

Extrait du Mouvement pour l'Autonomie de la Kabylie (MAK)

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# Kabyle identity in France

- Actualités -

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### **Description :**

The Kabyle presence in France dates back more than a century. Integration Kabyle has shown every day from the family reunification policy is exemplary in many respects. Yet, despite the fact that the Kabyle of course continue to give this country their very best, they are still not recognized as constituting a distinct community with its own identity. They are formally linked to assemblies and communities in which they do not recognize themselves, feel alienated. The Kabyle identity thus ignored and distorted. It is sometimes dissolved in the "Arab" community and sometimes in that of "Maghreb" or finally, the whole "Muslim". The Kabyle whether immigrants or French-Kabyle is routinely referred to an identity that is not his own. In doing so, by modeling their behavior on that of Algeria, France reproduces racist reflexes to the Kabyle and contribute, in a probably unconscious way, to an Algerian genocide campaign. (&hellip;)

At a time when in France, one wonders about national identity, we focus our attention on our own identity as Franco-Kabyle. The kabyle identity, despised and endangered in his own country, is ignored in the country of human rights. However, what was unthinkable in Algeria since the Berber Spring of 1980, the debate on the question of identity, in turn comes back like an underground spring gushing from the ground, and this, strangely, from the French news. The passionate relationship, often stormy, between the two countries are likely the cause. Having grown up in France but knowing a little of Algeria, I would like to bring my modest contribution to the identity of the Kabyle of France.

Everyone agrees that the identity, no matter what the component (roots, membership in a society and its values, facies &hellip;) is now vital to the growth and balance of every human, from every nation. Preserving its identity is assuring to leave a cultural, historical and civilizational legacy to the future generations. Deleting an identity is to destroy a people, it is breaking the very foundations of mankind. France, which already has a heavy responsibility in the destruction of peoples identities should revise its axioms and politic certainties about its daily environmental whose the Kabyle people is, like it or not, part.

The Kabyle presence in France dates back more than a century. Integration Kabyle has shown every day from the family reunification policy is exemplary in many respects. Yet, despite the fact that the Kabyle of course continue to give this country their very best, they are still not recognized as constituting a distinct community with its own identity. They are formally linked to assemblies and communities in which they do not recognize themselves, feel alienated. The Kabyle identity thus ignored and distorted. It is sometimes dissolved in the "Arab" community and sometimes in that of "Maghreb" or finally, the whole "Muslim". The Kabyle whether immigrants or French-Kabyle is routinely referred to an identity that is not his own. In doing so, by modeling their behavior on that of Algeria, France reproduces racist reflexes to the Kabyle and contribute, in a probably unconscious way, to an Algerian genocide campaign.

The finding is striking, despite its age and population size of nearly two million souls, its integration into French society, its visibility paradoxically remains virtually inexistent. How to explain this situation and finally give the Kabyle diaspora the recognition it deserves ? Let s go back to the past !

When discussing the colonial past of France in Algeria, only two events are highlighted. The capture of Algiers in 1830 and the war in Algeria (1954-1962).

The violent manner which was made the conquest and the colonial politics that ensued are rarely made known to the public. Textbooks speak very little of that dark period that lasted 132 years. It is only limited to the image of "Arab" resistance of the Emir Abdel Kader presented as the undisputed leader and sole defender of the country. This character the Kabyle has rebuffed in his quest for leadership, has the great advantage for the colonial symbol of an enemy who had surrender and become a "faithful friend" [1] of France. By enhancing the image and name of the man we have called today "repented" or a traitor, colonization gave the illusion of a peaceful Algeria. It is because of the non-allegiance of the Kabyle to the Emir that colonial France, then France for short, made the Kabyle identity obscured. She was a flamboyant symbol of the fiercest resistance to colonization. She was the witnessed of that part of Algeria, at the time, that stubbornly refused to be French, to lose its identity.

The history lessons taught in France do not present Kabylia as a political and territorial independent entity at the time of the colonial conquest. They also silenced the fact that it had taken more than 30 years to overcome the valiant Kabyle people, attached to its freedom and his land and having witnessed the birth of a heroine such as Fadma N soumer in the first clash between France and Kabylia in 1857, and heroes like the historic leaders of the Kabyle rebellion of 1871, Amokrane and Sheikh Aheddad. To have peace, France was then, after the massacres of entire villages, forcing thousands of Kabyle to leave their homeland to the Eastern countries and deported their leaders to

New Caledonia.

