

Hollande sheds crocodile tears over refugees in Lebanon visit

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On Saturday, French President François Hollande arrived in Lebanon as part of his four-day trip to the Middle East, visiting Lebanon, Egypt and Jordan.

Hollande's visit to Lebanon reportedly focused on official talks regarding the Syrian refugee crisis, the war against the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), and the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. What emerged from these talks is the increasing inability of the imperialist powers to effect any change in policy to address the catastrophic consequences of their bloody wars in the region, particularly in Syria and Iraq.

In Lebanon, Hollande met with parliament speaker Nabih Berri and Prime Minister Tammam Salam. Since the six-year term of President Michel Suleiman ended in May 2014, Lebanon has been in political crisis, unable to elect a president and with a deadlocked parliament as the Syrian crisis spilled over to Lebanon.

In a joint press conference with Berri, Hollande urged the election of a President. "I want to visit Beirut again when there is a president in Lebanon but the issue lies in the hands of Lebanese lawmakers who should resolve the deadlock and elect a head of state," he said.

In Beirut, Hollande expressed hypocritical sympathy to Syrian refugees fleeing the civil war in Syria stoked by the United States, France, and other major NATO powers, while insisting that refugees should not come to Europe.

"What these families want is not to go to Europe, but to return home as quickly as possible," he declared at the Dalhamiyé camp.

He announced token plans to support refugees in Lebanon, which is now home to about 1.5 million Syrians, or one-fourth of Lebanon's population. He announced €100 million in aid over the next three years supposedly helping Syrian refugees in Lebanon, and visited an informal Syrian refugee camp in Lebanon's

eastern Bekaa Valley.

Hollande's pose of solidarity with Syrian refugees and France's minimal aid reek of hypocrisy. It was aimed at covering up France's responsibility in the unpopular war for regime change that produced the Syrian refugee crisis, and where the NATO powers trained Islamist terror networks that are now carrying out attacks in Europe, including in France and Belgium.

But it is France and the other NATO powers that bear the principal responsibility for monumental crimes against the Syrian people in the course of their proxy war. The Syrian conflict has claimed over a quarter of a million Syrian lives. Over 3 million people have fled from Syria, and 6.5 million are internally displaced within the country.

The response of the European powers to Syrian refugees fleeing to Europe is now mass deportation. At the Munich Security Conference in February, French Prime Minister Manuel Valls publicly attacked the initial German policy in the Syrian refugee crisis of allowing Syrian refugees in Europe to travel on to Germany as unacceptable to France.

Hollande also announced plans to strengthen military cooperation with Beirut: "France stands with Lebanon and is keen on consolidating security in Lebanon through military cooperation."

Hollande's proposal for military cooperation with Lebanon comes after Saudi Arabia announced in February that it would scrap a \$3 billion grant for the Lebanese Army to buy French weapons. The Saudi-funded "Donas" military aid program was announced in December 2013 by the late King Abdullah and signed between France and Saudi Arabia at the end of 2014.

At the time, Paris and Riyadh saw military aid to Beirut as essential in order to boost influence and

aggressively counter Syria and Iran. France was taking a bellicose stance against the Syrian government, aggressively pushing for air strikes against Syria before the United States suddenly decided not to carry out a full-scale attack. After France sought to reorient its policy and develop closer ties to Iran after Tehran signed a deal with Washington over its nuclear program, French relations with Saudi Arabia rapidly worsened, however.



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