

July 13, 1957

**Telegram, Colonel [Amar] Ouamrane to Lt. John
Kennedy, Senator, Washington**

Citation:

"Telegram, Colonel [Amar] Ouamrane to Lt. John Kennedy, Senator, Washington", July 13, 1957, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Papers of John F. Kennedy, Pre-Presidential Papers, Senate Files, Speeches and the Press, Algerian Speech File, 1957, Mixed comments, unsorted, France, JFKSEN-0920-004, p. 109, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum,
<https://www.jfklibrary.org/asset-viewer/archives/JFKSEN/0920/JFKSEN-0920-004>.
Contributed, translated, and annotated by Cyrus Schayegh.
<https://digitalarchive.umd.edu/document/291041>

Summary:

On July 2, 1957, US senator John F. Kennedy made his perhaps best-known senatorial speech—on Algeria.

Home to about 8 million Muslims, 1.2 million European settlers, and 130,000 Jews, it was from October 1954 embroiled in what France dubbed “events”—domestic events, to be precise. Virtually all settlers and most metropolitan French saw Algeria as an indivisible part of France. Algeria had been integrated into metropolitan administrative structures in 1847, towards the end of a structurally if not intentionally genocidal pacification campaign; Algeria’s population dropped by half between 1830, when France invaded, and the early 1870s. Eighty years and many political turns later (see e.g. Messali Hadj’s 1927 speech in this collection), in 1954, the Front de Libération Nationale (FLN) launched a war for independence. Kennedy did not quite see eye to eye with the FLN.

As Kennedy's speech shows, he did not want France entirely out of North Africa. However, he had criticized French action already in early 1950s Indochina. And in 1957 he met with Abdelkader Chanderli (1915-1993), an unaccredited representative of the FLN at the United Nations in New York and in Washington, DC, and a linchpin of the FLN's successful international offensive described in Matthew Connelly's *A Diplomatic Revolution: Algeria's Fight for Independence and the Origins of the Post-Cold War Era* (2002). Thus, Kennedy supported the FLN's demand for independence, which explains its very positive reaction to his speech, evidenced in the telegram sent to Kennedy printed here.

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Contents:

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LT JOHN KENNEDY SENATOR WASHINGTON

HAVE READ WITH SATISFACTION SENATE DECLARATION ABOUT ALGERIA STOP
CONGRATULATE SUCH IMPORTANT AMERICAN PERSONALITY FINALLY FORCEFULLY
DENOUNCES EXTERMINATION WAR LED BY FRANCE IN ALGERIA AND HIGHLIGHTS
URGENT NECESSITY GRANTING INDEPENDENCE TO THAT MARTYROUS PEPOLE STOP
DAILY MASSACRES HAPPENING IN ALGERIA DISHONOR UNITED STATES IF IT REMAINS
INDIFFERENT TO SUCH GENOCIDE

FLNALN FOR THE HEAD OF THE DELEGATION ABROAD OF THE FRONT COLONEL
OUMRANE

FLNALN ABROAD