

United Nations
**GENERAL
ASSEMBLY**

FIFTEENTH SESSION

Official Records



**FIRST COMMITTEE, 1125th
MEETING**

Saturday, 10 December 1960,
at 10.30 a.m.

NEW YORK

CONTENTS

	Page
<i>Agenda item 71:</i>	
<i>Question of Algeria (continued)</i>	
<i>General debate (continued)</i>	227

Chairman: Sir Claude COREA (Ceylon).

In the absence of the Chairman, Mr. Kurka (Czechoslovakia), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

AGENDA ITEM 71

Question of Algeria (A/ 4418 and Add.1) (continued)

GENERAL DEBATE (continued)

1. Mr. TOURE Ismaël (Guinea) said that despite the wishes expressed by the United Nations General Assembly, and despite the efforts of the Algerian nationalists, no solution was in sight in Algeria after six years of war. As early as 1956, the Algerian National Liberation Front (FLN) had sought negotiations with the French Government, but its effort had ended with the arrest by the French of Algerian emissaries on their way to a conference at Tunis. France's attitude had led the General Assembly to adopt, at its eleventh session, resolution 1012 (XI) expressing the hope that a peaceful, democratic and just solution of the Algerian problem would be found. In 1957, the FLN had resumed direct talks with France, but the French had again ended them by arresting an Algerian representative. In November of the same year, an offer of good offices by the King of Morocco and the President of Tunisia had been accepted by the FLN but rejected by France.

2. At its twelfth session, the General Assembly had adopted resolution 1184 (XII), expressing the wish that "pourparlers" would be entered into with a view to a solution in conformity with the Purposes and Principles of the United Nations Charter. That resolution had also been ignored by France. On 26 September 1958, Mr. Ferhat Abbas, the head of the newly established Algerian Provisional Government, had offered to negotiate with French representatives at any time. However, President de Gaulle had replied with his offer of a "peace of the brave", which in effect had been a call for the unconditional surrender of the Algerians. The Provisional Government had thereupon appealed once again to the United Nations to compel France to negotiate; but the General Assembly, as a result of certain manoeuvres which were well known to everyone, had debated the Algerian question at its thirteenth session without adopting a resolution.

3. After six years of war in Algeria, more than 500,000 civilians had been killed or seriously wounded, 100,000 persons were being held in prisons and in-

ternment camps, more than 300,000 had taken refuge in Morocco and Tunisia, and 1.8 million peasants had been regrouped in an effort to isolate the National Liberation Army from the Algerian people. France was trying to retain possession of Algeria by means of concentration camps and brain-washing, regardless of the cost.

4. On 16 September 1959, President de Gaulle had introduced a new factor into the situation by recognizing the Algerian people's right of self-determination and offering the Algerians a choice between integration with France, federation, and secession, with the last alternative clearly entailing partition. The Algerian Provisional Government had accepted the principle of self-determination, but had declared that there could be no cease-fire in Algeria without an agreement on safeguards for the equitable application of the principle of self-determination; it had pointed out that the Algerian people could not possibly make a free choice so long as half a million French troops were occupying the country and more than a quarter of its population was in prison, concentration camps or exile. The hopes placed in President de Gaulle's statement had been quickly disappointed, and it had become apparent that his speech of 16 September 1959 had been partly intended to confuse world opinion on the eve of the fourteenth session of the General Assembly.

5. On 20 November 1959, the Algerian Provisional Government had appointed five responsible representatives to initiate negotiations with France; but the French Government had refused to negotiate with them on the pretext that they were in prison and therefore "hors de combat"—even though their imprisonment had been the result of an act of kidnapping by the French authorities. In February 1960, the Provisional Government had asked President de Gaulle to receive an emissary with a personal message from Premier Abbas. President de Gaulle had refused, and had stated shortly thereafter that there could be no solution of the Algerian problem until France had achieved final military victory; France would, in any case, remain in Algeria. Thus, what France was proposing was that the referendum in Algeria should be held under conditions which would predetermine its outcome; but that was a negation of the very principle of self-determination. As a result, the situation was one of deadlock: France could not achieve a military victory in Algeria, but at the same time it was unwilling to negotiate.

