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French general in Algeria torture claim



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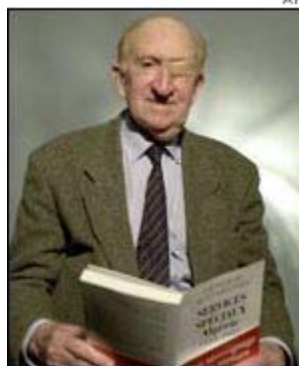
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By North Africa Correspondent David Bamford

The family of an Algerian Independence War fighter who was allegedly tortured by French military forces in the 1950s is reported to have filed a legal suit against retired French general, Paul Aussaresses.

Algerian newspapers say the court in the eastern town of Tebessa has accepted the law suit against General Aussaresses.

The State Prosecutor in Tebessa is quoted as saying that the suit could lead to an international arrest warrant against the 83-year-old general.



The general has expressed no regrets

Admissions of torture

This month the general published his memoirs in which he admitted personally torturing and killing 24 Algerian prisoners during the Independence War which ended in 1962.

The suit was lodged by the family of leading Algerian fighter Messaoud Amrani, known during the Independence War by his nom de guerre, El-Hadj Lemlouli.

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He is not one of the 24 that General Aussaresses confessed to having personally killed after torturing them to extract information.

But according to his family, Mr Amrani did die soon after the war from injuries received as a result of his alleged torture by the general.

Political issue

Just how far this legal process will be able to go remains to be seen, but a groundswell of opinion appears to be growing in Algeria now the general has freely admitted his role, and indeed expresses no regrets.

At the very least, it is developing into a political issue between France and Algeria, with a growing view that something must be done.

President Chirac has expressed horror at the general's confession and token disciplinary measures are to be discussed by the French military.

But there is little evidence that the French authorities left to themselves will want to take the issue any further.

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