sincere Call for the Unity of Parties and Organizations,” *Al-Basa’ir* newspaper, Issue 10, Monday, October 13, 1947, p. 2.

³² Muhammad Al-Bashir Al-Ibrahimi, “Announcement to the Algerian Arab Nation from the Administrative Council of the Association of Algerian Muslim Ulama,” *Al-Basa’ir* newspaper, Issue 29, Monday, March 29, 1948, p. 1.

capabilities in the service of the nation's true interests.³³

Among the most salient issues that reflect the patriotism of the scholars is the religious question, which the Association championed in pursuit of the truth for nearly two decades. The defense of Islam and its institutions is, in essence, a defense of the nation itself. Al-Ibrahimi underscored this point, clarifying the Association's stance in an article in *Al-Basa'ir*: "Our view of the issue, namely the question of the separation of religion from the state, is that it is a solid foundation of patriotism. We have considered our efforts in this field to be, above all, national acts, for the homeland is profoundly Muslim and deeply rooted in Arabness."³⁴

Reformist thought in Algeria witnessed a profound transformation in intellectual and cultural spheres. Distinguished by its moderation and reconciliatory character, reformist thinking played a decisive role in the development of a national and patriotic

culture, establishing its foundations, consolidating them within the homeland, nurturing them with its principles, and disseminating them among the populace. The reformist movement launched by the scholars marked a significant departure in both scale and depth from previous initiatives, operating according to a clear and deliberate plan oriented toward specific objectives. It is sufficient to affirm that this movement represents a new impetus that intricately links reform with religion and worldly matters, as well as with heritage and patriotism.³⁵

Conclusion:

The release of the second edition of *Al-Basa'ir* in 1947 signified the continuation of the reformist journalistic struggle that had been launched by the Association's earlier newspapers. At that historical juncture, *Al-Basa'ir* stood as the sole newspaper articulating and representing the

³³ Muhammad Al-Bashir Al-Ibrahimi, "The Issue of the Separation of Religion from the State – Our View of It," *Al-Basa'ir* newspaper, Issue 154, Monday, May 7, 1951, p. 1.

³⁴ Abdallah Rakebi, *Arabness of Thought and Culture* First, no edition, M.W.K., Algiers, 1986, p. 44.

³⁵ Abu Al-Qasim Saadallah, *Unrestrained Thoughts*, no edition, M.W.K., Algiers, 1988, p. 33.

Association's vision and principles. It distinguished itself through the depth and richness of its subject matter and intellectual content, supported by the diversity of its sections—most notably the editorial column, which was particularly effective in addressing critical issues. The overarching objective of the newspaper was to cultivate a project of cultural and reformist consciousness.

The writers of Al-Basa'ir attached tremendous importance to the question of national identity, confronting a colonial power that relentlessly sought to erase and distort the material and spiritual foundations of Algerian identity. The affirmation of Algerian identity's components was a central theme, present in nearly every article, revolving around the nation, the Arabic language, and Islam. Islam, in particular, served as the principal pillar upon which the Association built its reform initiative, striving to purify its message, clarify its role in Algerian society, and demand the withdrawal of colonial control from its institutions.

Al-Basa'ir consistently underscored the vital significance of the Arabic language in Algeria—both historically and in the present—regarding it as an inseparable part of Algerian identity and emphasizing the necessity of

protecting it from marginalization and erosion. The focus on Algeria's Arab-Islamic character was designed as a response to colonial strategies that sought to weaken national unity among the people.

The nation and the principle of patriotism constituted an essential dimension for the writers of Al-Basa'ir. In the era of colonial domination, these elements were among the most decisive factors shaping Algerian identity. The reformers persistently highlighted these values in their writings, seeking to affirm national belonging and revive the spirit of patriotism in the hearts of the Algerian people.

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