

## International

# Independent Algeria turns 60, but colonial-era wounds remain

## Macron's move towards reconciliation could face a major test

**ALGIERS, Algeria:** Algeria marks 60 years of independence from France on Tuesday, but rival narratives over atrocities committed during more than a century of colonial rule still trigger bitter diplomatic tensions. The North African country won its independence following a gruelling eight-year war which ended with the signing in March 1962 of the Evian Accords.

On July 5 of the same year, days after 99.72 per cent voted for independence in a referendum, Algeria finally broke free from colonial rule—but memories of

and fomenting "hatred towards France".

Algeria withdrew its ambassador in response. "Relations between the power system in Algeria and 'official France' have been punctuated by crises and pseudo-reconciliations since independence," said Athmane Mazouz, head of Algeria's secularist opposition party RCD. "At this point, all bets are off on whether they can establish better ties."

### 'Take heat out of debate'

France has ruled out any form of apology for the colonial period. But Macron has also made a number of gestures aimed at mending ties with the former colony. Visiting Algiers during his first presidential campaign in February 2017, he described colonisation as a "crime against humanity".

He has since acknowledged the French army was behind the death of Algerian nationalist lawyer Ali Boumendjel and anti-colonialist French mathematician Maurice Audin. France has returned the skulls of 19th century Algerian resistance fighters and opened state archives on the Algerian war.

And the two sides appear to have moved on from the latest crisis. Macron and his Algerian counterpart Abdelmadjid Tebboune confirmed in a June 18 phone call their desire to "deepen" relations. Tebboune even congratulated Macron on his "brilliant" re-election and invited him to visit Algeria. Historian Amar Mohand-Amer said it was time for "a quick return to a normal situation". "Sixty years after independence, isn't it time we took the heat out of this debate?"

### 'Unstable geopolitics'

Mohand-Amer pointed out that the anniversary celebrations come at a time of raised tensions in the wider region around Algeria. The country cut ties with regional arch-rival Morocco last August, accusing it of "hostile acts".

In early June, Algiers suspended a two-decade-old cooperation pact with Madrid after Spain backed Morocco's stance in the long-running dispute over Western Sahara. To the east, in war-

left tens of thousands homeless, adds urgency to the funding debate. "The United States expressed condolences for the loss of life and suffering in Afghanistan caused by recent earthquakes," the State Department said of the meeting, which was led by Special Representative for Afghanistan Thomas West.

The United States raised "concerns regarding increased interference by the Taliban in the delivery of humanitarian assistance" and "concerns regarding transparency in delivery of services," the statement said of the aid.

According to the State Department, US representatives also pushed the Taliban authorities on women's rights—a sticking point which led Washington to cancel talks in Doha in March, when the group closed girls' secondary schools in Afghanistan.

"The United States supports the Afghan people's demands that girls be allowed to return to school and that women be allowed to work, contribute to the country's economic growth, and move and express themselves freely," the statement said. The hardline Islamist Taliban took over in August 2021 after the United States gave up a 20-year military effort.

Washington at the time froze \$7 billion in reserves and the international community halted billions in direct aid that Afghanistan and its population of roughly 40 million people had relied on. The currency has collapsed and the country descended into a serious economic crisis, although some assistance has been restored. — AFP

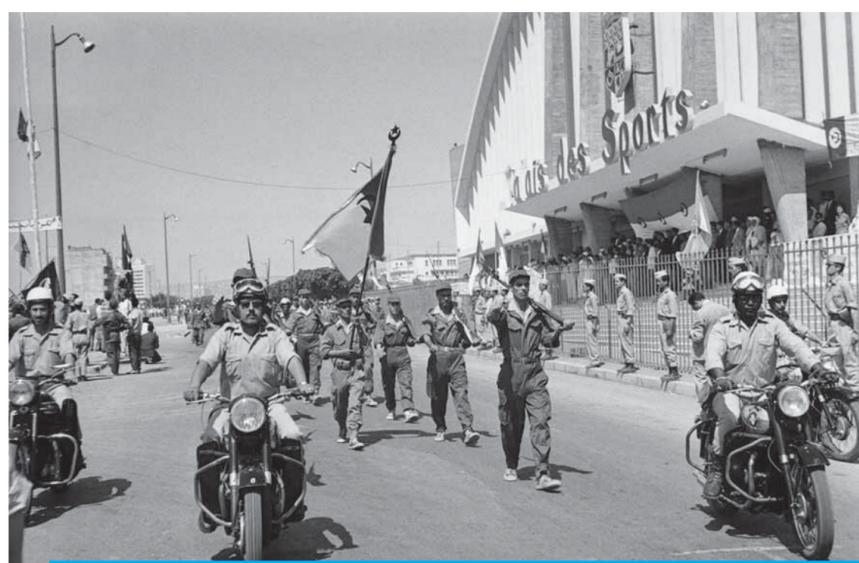
over the risks of famine in Somalia due to draught and reached consensus on offering emergency assistance to the Arab country to alleviate the suffering of the people there, Bou-Habib said. As for the war in Ukraine, the top Arab diplomats were unanimous in their rejection of any politicization of international organizations against the backdrop of this conflict, he added.