6. In June 1960, after a new statement by President de Gaulle which had seemed to constitute a step forward, the Algerian Provisional Government had sent two emissaries to Melun, in France, to arrange for the dispatch of a delegation led by Premier Abbas. At the Melun conference, however, the French had sought to dictate conditions for the projected negotiations under which the treatment of the Algerian

delegation during their stay in France would have been worse than that of political prisoners; the Algerians had in effect been asked to come to France to capitulate.

7. Thus, for six years the Algerian nationalists had sought in vain to end the war by negotiation. France had used the time allowed it by the United Nations solely to aggravate the situation. Moreover, it had done so with the moral and material support of its allies in the aggressive North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). That was why the Algerian Provisional Government, on 20 September 1960, had denounced as illegal the inclusion of Algeria in the area covered by that treaty. The moral and political ideals proclaimed by the so-called free world were being trampled underfoot in Algeria.

8. The French Government was still pursuing its policy of integrating Algeria into France; its declaration of 5 March 1960 had clearly envisaged a vast regrouping of the population designed to facilitate a plan of partition under which the wealthy coastal region and the oil-rich areas would remain under French control. That was the real meaning of the "Algerian Algeria" proposed by President de Gaulle. On 19 November 1960, the Algerian Provisional Government had denounced the French partition plan, which would split the Algerian people into a number of artificial racial or religious communities, as a further denial of the principle of self-determination.

9. The French Government used the problem of the European minority in Algeria as a pretext for refusing to negotiate. But, while that minority was admittedly an important consideration, its existence could not justify continued colonial rule in Algeria. On 17 February 1960, Mr. Ferhat Abbas had declared that in an independent Algeria all would be equal, without regard to race or religion. The differences of opinion among the European population of Algeria showed that the problem was not an insurmountable one: although most Europeans were opposed to Algerian independence, the outbreaks of January 1960 had demonstrated that they could not be led into an insurrection by the extremists.

10. It was obviously France's intention that the projected referendum in Algeria should be organized by the French Army. What that would mean was evident from the record of the referendum of September 1958 and of the various elections held subsequently in Algeria, in which the French Army had rounded up voters and taken them to the polls to cast their ballots in accordance with instructions. It was for that reason that the Algerian Provisional Government had stated, on 22 August 1960, that in view of President de Gaulle's refusal to negotiate on guarantees for a free referendum in Algeria, such a referendum must be organized and supervised by the United Nations.

11. French Government leaders had been thrown into confusion by the Algerian Provisional Government's latest step, and were making frantic efforts to confuse the present debate in the United Nations. They were resorting to intrigue in order to win certain African Heads of State over to support of a policy which was patently insincere and was contrary to the interests of all Africa. In the circumstances, it was the duty of the United Nations to uphold the principle of self-determination—one of the fundamental

principles of the Charter—by agreeing to control and supervise the referendum in Algeria.

12. The Algerian conflict was a challenge to the sincerity of the West's ideals; he appealed to the NATO Powers to respond to it by renouncing outdated ideas of colonial domination and accepting a policy of co-operation based on dignity and equality. By supporting France in Algeria the NATO Powers were alienating the African peoples; but by agreeing to support a referendum in Algeria under United Nations supervision, they would help to pave the way to a solution of the problem of the coexistence of different ethnic groups in peace and mutual confidence. The future independent Algeria would guarantee true equality for all its inhabitants, irrespective of their race, sex or religion; there would be no superior or second-rate citizens.

13. Certain African States still came forward as advocates of a peaceful solution of the Algerian conflict through "pourparlers" or negotiations between the parties. But such a solution had been rendered impossible by the French Government's equivocations, demonstrations of bad faith and outright refusal to negotiate. At a time when neo-colonialism was gaining a foothold in Africa, no African country aware of its responsibilities could back French policy in Algeria or believe in the sincerity of French imperialism. It was no longer sufficient for the African States to express sympathy for the Algerian people in their struggle for emancipation from the colonial yoke; indeed, such an attitude was tantamount to approving the French policy of colonial reconquest. The time had come for African solidarity to become a reality; Guinea's first international act after its attainment of independence had been to recall all its troops fighting in the French Army in Algeria, in order to demonstrate that the war in that country was directed not only against the Algerian people but against all the peoples of Africa. Not a single African soldier should remain in Algeria in the service of French imperialism; no former French territory in Africa could hesitate in choosing between the Algerians fighting for freedom and their oppressors. Indeed, no African country, however good its relations with the former colonial Power might be, could hope to live in peace and lay the basis for its economic development while the Algerian war continued. The peoples of Africa knew that the fate of Algeria was the fate of Africa as a whole; it was in Algeria that imperialism and colonialism would ultimately be defeated.

