



حبر أبيض  
WHITE INK



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## Tlemcen massacre: treachery is the nature of the old and new Ottomans

It would not have been easy for the Turkish pirates in North Africa had it not been for their tactics of cunning, deceit, malice and slander. It is as if they had read the book "The Prince" by Nicholas Machiavelli (1527-1469), which was contemporary and not adjacent to the crimes of the Ottoman Turks in the region. The principle was the end justifying the dirty means used by the Barbarossa brothers to subject these Muslim countries to the rule of the Ottomans, even if the matter was in a decentralized framework and an administrative style that is closer to autonomy than to the central administration.

In this context, after the subjugation of the Emirate of Tenes and the execution of its prince with a large crowd of its residents under the justifications of sedition and loyalty to the infidels, it was the turn of Tlemcen to face the same fate of Tenes and under the same justifications and premises that were falsely attached to religion and Sharia. At first, Aruj overthrew the prince of Tenes, Hamid Al-Abdi, and subjected it to his rule, under the pretext that Tenes was the source of sedition. These were also the justifications for the attack on Tlemcen, which Aruj Barbarossa described as "the source of all sedition". It was the accusation that was denied by reality and the confession of Khair Al-Din Barbarossa himself when he returned to assert that the city "was ruled by a ruling family for a long time".

What helped the success of Aruj's plan was the misunderstanding of some residents of Tlemcen who did not benefit or perhaps did not know the plight of the people of Algiers, who sought help from the Turkish pirates before they turned against them and subjected them to various kinds of humiliation and torment. The notables of Tlemcen formed a high-ranking delegation and sent it to the invader Aruj, begging him in the name of religion to rid them of the rule of Abu Hammou III, who allied with the Spaniards and was satisfied with the guardianship of the "people of infidelity" from the foreigners. This request was reinforced by a letter of the same content from his nephew Abu Zayan while he was in prison leading the coup against his uncle.

Regarding the appeal of Tlemcen's residents to Aruj Barbarossa, Khair Al-Din Barbarossa says: "The Sultan of Tlemcen was a powerless king, subject to the infidels of Spain. As for the people, they were suffering from the oppression of the Spaniards and the oppression of their sultan as well. A long time ago the people of Tlemcen came to Algiers begging my brother Aruj to save them from those who persecuted them".

Although Aruj wished to occupy Tlemcen and annex it to his "new state", being it far from the city of Algiers and then being an inland city made it difficult to implement maneuvering tactics and landing through the sea. This made Aruj wait and plan until the conditions are met for its subjugation.

Aruj was waiting and watching the development of the matter inside Tlemcen, and he had spies and followers inside the city who told him all the news. These were the ones who betrayed and handed over the city to the Turks without a fight, after they had made a "revolution" against their sultan, who had fled from the city. This was the scenario that Aruj Barbarossa had hoped for, as he succeeded in subduing Tlemcen without any loss of equipment or life.

Once again, the Ottoman Turks succeeded in subjugating another Emirate. They entered it as conquerors and welcomed by its people, thinking that their loyalty to the Ottoman Sublime Porte would end colonialism and would spread justice in the emirate after injustice had spread in it. This is the misunderstanding that annihilated them, like those who preceded them, because they did not know the intentions of Aruj and did not inquire about the ethnic and superior behavioral structure of the Turks.

In this regard, as soon as Aruj entered the city and assumed power, he allowed his soldiers to attack the people of Tlemcen. They treated people harshly and waste blood and honor. This was what made them regret sending to Aruj, according to the Algerian historian Mubarak El-Mili. Subsequently, the people of Tlemcen submitted a complaint to Abu Zayan because of the oppression of the Turks. The latter submitted the complaint to Aruj Barbarossa. Instead of examining the complaint, achieving justice and erasing injustice, Aruj ordered the execution of Abu Zayan and hanged him on the front of the palace.

The bloodiness of Aruj and his ethnic hatred towards everything that is Arab made him not stop at killing Abu Zayan, but gave orders to his soldiers to drown seventy people from his family. Mubarak El-Mili adds that they also killed a large number of the city's people. It is noted that Khair Al-Din Barbarossa avoided talking about this massacre and did not refer to it at all. He only focused on the Spanish threat coming from Oran, which later hastened the end of Aruj Barbarossa.

The Ottoman pirate was not satisfied with executing the ruler of the city, drowning his family, and killing a group of the city's people. He also plundered their money and burdened them with the taxes he imposed on them. He stipulated that the taxes should be in the form of foodstuffs to face the siege that he expected the Spaniards would impose on the city, which actually happened.

The Spaniards decided to recover Tlemcen from the Turks and prepared a large army for this. Some historians estimated its number at ten thousand soldiers and others at forty thousand. They marched towards Tlemcen, taking advantage of the state of tension in the city and the hostility of its residents to the invader Aruj, as they waited for the opportunity to get rid of him. Perhaps Aruj knew that he could not rely on the people of Tlemcen who swore to be loyal to him. He was uncertain of their loyalty and thus was weak against the Spaniards.

The Spaniards moved with the former ruler of Tlemcen, Abu Hammou, and subjugated the castle of Bani Rashid first, after they defrauded Isaac Barbarossa, brother of Aruj, to reach Tlemcen and besiege it severely. They were also able to defraud Aruj Barbarossa by making him feel safe and then they tracked and killed him. It is the power and will of Allah that made Aruj die in a manner similar to his deeds and made him bear the consequences of breaking covenants and turning against promises.