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France/Palestine solidarity

The shame of France

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Since when is solidarity with victims of aggression called 'importing a conflict'?

By banning French protests last Saturday against Israeli war crimes in Gaza, Hollande and Valls disgraced themselves. The French people, however, who ignored the ban and turned out en masse in various cities throughout France to express solidarity with Gaza, can be proud.

Two years ago, on behalf of the Alternative Information Centre (AIC), I received the 2012 Prix des Droits de l'Homme de la République Française from French Justice Minister Christiane Taubira for our fight against Israeli impunity. This week, while reading the news, I thought a moment about returning this prize to the French authorities in response to the ban by Francois Hollande and Manuel Valls' government of a protest in Paris last Saturday against the crimes committed by the Israeli army in Gaza. Last week we again protested in Tel Aviv with the same slogans as those of the banned protest in France. Hollande is more Zionist than Netanyahu and Manuel Valls is less democratic than Aharonovitch (Israel's interior minister from the ultra-right-wing Yisrael Beiteinu party)!

Later on, I saw that thousands of protestors had ignored this unjust order of their politicians, assembling en masse in Saint Etienne, Lille, Strasbourg, and in a dozen other French cities. I told myself that the prize AIC had received in honour of the struggle against injustice was actually given by France, not by the prime minister. France should be proud. It was Valls and Hollande who brought shame upon themselves; the French people held mass protests against the impunity afforded by its leaders to the state of Israel.

One of the arguments used - which one might say is stale and overworked - by Valls and friends is that they don't want to 'import the conflict into France.' I have never understood what 'importing a conflict' means. Since when is solidarity with victims of aggression called 'importing a conflict'? This argument, however, is inapplicable when they talk about their friends at the Conseil Représentatif des Institutions juives de France (CRIF), the organisation which has become the primary ambassador of Israel in Europe and which has tried to hold European Jewry hostage in unconditionally supporting the war crimes committed by the Jewish state.

France's honour is also shown by the late Stéphane Hessel and his partner Christiane, who worked tirelessly to express their support for the people of Gaza. They visited Gaza on several occasions to declare loud and clear their solidarity with the martyred population.

By supporting the Israeli aggressor and forbidding protestors to march in support of the people of Gaza in several French cities, most notably in Paris which to the world represents the capital of human rights, Manuel Valls and Francois Hollande have disgraced themselves. Not the French people, however, a majority of whom knew which camp to choose: indignation in the face of war crimes and solidarity with the massacred children of Gaza. These protestors, in disobeying the government's edict, have made eminently clear their refusal to see these massacres continue.

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