Aboul-Gheit said the consultative meeting took place between two regular formal meetings of the Arab League's Council in March and September. "The conferees reviewed preparations for the coming Arab Summit and the impacts of the war in Ukraine on Arab countries in such areas as food security and energy," he noted. They held good discussions on how to help Lebanon recover from the current difficulties and support it in the talks with the IMF, he revealed. On Lebanese-GCC relations, Aboul-Gheit said there is good progress in this relationship, which signals a shared desire to normalize relations. — Agencies

journalist said protesters in Libya's third city Misrata were blocking roads after setting fire to a municipal building on Friday night.

Interim prime minister Abdulhamid Dbeibah leads a Tripoli-based administration while former interior minister Fathi Bashagha draws support from the Tobruk-based House of Representatives and eastern military strongman Khalifa Haftar. "For more than a year, the overwhelming majority of diplomatic and mediation efforts around Libya have been monopolized by the idea of elections, which won't happen for at least two years, given the failure of the Geneva negotiations," Libya expert Jalel Harchaoui told AFP. This year "has been extremely painful for Libyans" because the country "imports almost all its food and the Ukraine war has hit consumer prices", Harchaoui said.

Libya's energy sector, which during the Gaddafi era financed a generous welfare state, has also fallen victim to political divisions, with a wave of forced closures of oil facilities since April. Supporters of the eastern-based administration have shut off the oil taps as leverage in their efforts to secure a transfer of power to Bashagha, whose attempt to take up office in Tripoli in May ended in a swift withdrawal. — AFP



ORAN, Algeria: File photo taken on July 3, 1962, Algerian troops of the National Liberation Army (ALN) parade in front of the Palais de Sports in Oran, during a ceremony celebrating Algeria's independence. — AFP

scarred Libya, the emergence of two rival governments has raised fears of a return to armed conflict after a two-year truce.

And to the south, Mali is in crisis after army officers, disgruntled at the government's failure to roll back a jihadist uprising, ousted president Ibrahim Boubacar Keita in 2020. "The very unstable regional geopolitics demand strong positions in the mid to long term and the consolidation of political and economic relations" between Algeria and France, Mohand-Amer said.

But the historian fears that Macron's move

towards reconciliation could face a major test due to gains by extreme right leader Marine Le Pen's party the Rassemblement National in June elections. Le Pen said in March that colonialism had "contributed to Algeria's development" and accused Macron of "spending his life apologising without asking anything in return from an Algerian government that continues to insult France".

Mohand-Amer warned that "the French far right will transform this mandate into a big battlefield of memories, where revisionism and the falsification of history will be omnipresent." — AFP

## Colonial rule still triggers diplomatic tensions

the 132-year occupation continue to mar its ties with France. The country's authorities are planning to mark the anniversary with pomp and ceremony, capped by a vast military parade in Algiers, the first of its kind in 33 years.

A show is also planned at the capital's opera house that "retraces the long history of Algeria", said the minister for independence fighters, Laid Rebiga. The government has even commissioned a logo—a circle of 60 stars containing military figures and equipment—to mark "a glorious history and a new era".

Algeria's war of independence left hundreds of thousands of dead and, despite a string of gestures by French President Emmanuel Macron, a crisis late last year underlined how spiky the issue remains six decades on. Macron reportedly questioned whether Algeria had existed as a nation before the French invasion and accused its "political-military system" of rewriting history

## US, Taliban talk quake aid, foreign reserves in Doha

**WASHINGTON:** Talks between the United States and the Taliban continued in Doha earlier this week to discuss earthquake aid, the State Department said Friday, months after the two parties last met in the Qatari capital in March.

The Taliban is seeking a way to unlock some of the country's foreign reserves—currently frozen by the United States—following a devastating earthquake last month, with the United States looking for assurances the money would go to help the population.

During the meetings Wednesday and Thursday, the United States reiterated an earlier pledge of \$55 million in new assistance for earthquake relief, the State Department said in a statement Friday. And "the two sides discussed in detail US actions to preserve \$3.5 billion in Afghan central bank reserves for the benefit of the Afghan people," the statement said, money which the White House said last week the US was "urgently" working to sort out.

Last week's 5.9-magnitude earthquake in eastern Afghanistan, which killed more than 1,000 people and

## Zionist strike on Syria wounds two civilians

**DAMASCUS, Syria:** An Zionist air strike wounded two civilians on Saturday in the Syrian government's heartland on the war-torn country's west coast, the defence ministry said.

"The Zionist enemy carried out an air strike" after daybreak near the town of Al-Hamidiyah, the ministry said, identifying the locations hit as poultry farms, without elaborating.

The strike was conducted from the Mediterranean Sea, west of Lebanon's northern city of Tripoli, and "led to the injury of two civilians, including a woman", it said in a statement.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights war monitor said the facility that was struck had formerly been used to keep farm animals but was now used by Lebanon's Shiite militant movement Hezbollah, a Syrian government ally.

