

Visitor's itinerary

The French Army and the Armée de libération nationale (1954-1958)

On 1 November 1954, the Front de libération nationale (FLN) launched a series of attacks which marked the beginning of the war of independence. Stunned by the scope of the action, and lacking the tactics and the wherewithal to fight an insurgency meant to shock by its violence, the French Army struggled. The brutally repressed Constantinois massacres of 20 August 1955 marked the actual beginning of the war. Under pressure from Algiers, Guy Mollet, the recently appointed Prime Minister, dismissed General Catroux early in 1956. Robert Lacoste, the new Resident Minister in Algeria, agreed with the Army Staff in Algeria that the conflict was of a revolutionary nature, and was determined to quash the insurgency. In March 1956, the National Assembly granted « special powers » to the government by an overwhelming majority. It enabled the Army to rely on recalled soldiers and conscripts, and also to use any measures, however controversial, to conduct counter-guerilla warfare. In 1957 the Armée de libération nationale (ALN) numbered some 40,000 men. To fight against a force a quarter of its own size, the French Army's tactics included active presence across the country, forbidden areas, regroupment camps, and psychological warfare to deprive the enemy of popular support. The French Army was able to regain the military initiative by dismantling bomb planters' rings during the Battle of Algiers, setting up road blocks along the Tunisian and Moroccan borders, and controlling once again the bled, all of which was achieved at the cost of torture.

All along the exhibition
historians share their analysis



War violence

JC. Jauffret, D. Aït-El-Djoudi,
R. Branche

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Special power

S. Thenault/Gal J. Delmas



Young visitors' itinerary

From the desert sands to trench warfare

At the outbreak of the First World War, France issued the mobilization orders. Following these orders, three French departments in Algeria sent their contingents to fight in the Mainland. The term Troupes Coloniales (French Colonial Forces) was printed for the first time on the mobilization posters. These troops took an active part in both wars (The First and Second World Wars).