It is taboo to even mention another monumental historic reality : The creation by the colonial France of an artificial country called "Algeria", in which many sovereign nations are sunk, "embedded" with the bayonet. This applies, among other for Kabylia.

Indeed, the historic date of 1871 sees Kabylia lose its independence against the great colonial war machine. The consequences of the repression of 1871 are unprecedented, the Kabyle socio-political elite, the economy and the traditionally democratic state structures of Kabylia are devastated, bringing with them not only the exodus and deportations mentioned above but also the Arabization of surnames and Kabyle emigration to France. We do not measure enough the trauma and disruption caused to our people by the loss of sovereignty to which we pay for today.

It would be very informative and beneficial for the French society to know this common history shared in all its aspects with Kabylia. This will only be not a duty of memory, but a way to scan the discriminatory prejudices and misconceptions, all originated from the colonial thought with footprints in the decadent Orientalism, dating from the seventeenth century. This will allow France to finally discover the real identity of North Africa.

It would be interesting to speculate on why a piece of history from the colonial empire is well sealed. Is that to hide the genocide, destruction, famine, deportations of thousands of Kabyles to New Caledonia and Guyana &hellip; is a deliberate intention of colonial France to force Kabylia to lose sovereignty ? Or is this arrogance and contempt, a pernicious way to ignore that there was a Kabyle people independent that was not Arab ? French colonization ended for nearly fifty years ago. But even replaced by another colonialism, this people is still there ! Are they afraid that the truth would be so disturbing that it would challenge the existing geopolitical regional balance, from which most states benefit because of the pan-Arabism and the Arab policy of France ?

The answer to these questions lies partly in the ambiguous relations between Algeria and France. It lies also in the French strategic option which, since Napoleon III and his dream of Arab Kingdom, which has caused disillusionment and disappointment in France. In spite of common sense, France still can not draw all the consequences. Indeed, since the nineteenth century, France is Arabophile. It is at this point that under the Fifth Republic, it is in the process of Arabization. For proof one need only recall that France is the only power to have an "Arab policy" for itself, while other major democracies have foreign policies in the Middle East and North Africa that do not relate to a racial and reducing criteria. The IMA (Institut du Monde Arabe) inaugurated by the President of the Republic François Mitterrand in November 1987 and which has no equal in the world, is a perfect illustration. The institute, funded for 80% by France and the rest from 22 "Arab" countries included Algeria, is responsible for the spread and influence of Arab culture in France. The French school offers and provides Arabic lessons to Kabyle children to erase their true identity, relaying in France the policy of Arabization that kabyle people are fighting in Algeria since 1962.

And as if this was not enough, a French politician, Jean Francois Coppé, has proposed a teaching of Arabic in all colleges and high schools in France so that people from North Africa will thus find their "roots". It appears that for this politician, electoral ambitions allow any wild aberrations. If unfortunately this proposal were to be implemented, it would participate in a cultural genocide for at least the Kabyle people. Is it so harmless that the French words "North African" and "North Africa" are systematically replaced by the Arab words Maghrebians and Maghreb ? As if it was absolutely necessary to erase more than 9000 years of Amazigh presence in North Africa, and to better attach it to an hypothetical Arab province and make an Orient that would only have consistency in the dreams of a nostalgic Orientalist.

Is this not clearly a form of unspoken racism against Kabyle and Amazigh peoples and the insistence on hiding to French people its several thousand years existence, failing to remove it ? Arab policy of France based on a racial

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criterion, has never been aligned with the sociolinguistics realities of the countries of the south shore of the Mediterranean. The non-Arab peoples of this region do not have to choose between dying physically or culturally for the benefit of regions those politicians want higher on them. Yet France, which holds high ideals of freedom, tolerance, secularism is now struggling against the advance of English at home and in so-called francophone countries. Preserving its identity is not limited to language, but also to what it carries, including all those values that France was able to make universal. Renouncing to its identity is a suicide, bury that of a people is a crime against humanity. This new century will see the rebirth of denied people beginning with the Kabyle people with its future regional state. France, an influential member of the European community, a country of human rights and the Enlightenment, would be well advised to reconsider its foreign policy as a better account of the Kabyle people, its domestic politics where the existence of the French Kabyle community must finally be recognized.

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Translated by Yugurten for [ADN](#)

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[1] "The faithful friend" was the title given to AbdelKader in the elementary school textbooks for "indigenous" Kabyle during the Revolutionary War and who served until 1965. This choice was both a tribute to the Emir Abdelkader and an insult to the ungrateful Kabyle who were in rebellion for the independence of Algeria.