The Zionist army told AFP on Saturday that they "do not comment on reports in the foreign media". Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian of Iran, also a staunch ally of Syrian President Bashar al-

Assad, condemned the Zionist strike.

"With its attacks, the Zionist entity is trying to portray Damascus as an unsafe city to obstruct the return of displaced Syrians," he said on Saturday during a visit to the Syrian capital.

Video footage by Syrian's official news agency SANA showed rubble at what it said was the site of the targeted facility. People are seen inspecting the site, where pulverised chunks of concrete and iron lay on the earth in the middle of a field.

Al-Hamidiyah is located south of Tartus, a bastion of the Syrian government and home to a naval port used by Russia, whose armed forces have backed Assad.

Since civil war broke out in Syria in 2011, Zionist entity has carried out hundreds of air strikes against its northern neighbour. The raids have targeted Syrian government troops as well as allied Iran-backed forces and Hezbollah fighters.

Observatory director Rami Abdel Rahman said Saturday's strike targeted "warehouses formerly used to raise animals, and which the Lebanese Hezbollah group was using to transport weapons".

Syrian air defence systems did not appear to have been deployed, said the British-based monitor, which has a wide network of sources in Syria.

Last month Zionist strikes on Damascus International Airport rendered its runways unusable for weeks. — AFP

## Lebanese president calls for unity to...

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The discussions dealt with the need to continue support to Lebanon, improve the living conditions of the Lebanese people and realize the objectives of the Kuwaiti initiative for Lebanon, he said. The minister noted he raised during the meeting the need of finding a new solution to the crisis of Syrian refugees other than funding their stay in Lebanon. On the Palestine question, he said the conferees discussed the abuses of the Zionist occupation authorities which undermine the possibilities of fair and comprehensive peace based on the two-state vision.

Regarding food security, the meeting mulled

## Libya anger boils...

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exercised by all," she tweeted. UN-mediated talks in Geneva this week aimed at breaking the deadlock between rival Libyan institutions failed to resolve key differences.

Presidential and parliamentary elections, originally set for December last year, were meant to cap a UN-led peace process following the end of the last major round of violence in 2020. But voting never took place due to several contentious candidacies and deep disagreements over the polls' legal basis between the rival power centers in east and west.

In Tripoli on Friday, hundreds came out to demand elections, fresh political leadership and an end to the chronic power cuts. The sudden eruption of unrest appeared to be spreading to other areas of the country, with Libyan media showing images of protesters in the oasis city of Sebha, deep in the Sahara desert, torching an official building. A local

## Kuwait monitors COVID cases via...

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A team of researchers from the UK Health Security Agency and the University of Bristol reviewed 18 studies in several countries on airborne transmission. In research published in the BMJ this week, they found that people can infect each other when they are more than two meters apart.

We know one thing for sure: if you open a window, or well-ventilate a space, the virus-carrying aerosols dissipate like smoke. But experts say that nowhere near enough is being done to ventilate public and private spaces across the world. "On the

whole, this is an issue that governments have not yet taken up," Flahault said. He called for massively increased funding to ventilate many public spaces, starting with schools, hospitals, public transport, offices, bars and restaurants.

"Just as we knew to filter and treat drinking water" in homes at the beginning of the 1900s, "one can imagine some households will equip themselves with air purifiers and consider opening their windows," Flahault said. Only a few countries have announced ventilation plans since the start of the pandemic.

In March the US government called on all building owners and operators, as well as schools and universities, to "adopt key strategies to improve indoor air quality". The plan, dubbed the Clean Air in Buildings Challenge, is covered by previously announced COVID funding and also includes a review of existing ventilation, heating and air conditioning systems. — Agencies

## Strong quakes kill five in...

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plates and experiences frequent seismic activity. The Islamic republic's deadliest quake was a 7.4-magnitude tremor in 1990 that killed 40,000 people in the north, injured 300,000 and left half a million homeless. In 2003, a 6.6-magnitude quake in south-eastern Iran levelled the ancient mud-brick city of Bam and killed at least 31,000 people. In Nov 2017, a 7.3-magnitude quake in Iran's western province of Kermanshah killed 620 people. In December 2019 and January 2020, two earthquakes struck near Iran's Bushehr nuclear power plant.

Iran's Gulf Arab neighbors have raised concerns about the reliability of the country's sole nuclear power facility, which produces 1,000 megawatts of power, and the risk of radioactive leaks in case of a major earthquake. In February 2020, a magnitude 5.7 earthquake in northwestern Iran killed nine people, including children, in neighboring Turkey and



SAYEH KHOSH, Iran: A view of destruction in the aftermath of an earthquake in this village in Iran's southern Hormozgan province. — AFP

injured dozens on both sides of the border. One person was killed in November last year when Hormozgan province was hit by twin 6.4 and 6.3 magnitude quakes. — AFP