

Protests in France against Israeli war on Gaza

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5 August 2014

As Israel's onslaught in Gaza continued over the weekend, killing 10 Palestinians at another UN school in Rafah, demonstrations took place in many French cities against the massacre of innocent civilians. The protest in Paris on Saturday, which this time was legally allowed to take place, attracted around 15,000 people. Thousands took to the streets in Marseille and Lyon.

In contradiction to the bankrupt politics of pseudo-left parties such as the New Anticapitalist Party or the Stalinist French Communist Party that attended the rally, marchers bitterly denounced the Socialist Party (PS) government's support of the Israeli onslaught in Gaza, and PS accusations that opponents of Israeli mass murder are all anti-Semites.

Hassana, 39, a sales assistant, said: "I voted for President [François Hollande of the PS], but it's worse than ever. Today we are outraged, but the ban on demonstrations means we cannot express this in France. Gaza is hell, because Israel fears its own demons and is weak; there should be no occupation of countries in the 21st century. Israel does not want peace."

She called the accusations of anti-Semitism "a smoke screen, propaganda... In the press we are constantly attacked for anti-Semitism but we are for peace. When the French CRIF (Council for Jewish Institutions in France) talks of pogroms and Kristallnacht, it's a shameful attack on the memory of all those victims of fascism which they are now reproducing."

She denounced the PS's ban on demonstrations against the Gaza war as "scandalous. It's a violation of fundamental rights. The massacre must be stopped. Zionism is the opposite of peace. They are perpetuating the crimes of Hitler... Hollande must resign. We need real independent leaders. I am fed up with the Zionist propaganda of SOS-Racisme [an 'antiracist' group close to the PS]) and CRIF. Netanyahu should be put

on trial for war crimes like at Nuremburg. Europe should boycott Israel."

Hassana added, "French imperialism is a problem with its army occupying the Sahel in Africa. The argument that it is combating jihadists is a political fraud. In Palestine, Obama and the UN let Israel occupy the country. This indifference has been continuing since 1967. It's revolting!"

Kalifa, a social worker, said: "I am very worried about the serious humanitarian situation in Gaza. Civilians are under attack and we must mobilise to support the Palestinians. Accusations of anti-Semitism are a manipulation by Israel. They seek to legitimise their action. The ban on demonstrations in Paris is an attack on lawful rights, of human rights. We are in a paradox with this government that bans us from expressing ourselves. Where is liberty? France is hypocritical, and follows the American line. Human rights? But where is the right to life? France hides all that with its support for Israel.

Kalifa also warned, "The dangers of war are there. The capitalist system is flagging and in history, the systems which arrive at that point, that leads to war."

Malek, 19, a student in business studies, said: "The charge of anti-Semitism against people opposed to Zionism is not new. Deliberately, positions are mixed up. I like my Jewish friends and I can tell the difference between Zionism and anti-Semitism. I am against Zionists and jihadists because I'm Moslem and am for peace."

He also attacked PS complicity in the mass murder in Gaza: "The ban on demonstrations in Paris is a provocation because without it, things would have been peaceful and calm. The ban only made the youth react in their manner, causing destruction at Barbès and Sarcelles. It was a Socialist Party government provocation. It's the only government to do that... President Hollande and Prime Minister Valls support

Israel. The French government and others are the poodles of Israel. There are sanctions against Ukraine but not Israel.”

Malek warned of the danger of a broad war in the Middle East: “The US has supported Israel from the beginning and when this war terminates, it is going to continue in Syria as it did in Libya. Their aim is control of oil. The next enemy will be Iran with its so-called nuclear bomb, but there is silence on Israel’s bomb.”

He dismissed reports of pro-Israeli demonstrations in the United States: “In the US, it’s the rich, not the poor, who are protesting in Washington for Israel, a minority.”

He also evoked the broad disillusionment of students and workers with the policies of the Hollande administration.

He said, “The President, he has already betrayed us after his election in 2012 and it’s the extreme right which is taking advantage of it; We voted 70 percent in the suburb of Clichy-sous-Bois of Paris for Hollande; He came to see us and promised changes because we are a very poor community. He was lying. I am sure that in the next election the rate of abstention will be very high in 2017 thanks to this disappointment. We need a new party which did not exist in 2012 and which can make the voice of workers heard and youth and also students.”

Maria, 31, an Ecuadorian student, said: “Gaza is an international problem which is linked to economic interests. There is a doubletalk in order to hide the economic interests. There is nothing in common between anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism. There are also other things at stake like the arms trade in the US. I was not aware of the ban on demonstrations about Gaza in Paris. This is an attempt to neutralise and demonise the protestors. President Hollande uses double talk. France is ‘democratic’ but it forbids demonstrations.”



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