

In the General Committee, the French Delegation opposed the inscription of this item on the grounds that the General Assembly was not empowered to deal with the Algerian problem, since it was entirely a domestic matter. Mr. Couve de Murville, the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, stated that the action taken by the United Nations up until then with regard to Algeria had been "not only ineffective but harmful." He pointed out that during the eleventh and twelfth sessions of the General Assembly the French Delegation had agreed to explain at considerable length the particulars of the Algerian problem and the manner in which the French Government intended to give this problem "a peaceful, democratic and just solution". The reopening of "a vain and harmful discussion" would be even more inopportune at a time when "the French Government has shown, in the clearest possible manner, its determination to devote all its efforts to the indispensable solution, and when it is making ready to translate this determination into acts". For this reason, he said, the French Delegation would not take part in any debate on Algeria.

The General Committee decided, without voting, to recommend inclusion of the item on Algeria, and after approval of this recommendation by the General Assembly, the item was assigned to the First Committee. (agenda item 63).

Events moved quickly during the next few weeks. On September 17, the rebel National Liberation Front proclaimed a "provisional government of the Algerian Republic". Towards the end of September 95 percent of the Algerian voters supported the new constitution of the Fifth Republic of France. In a press interview on October 10, Mr. Ferhat Abbas, leader of the "provisional government" was reported to have offered to negotiate with France, and on October 23, Premier Charles de Gaulle offered safe conduct guarantees to leaders of the Algerian revolt if they would come to Paris to negotiate an effective cease-fire. The National Liberation Front, however, rejected this offer on the grounds that Premier de Gaulle's offer was in effect a demand for unconditional surrender. The National Liberation Front also refused to recognize the validity of the elections held towards the end of November, in which sixty-seven Algerian Representatives to the French National Assembly were elected.

Debate on the Algerian item commenced in the First Committee of the General Assembly on December 8, with a statement by the Tunisian Representative Mr. Mongi Slim, who contended that the results of both the constitutional referendum and the elections did not reflect the true feelings of Algerians. He stated that the only conceivable method of ending the war in Algeria was by political negotiations between the two parties to find a political solution. He expressed the opinion of his delegation that it was "the duty of the United Nations to advise negotiations as the most peaceful method of putting an end to a bloody conflict."

Representatives of African and Asian nations argued generally that it was the duty of the United Nations not only to urge negotiations on the parties concerned but also to outline a solution which would be in harmony with the right of the Algerian people to independence. Other representatives contended that the United Nations was not entitled to define a final solution of the Algerian question because this was a matter of domestic jurisdiction to be decided in negotiations between the French Government and the Algerians. Therefore, the General Assembly should use its moral authority merely to make an appeal that a peaceful and just solution should be negotiated.