14. If the newly-independent African States genuinely desired a peaceful solution of the Algerian conflict, they should be careful not to confuse friendship for the French people with friendship for the Government of the former colonial Power. Guinea, for its part, had always made a clear distinction between its determination to fight imperialism and colonialism and the normal friendly relations it sought to establish with all peoples. On the Algerian question, no African State could invoke its friendship for the French people in order to justify a new tactic clearly inspired by French colonialist interests, a tactic designed to prevent the United Nations from adopting a clear and firm stand and to enable France to weather the crisis it faced in the United Nations every year when the Algerian question came up for debate.

15. The negotiations which some African States were being persuaded to advocate were not only impossible, but were designed to enable General de Gaulle to organize his own referendum, in which the French people would be asked for their views regarding the future of the Algerians—after, of course, all the necessary administrative machinery had been installed in Algeria to ensure the perpetuation of the status quo and of French domination. Moreover, the plan was a utopian one, for it presupposed the failure of the Algerian revolution. It was sad to see the representatives of African States underwriting such a betrayal of the Algerian people. It was in the interest of the French people and of the true friends of France that the right of the Algerians to independence should be recognized.

16. He appealed to the African States of the French Community to reconsider their position before it was too late; the peoples of Africa would not pardon African representatives who acted as the spokesmen of the exploiters of the African continent. To betray Algeria was to support the aggressors against a defenceless people and to prevent the genuine development of indigenous African values.

17. The African States which had sent troops to the Congo in token of their solidarity with another African people could not hesitate to support the Algerian people, particularly since that meant supporting a referendum in Algeria under United Nations supervision, or in other words supporting a peaceful solution. Their future was identical with that of the Algerian people; they could no longer compromise with colonialism. Those who were not for the Algerian people were against the dignity of Africa; those who were not for the ultimate triumph of Algerian independence were against the rehabilitation of the African personality. In the present situation, professions of friendship for France would be of no help; what was needed was support of the only means whereby the Algerian people would be able to express themselves freely. In the final analysis, the Algerian war was the war of all the African peoples: the resistance of the Algerian people had been a decisive step in their own liberation. Moreover, there was no real contradiction between the support which they were being asked to give to the Algerian struggle for independence and the continued friendship with the French people, since the French people itself condemned French actions in Algeria.

18. Mr. SON SANN (Cambodia) said that in a situation which was growing daily more serious, Cambodia would be remiss in its friendship towards both the French and the Algerian peoples if it failed to state its views on the Algerian problem in all objectivity. At the 877th plenary meeting of the General Assembly, on 29 September 1960, Cambodia's Head of State, Prince Norodom Sihanouk, had given clear expression to Cambodia's hope that an agreement would be reached between the two contending parties as soon as possible. It was greatly to be regretted that as a result of the breakdown of the "pourparlers" initiated at Melun, negotiations between representatives of the French Government and of the Algerian Provisional Government had not taken place.

19. That set-back had led the Algerian Provisional Government to seek the good offices of the United Nations. On the other hand, the French Government would not agree to any intervention by international

bodies, contending that the Algerian question was an internal matter whose settlement would have to await a cease-fire. It was not hard to understand the French Government's attitude, when one considered the magnitude of the French interests involved and the added problem of the large number of French citizens living in Algeria.

20. However, the principle of self-determination, which was demanded by the FLN and accepted by France, remained the common objective of both sides. In Cambodia's view, that principle could only be applied by means of a free and peaceful popular referendum. The major difference between the parties seemed to centre on the question of the guarantees by which such a referendum should be attended. Since the Algerian combatants were unwilling to accept the guarantees offered by France, it might be wise to seek suitable guarantees for a cease-fire and referendum elsewhere. As Cambodia's Head of State had said, the United Nations was the only organization qualified to provide such guarantees.

