



حبر أبيض  
WHITE INK



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# “The Algerians jumped out of the frying pan into the fire”

## The matter

## of the Barbarossa brothers

The late Turkish historian “Yilmaz Öztuna” says about the collapse of the last Arab strongholds in Andalusia: “This arbitrary injustice angered the Turks, so the Ottoman Empire decided to intervene in the Maghreb”. Through this, the reader realizes the truth that is absent from many because of the emotional view mixed with religion that the Turks were able to market to the minds of many Arabs through the ages. The Ottoman Empire actually dealt with that inhuman tragedy that the Andalusians went through in a purely Machiavellian manner, so it exploited those circumstances for its expansionist interests in North Africa. Thus, it was achieving a strategic policy followed by it since the extension of its control over the Arab region in the sixteenth century AD. Before talking about how they reached North Africa, we must point out an important point, which is that the Ottoman Empire, since its emergence, had a nationalist tendency as a small emirate in Asia Minor and continued on that pattern even after it became a major empire. After their control of the Arab region, the Arabs became incapable of taking action and influencing matters of world politics, and their history became subordinate to the Ottoman history. There are many historical evidences to prove this which are supported by Ottoman documents, such as reports, official documents and correspondence between Istanbul and the Arabian states.

It should be noted that the success of the Turks in reaching North Africa, and Algeria in particular, was through the exploitation of the piracy practiced by “the Barbarossa brothers” for their own interests against European ships in the Mediterranean, which was under Ottoman control. This prompted Aruj to move his piracy activity to the west so that he would not clash with the Ottoman navy and on the other hand, he would track the European ships to the west and hunt them. He established an independent emirate for him on the island of Djerba in Tunisia in order to legitimize piracy against European aggression against North Africa. That matter encouraged the Algerians to seek his help to save the port of Bejaia from the control of the Spaniards, so he liberated it from them and made it a center for his operations, then he moved to another Algerian town, making it the center for his operations. All of these movements were by his own efforts, his adventures, and in his name, and not in the name of the Ottoman Empire, which at that time was ignoring maritime activity in the western Mediterranean. Aruj was able to fight in two places: On the one hand, he was taking advantage of the chaos of the Emirates and cities in North Africa and the Central Maghreb to overthrow their governments and impose his control over them. **This is what his brother Khair Al-Din stated in his memoirs, saying:** “It has become necessary to establish a new state in our exile”. On the other hand, he continued to liberate the northern African frontiers from the occupying European garrisons. Aruj died near the Algerian city of Tlemcen. His brother Khair Al-Din took over the leadership after him. He found himself the leader of a weakened force and in an atmosphere of internal intrigue against him and constant Spanish threats, not to mention that he was not as popular as his brother. He seemed to be more pragmatic and practical than his late brother. Khair Al-Din decided to be under the rule of the Ottomans as “the new masters”. He wrote to Selim I in 1519 AD, and his letter contained pleas to link the issue of Algeria to the Ottomans, and petitions from judges, jurists and notables to the Sultan to put Algeria at his disposal. They even described themselves as “slaves of the Ottoman Empire”. This was a letter they wrote by order of Khair Al-Din and not on their own, and he concluded his letter by saying that he would have personally gone to Istanbul to be at the Sultan's disposal, had the Algerians not begged him to stay among them to protect their country.

In fact, Selim I did not hesitate to accept such an opportunity, as he found himself in front of a large area of the western Mediterranean ports that would be under his control at no cost. He sent to Khair Al-Din assigning him to rule Algeria and a firman by calling him “kurcu başı or beylerbeyi”, meaning a general prince, and sent two thousand Janissary soldiers to help him. It was a win-win deal for both the pirate and the sultan, as Khair Al-Din was no longer a wandering pirate, but rather became an Ottoman governor and leader, and the Ottomans gained land at an insignificant price. Rather, they even honored him by appointing him commander of their fleet to exploit his talents and skills. Although the people demanded the Ottomans to leave him in North Africa because they desperately needed his presence and leadership, the Ottoman Sultan, as usual, preferred his interest over the state's. In fact, the inhabitants of Algeria were deceived by Aruj Pasha and Khair Al-Din Barbarossa when they thought that they would be a lifeline from Spanish colonialism and resorted to them to expel the occupier and restore their rule of the city, but they found themselves under the control of a new colonialism. To legitimize the new rule, they supported it with a torrent of fervent religious sentiment.