

The French political establishment and Gilles Jacquier's death in Syria

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Contrary to accusations made by the press and the French political establishment after the death of reporter Gilles Jacquier, killed on January 11 in Homs in Syria, it appears in fact that he was killed by fire from the pro-Western, “rebel” Free Syrian Army (FSA).

Jacquier was in Syria with other journalists after accepting an invitation from the Syrian regime. The attack that killed him in Homs—a city known for its many demonstrations and armed operations by the FSA against President Bashar al-Assad’s forces—also killed several Syrian army soldiers.

The French press made extensive allegations that the Assad regime was probably responsible for Jacquier’s death, but systematically avoided raising the possibility that Jacquier could have been hit by FSA fire. (See “French media attack Damascus after French journalist dies in Syria”)

Now, the press is admitting that from the start it held back information in its possession pointing to the responsibility of the pro-Western “rebels”. According to *Le Figaro* of January 20, “Some hours after the death of Gilles Jacquier, an official of the town’s human rights organisation told a leader of the Syrian opposition in France that it involved ‘a serious stupidity’ committed by the opponents of Bashar el-Assad.”

Le Figaro adds, “This official had given the information the day after the attack.” Thus on Thursday, January 12, the media had in their possession information indicating the possibility that the Syrian

opposition had caused Jacquier’s death.

Nevertheless, *Le Figaro* chose to keep quiet about the issue for over a week—while the Quai d’Orsay, the French foreign office, told it that French diplomats were in contact with the Arab League observers in Syria “so that the truth of what had happened could be established.” Finally, on January 20, an Arab League official reportedly confirmed that “we now know that a blunder was committed by the Free Syrian Army.”

Le Figaro explained its decision to withhold information regarding the Syrian opposition thus: “We need further details before *Le Figaro* could make an assertion.”

This is a cynical evasion. Firstly, it was not a question of immediately claiming that it was the opposition that killed Jacquier, but of acknowledging that there were plausible reports inculpating the opposition, and not the Assad regime, in Jacquier’s death. The media refused to do this, thus deliberately skewing their coverage.

Le Figaro’s explanation is all the more unbelievable, as the media rarely waits to have “further details” before quoting reports from the Syrian opposition—notably on the number of deaths which the opposition blames on the Syrian army, figures which are constantly quoted in the Western press. If the media decided to wait for “further details” in the Jacquier case, it was that the avowals of the opposition this time went against the interests of French imperialism.

The parties of the petty bourgeois “left,” such as the New Anti-capitalist Party (NPA) and the French Communist Party (PCF), played their part in the

manipulation of public opinion by the state and the media in this affair.

The NPA, which has close relations with the Syrian opposition, chose to maintain complete silence on the Jacquier affair. This decision would be incomprehensible, were it not for the support the NPA has given to the NATO war in Libya and its discussions with the Syrian opposition on a possible imperialist intervention in Syria. (See “France’s New Anti-Capitalist Party backs imperialist intervention in Syria”)

As for *L’Humanité*, the Communist Party daily, it based its comments on the accusations of the press and the Syrian opposition—which prominently raised the possibility of “the resort of the [Syrian] authorities to operations aiming to physically eliminate journalists, in order to silence neutral and independent media.”

The latest revelations confirm the analysis of the WSWs, which raised the question of the possible responsibility of the Syrian opposition in Jacquier’s death and has fought to expose the links the petty-bourgeois, anti-Marxist “left” has developed with imperialism.



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