21. Prince Norodom Sihanouk had said that it would be illusory to expect the Algerian combatants to agree to lay down their arms without first being assured of suitable guarantees for the proposed referendum. That observation had been prompted by Cambodia's own experience in the war of Indo-China. In that connexion, he wished to point out, there seemed to be a general, and somewhat over-simplified, belief that France had been driven out of Indo-China and lost all its interests there. That might be true in the case of some of the countries of former Indo-China, but so far as Cambodia was concerned, Franco-Khmer friendship had never been so strong as at present, and France continued to enjoy a privileged position in that country. For instance, the number of French teachers, doctors and technicians in Cambodia had more than doubled. That was all due to the fact that France, at the proper time, had satisfied the demand for complete independence made by the King of Cambodia in 1953.

22. Nor had Prince Norodom Sihanouk failed to take due account of possible objections that Algeria's case was not analogous to that of Cambodia, which had always constituted a united monarchy. In an interview given to Agence France-Presse in September 1959, Cambodia's Head of State had expressed the conviction that a solution to the Algerian problem could be found only after the freely-expressed wishes of all the Algerian people had been determined by means of a referendum organized by the United Nations, which was the only body in a position to provide acceptable guarantees.

23. Prince Norodom Sihanouk had proposed that the neutral forces of the United Nations should first "occupy" Algeria, with an accompanying supervisory commission, so as to permit an armistice to be concluded; next, a referendum should be held among the Algerians to ascertain whether what they desired was full union with France with equality of rights, or a federated State associated with France, or complete independence. If they chose independence, a general election would be held under United Nations supervision, and the resulting Government and Parliament would be required to pledge themselves to the United Nations to furnish suitable guarantees of the rights of French citizens and Moslems loyal to France. The United Nations commission and forces would not leave

Algeria until such a guarantee was deposited with the United Nations Secretariat.

24. Such a procedure would ensure that the referendum would be held after peace was restored, which was a condition laid down by France. Moreover, the Algerian people would have the guarantee of the principle of self-determination which they desired. Lastly, United Nations intervention would give French citizens living in Algeria and Moslems loyal to France the legitimate guarantees that were due to them in all fairness. Algeria had already agreed to United Nations supervision, and France, which was a Member of the Organization, could not go on rejecting it indefinitely in the absence of any other solution which would permit the early termination of the conflict.

25. Cambodia appreciated the French Government's legitimate concern for the future of French citizens living in Algeria. After several years of armed conflict, they could not be expected to be content with vague assurances of "equality of rights and opportunity". Another important point was that progress towards a friendly settlement would not be helped by condemning France. It should be realized that in present conditions General de Gaulle was the only person in France capable of settling the problem by agreement. Accordingly, those who desired a satisfactory solution should do everything possible to avoid complicating the task of the French Head of State, and should seek to enable him to act with full authority, taking into account world opinion as expressed in the United Nations. Moreover, in its search for a just settlement the Committee should bear in mind that

its duty was not merely to recommend a solution but to recommend one that would be acceptable to all parties concerned. The most realistic step it could take would be to create favourable conditions for the acceptance of such a solution. Cambodia, therefore, wished to warn the Committee against any attempts to use the Algerian problem to advance partisan interests; untimely statements could only jeopardize the prospects of conciliation. As Cambodia's Head of State had emphasized during the general debate, the United Nations, far from condemning France, should do everything possible to help the French Government and the Algerian Provisional Government to reach an understanding. He had expressed the conviction that if France granted Algeria its independence while there was still time, the new State would undoubtedly maintain its ties of friendship and co-operation with the former ruling Power, just as Cambodia had done. At the same time, the world was waiting to see France make the same generous gesture towards Algeria as it had towards its former African possessions; by doing so, it would regain the friendship of the African-Asian world.

26. Cambodia, while it favoured a popular referendum under the auspices of the United Nations, hoped at the same time that the Organization would refrain not only from condemning France but also from prejudging the results of that referendum, since the people of Algeria alone were in a position to make their true wishes known. Accordingly, Cambodia would not vote for any resolution which failed to take account of those two requirements.

The meeting rose at 12.25 p.m.