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The Turks and Andalusians: a human reservoir in the service of the Ottoman expansion projects

The website " Hebr Abyadh " devoted a series of episodes about the supposed relationship between the Ottomans and Andalusia after some ideologues tried to present the Turks with the perspective of the heroes who provided everything to the relief of our people in Andalusia. Were it not for the complex conditions and repeated targeting of the Ottoman Empire by the Safavid state, the Mamluks and some European powers, today Andalusia might have been, in their perception, an independent Arab Islamic state and a member of the Islamic Conference Organization and the United Nations!

In fact - as we indicated earlier - the objective writings that were monitored for that historical period (the end of the 15th century AD and the first half of the 16th century AD) unanimously agreed that the Ottoman Empire did not undertake any serious initiative to save Andalusia from its fall, and it was not at the top of its agenda to restore this spot to Islamic countries .

On the other hand, the Ottoman Turks, especially those who occupied the Maghreb, made an effort to bring in a group of Andalusians on the occasion of their raiding on the southern coasts of Spain. They were escorted to Algeria in particular, and there they were treated in a way that is better than the one of Inquisition in Spain. However, the important question is: Were these Andalusians being brought in purely Islamic religious scruples, or did the Turks carry out these initiatives for purely pragmatic considerations imposed by the coercions that the Turks were living in North Africa, especially Algeria?

The answer to this question requires us to divide the people who were brought in or abducted from the Spanish coasts into three categories:

- Andalusian Muslims
- The Jews who were in Andalusia and fled from the Christians 'abuse of them.
- The Christizans who were kidnapped in piracy and declared their entry into Islam after mixing with North African residents.

On the other hand, the Turks lived in the central Maghreb under the weight of repeated revolutions throughout their stay in Algeria. This is the reality that Khairuddin Barbaros recognized. In his memoirs, he recounted passages describing the Algerians' hatred of the Turks, which made the Turkish rulers afraid to bet on the local population in forming the army; for fear of repeated coups against them, which were taking place in a national mood that refused to submit to foreign colonialism. This prompted them to rely on the Turkish race and mercenary elements, in addition to the tens of thousands of Andalusians who were rescued from the claws of the Inquisition and pushed to the holocaust of the Algerian revolutions.

Mubarak El-Melli says in his book "The ancient and modern history of Algeria" and in his discussion of Khairuddin Barbaros's strategy in Algeria, the following: "He also realized (Khairuddin) that he could not depend for a long time on the loyalty of the inside unless he derived strength and duration from the outside". From here it appears that the Turks resorted to exploiting the Andalusians to create a base of armies to support the Turks in light of the many revolutions launched by the people of North Africa against the Turkish occupation, as Khairuddin Barbaros continued to arouse the feelings of Andalusians by reminding them of his battles against the Spanish to extract them from the clutches of infidelity and atheism.

Andalusians had a decisive role in a series of battles fought by the Turks, especially against the Spanish. The Turks took advantage of the Andalusian hatred against the Spanish to direct them to fight them in the cities they occupied or to defend the cities that the Spanish tried to obtain from the Turks. A group of stories mention that Andalusians played a heroic role in defending the city of Algiers against the Charles V campaign. Here, we return to the testimony of Mubarak al-Melli, in which he says, "The number of Turkish soldiers did not exceed eight hundred, in addition to them about five thousand immigrants from Andalusia, who can easily imagine the extent of their enthusiasm to defend the city of Algeria against the Spanish".

In the same context, the Andalusians made a great contribution to the Battle of Tlemcen on the side of Moulay Mohamed, loyal to the Turks, where they fought alongside only four hundred Turks, while the bulk of the army consisted of returnees from Andalusia. When the Spanish attacked the city of Mostaganem, the Andalusians had a major role in defeating the armies of the Spanish commander "Martín Alonso Fernández", as he was surprised by an army that consisted mainly from Andalusians, counting about twenty-five thousand, inflicting a terrible defeat on the Spanish army.

Regarding the category of mercenaries and Spanish Christians who converted to Islam, the Turks relied on them to put down the repeated revolutions carried out by the inhabitants of Algeria as a result of the inhumane treatment that characterized the treatment of the Turks with the inhabitants of these areas. Also, when Khairuddin Barbaros decided to settle his accounts with the Sultan of Tunisia with the approval of the Sublime Porte, he commanded an army of eight thousand and nine hundred soldiers between Turks, Greeks, Albanians and Spaniards who left their religion and entered Islam (Mubarak El-Melli, "The ancient and modern history of Algeria, p. 58).

As for the third category that the Turks brought from Andalusia, they were the Jews who were famous for their professionalism in trade and who made an effective contribution to achieving self-sufficiency inside Algeria in addition to stimulating trade at the external level. The Jews were not satisfied with this role, but played the role of spies inside Spain, and they were supplying their countrymen in the Central Maghreb with a set of valuable information that made the Turks avoid a group of blocs that were intended to eliminate the Turkish presence in the Maghreb region, especially Algeria.

This role that the Jews played made them enjoy the care, attention and preferential treatment of the Turks, so that the Turks treated them way better than they dealt with Arab Muslim. The American historian William Spencer describes this preferential treatment to them, saying: "Only the Jews were a **recognized non-Islamic community. The transcendence that was the nature of the Turks towards their Muslim subjects did not extend to the Jews**, who were looking at them with some unnatural practice, such as having access to black magic, as well as an extraordinary knowledge of currency issues". (Algeria in the era of Rias al-Bahr, p. 100)

Based on the above, we conclude that the Turks helped the Andalusians to leave Spain and join the areas of Turkish influence in order to take advantage of the important reserves of the Andalusian armies that hated the Spanish after the massacres carried out by the Inquisition and placed great hopes on the Ottomans to restore Andalusia to the rule of Islamic countries. The Turks also benefited from the experiences of the Jews who lived in Andalusia, who were receiving the same aggressive treatment by the Spanish Christians, and they were exploited in many matters, such as trade, currency, espionage and translation.

Perhaps the argument of the Ottomans saving the Andalusians from the oppression of the Spaniards after their failure to prevent the fall of Andalusia becomes null and void in the face of evidence that confirms that what the Turks did towards Andalusians was for a matter of life affairs and for personal interests and was not for a matter of religion and the hereafter. This makes us convinced that the Sultans of the Ottoman family established a supremacist racist ideology that wagered on subjugating the Arab and Islamic countries under the headings of the "Islamic Caliphate". This was nothing but a Trojan horse to stir the collective feeling of the Muslims, whose hearts were eager for a strong state that would return to the Muslims their prestige and pride, before they clashed with the terror of the Ottoman Empire, which killed more Arabs and Muslims than it killed during its invasion of Eastern Europe. This is the policy that Ankara still pursues through its claim to represent Muslims in all of the Islamic world, which prompted it to violate the citizens of many Islamic countries in Syria, Libya and Iraq in hope of reviving the glories of the Ottoman Empire, which left behind more than a million people killed, according to the documented statistics. The numbers are likely to rise if Turkish politicians do not change their strategy, which strikes at the principles of the national state and the rules of good neighborliness.