

Crisis Phase

(137) France/Tunisia (national liberation/independence dispute), 1920-1956

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(137-676) Pre-Crisis Phase (June 23, 1920-April 9, 1938): Tunisian nationalists established the *Constitution Party (Destour Party)* headed by Sheikh Abdelaziz Taalbi, and the Destour Party presented nine demands to the French resident-general on June 23, 1920. The French parliament rejected the demands in July 1920. Tunisian nationalists established the *New Constitution Party (Neo-Destour Party)* headed by Mahmoud Materi and Habib Bourguiba in March 1934.

(137-677) Crisis Phase (April 10, 1938-March 9, 1952): French government troops fired on demonstrators in Tunis on April 10, 1938, resulting in the deaths of 122 individuals. The French government declared a state-of-siege on April 11, 1938. Habib Bourguiba, secretary-general of the *Neo-Destour Party*, was arrested by French officials in 1939. German troops occupied Tunisia from November 1942 to May 1943. Allied troops captured Tunisia from German troops on May 12, 1943. The *Free French* took control of Tunisia from the Allied troops on May 15, 1943. Sheikh Abdelaziz Taalbi died on October 1, 1944. Habib Bourguiba issued the *Manifesto of the Tunisian People*, and went into exile in Cairo, Egypt in March 1945. **Government police fired on Tunisian laborers led by Habib Achour in Sfax in 1947, resulting in the deaths of 32 individuals.** Habib Bourguiba returned to Tunisia on September 9, 1949. Louis Perillier was appointed as resident-general of French Tunisia on May 31, 1950. France provided Tunisia with autonomy within the French Union on February 8, 1951. Tunisian nationalists referred the matter to the *United Nations (UN) Security Council* on January 12, 1952. Tunisian nationalists demonstrated against the French colonial government in Bizerte, Mateur, Sousse, Teboulba, and Tunis on January 16-23, 1952, resulting in the deaths of 30 nationalists. French police arrested Habib Bourguiba and five other *Neo-Destour Party* leaders on January 18, 1952. France deployed some 28,000 troops and police in Tunisia between January 26 and February 11, 1952. French police and demonstrators clashed in Tunis on February 4, 1952, resulting in the deaths of three individuals. The Bey of Tunis, Sidi Muhammad al-Amin, requested the release of Tunisian nationalists from custody on February 7, 1952. Some 100 individuals were killed during the crisis.

(137-678) Conflict Phase (March 10, 1952-April 21, 1955): Tunisian nationalists bombed a government police station in Tunis on March 10, 1952, resulting in the deaths of one government soldier. Tunisian nationalists bombed a railroad station in Gabes on March 12, 1952, resulting in the deaths of eight individuals. The French colonial government declared a state-of-siege in Gabes on March 13, 1952. French government police and Tunisian nationalists clashed in Tunis on March 20, 1952, resulting in the death of one nationalist. Salaheddin Baccouche formed a government as prime minister on April 12, 1952. The UN Security Council voted against placing the Tunisian matter on its agenda on April 14, 1952. Tunisian nationalists bombed a post office in Tunis on May 13, 1952, resulting in the deaths of five individuals. The French government released 450 Tunisian nationalists from custody on May 22, 1952. Five Tunisian nationalists were sentenced to death by a French military tribunal on June 11, 1952, and the three of the nationalists were executed on December 8, 1952. Tunisian nationalists attacked and killed two individuals in Sousse on August 2, 1952. Ferhat Hached, general-secretary of the *General Union of Tunisian Workers (Union Generale des Travailleurs Tunisiens - UGTT)*, was killed on December 4, 1952. Tunisian nationalists attacked the police station in Hamma on December 7, 1952, resulting in the death of one Tunisian. The UN General Assembly appealed for peaceful negotiations between the parties on December 17, 1952. Pierre Voizard was appointed as resident-general of French Tunisia on September 2, 1953. The *League of Arab States (LAS) Council* expressed support for Tunisian independence on September 7, 1953. Mohammed Salah M'Zali formed a government as prime minister on March 2, 1954. French government policemen and Tunisian nationalists clashed in Tunis on March 15, 1954, resulting in the death of one individual. Habib Bourguiba was sent into exile in France on May 20, 1954. French troops and Tunisian nationalists clashed near Bizerte on May 23, 1954, resulting in the deaths of five Tunisian nationalists and two French government soldiers. The Bey of Tunis, Sidi Mohammed el Amin, and Habib Bourguiba appealed for the end of violence on June 1, 1954. Prime Minister M'Zali resigned on June 16, 1954. French government troops and Tunisian nationalists clashed near Jebel Orvata on July 5, 1954, resulting in the deaths of seven Tunisian nationalists and three French government soldiers. Some 74 Tunisians and 21 French government police were killed as a result of political violence between March and July 1954. Tahar ben Ammar formed a government as prime minister on August 8, 1954. French government troops and Tunisian nationalists clashed near Sidi Bou Zid on October 2, 1954, resulting in the deaths or wounding of 65 nationalists. French government troops and Tunisian nationalists clashed near Kasserine on October 20, 1954, resulting in the deaths of 17 individuals. Prime Minister Edgar Faure of France and Habib Bourguiba signed an autonomy agreement in Paris on April 21, 1955. Some 3,000 individuals were killed during the conflict.

(137-679) Post-Conflict Phase (April 22, 1955-March 20, 1956): Habib Bourguiba returned to Tunisia from exile in France on June 1, 1955. Tunisia formally achieved its independence from France on March 20, 1956.

[Sources: Bercovitch and Jackson, 1997, 71; Butterworth, 1976, 137-138; *Facts-on-File*, June 2-8, 1955; *Keesing's Record of World Events*, March 24-31, 1951, May 3-10, 1952, August 9-16, 1952, December 13-20, 1952; Langer, 1972, 1291-1292; Ling 1967; *Middle East Journal (MEJ)*, Spring 1952, Summer 1952, Autumn 1952, Winter 1952, Spring 1953,

Winter 1953, Summer 1954, Autumn 1954, Winter 1954, Summer 1955, Autumn 1955, Spring 1956, Summer 1956;
Rivlin, 1952, 167-193; Weisburd, 1997, 70-71.]