

# French Socialist Party government attacks anti-Gaza war protests

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The police attack on a march against the Gaza war in Paris Saturday, after President François Hollande of the Socialist Party (PS) personally endorsed a ban on the protest, directly implicates the French government in the Israeli state's mass murder in Gaza. Hundreds of Palestinian civilians, including children, have been killed and thousands wounded in the Israeli bombardment and ground invasion of Gaza.

On Saturday, thousands of people defied the PS ban, marching in cities throughout France to show both their anger at Israel's offensive in Gaza and their indignation at the PS ban. Protests also took place internationally, in the Middle East and in Europe including in London, Rome and Brussels.

Protesters met with violent repression by CRS riot police in Paris, who arrested 38 protesters.

Thousands demonstrated peacefully in several cities including Clermont, Lyon, Saint Etienne, Strasbourg and Marseille. Another protest against the Gaza war in the Paris suburb of Sarcelles on Sunday led to clashes between police and demonstrators near two synagogues. Further protests are called for Wednesday.

The Paris march Saturday began peacefully from the immigrant Barbès area towards the Opéra Garnier. Before it began, riot police were already mobilized to try to halt the protest. In the Barbès area, the fiercest confrontations broke out when police accused some demonstrators of throwing rocks and other objects at police and setting fire to cars. According to police, 38 protesters were arrested on charges of using violence against police or "throwing projectiles," such as rocks.

At the Paris march, demonstrators condemned police violence against the protest. Protesters Asma and Ouahiba said: "We are being attacked like cattle. Is this France? We have the right to protest."

Louisa and Mourad denounce the protest ban: "It's

the ban that made us want to come. What is taking place there is very serious, and they are trying to keep us from expressing our anger by demonstrating."

A shopkeeper in the Barbès area said, "We were forced to take cover, like rats. It is pathetic, and in addition this is a left government."

For his part, Prime Minister Manuel Valls condemned the Saturday rally, stating: "These unacceptable excesses are all the more justification for the ban [against the demonstrations]."

The PS' decision to ban the demonstration is an extraordinary attack on democratic rights. It is in the reactionary traditions of French social democracy, which banned support to the Spanish Republicans against fascist dictator Generalissimo Francisco Franco in the Spanish Civil War of 1936-1939. The ban testifies to the extraordinary sharp social tensions and the nervousness of the PS government, France's most unpopular government since the collapse of the World War-II era Nazi collaborationist regime of Vichy.

Last week, Hollande personally defended Israel's offensive on Gaza and the ban against demonstrations in France, warning of the risk of social conflict in France itself. "Israel can defend itself if it is attacked, however Israel must be restrained," Hollande said, "I do not want there to be consequences in France. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict cannot be imported into France."

The PS cynically seized on a provocation by Zionist thugs working with police, outside two synagogues in Paris after a pro-Gaza protest on July 13, as the pretext for the ban. The government, the police and the media made false claims that synagogues in Paris had been targeted by pro-Palestinian demonstrators after the July 13 rally. Citing these "heightened tensions," the Paris police prefecture said: "The conditions for the

demonstration planned in Paris to take place peacefully do not exist today.”

In fact, the July 13 rally brought together several thousand people. Clashes reportedly erupted between pro-Israel activists and pro-Palestinian demonstrators. Riot police attacked the demonstrators, firing tear gas.

According to many eyewitness reports, it was the right-wing Zionist groups supported by the police, including the banned Jewish Defence League (JDL) and Betar-Zionist youth movement that deliberately provoked and attacked the Palestinian demonstrators on July 13.

Bernard Ravenel, the former head of France’s France-Palestine Solidarity (AFPS), told France24: “The JDL were largely responsible for those incidents ... They turned up with the sole intention of provoking the crowd and the authorities interpreted this, sadly, as an anti-Semitic march. This is simply not true.”

On its web site, IslametInfo posted video footage showing some 150 Jewish men taking to the streets and chanting racist slogans as they went on the rampage against the protesters. The video shows them armed with gas canisters, pepper spray, metal bars and wooden sticks and some wear crash helmets while others simply covered their faces. They run towards pro-Palestinian demonstrators, before skirmishes break out.

The Zionist militia also promised, in its postings on social networks, to “deal with all the pro-Palestinian demonstrations.”

IslametInfo cited testimony from a member of the security services, who said: “As soon as they had arrived in the middle of Roquette street, these people [protesters, largely coming as families], identified by their flags and Islamic clothing, were greeted with insults and projectiles thrown by the Zionist group from behind two lines of CRS [riot police]. Two people came to warn us.”

Although the group, thought to be linked to the JDL, violently attacked pro-Palestinian activists in broad daylight, the CRS riot police did not arrest any of them, letting them freely leave the demonstration. Instead, six pro-Palestinian demonstrators were arrested, accused of trying to break into two synagogues in Paris.

After the July 13 demonstration, the government and media cynically demonised the demonstrators as anti-Semites. Valls said: “Attacks on our Jewish compatriots are unacceptable. The sentiments they are

currently experiencing, we must obviously listen to them.”

“Our Republic is not compatible with hate. Our Republic is not compatible with xenophobia. Anti-Semitism cannot express itself a second time, because we know what it led to,” Interior Minister Bertrand Cazeneuve told Europe1. Cazeneuve’s comparison between the fascist Holocaust of European Jewry during World War II and people who today are protesting against mass murder in Gaza is an outrageous and slanderous provocation.



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