

Internet Needs to Be “Regulated” to Suppress Videos and Search Results Deemed “Anti-Semitic”, French President Says

Hollande Says France Must Treat Online "Anti-Semitism" Like Child Pornography

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French President François Hollande says modern “anti-Semitism” stems from “hatred of Israel.”

([Presidency of France](#))

French president François Hollande has said his government will soon announce a raft of tough criminal laws to crack down on anti-Semitism, racism, homophobia and Holocaust denial.

He made the announcements in a [speech](#) to [CRIF](#), France’s main Jewish communal body and Israel lobby group, on Monday.

Hollande said that the Internet needed to be “regulated” to suppress videos and even search results deemed “anti-Semitic.”

The president said that the appropriate model would be the laws used to prevent the dissemination of child pornography.

But the measures are likely only to make matters worse, among other things by criminalizing criticism of Israel and further conflating Zionism with Judaism.

Discipline and punish

The plans will worry civil libertarians already concerned about the [crackdown on free speech](#) since the January attacks by three [French gunmen](#) on the offices of *Charlie Hebdo* and a Jewish supermarket in Paris.

Hollande said that details of the draft law would be announced in coming days by his prime minister [Manuel Valls](#).

Meanwhile, Valls recently indicated his direction of travel by declaring that his goal was to fight “Islamofascism” – [a term used by the neoconservative, pro-Israel far right](#) to demonize Muslims.

Hollande promised that the laws would become more punitive, so that “no anti-Semitic word

or act goes without a response.”

He promised “faster” and “more effective” punishments for “words or writing that are anti-Semitic, racist or homophobic.”

Only in passing, toward the end of the half-hour speech, did Hollande mention that anti-Muslim hate attacks in France in January alone exceeded the entire number recorded in 2014.

He did not announce any specific measures to combat this alarming phenomenon.

The president observed that “Muslims are the first victims of Islamist or jihadist terrorism, whether in the Middle East or Africa,” and called for more international military intervention in those regions.

Hollande did not consider that it was “Western” interventions in Syria, Iraq, Libya and elsewhere that gave rise to the menace known as Islamic State (for an excellent account of that, see Patrick Cockburn’s new book *The Rise of Islamic State*).

Conflating anti-Semitism and criticism of Israel

Hollande’s speech also confirms the direction hinted at in [earlier statements](#) that France is likely to take more measures to suppress criticism of Israel in the name of combating anti-Semitism.

The president told CRIF that anti-Semitism has ancient roots, but asserted that “a more recent source is hatred of Israel.”

But if this is the case, who decides what is “anti-Semitic”? If all anti-Israel and anti-Zionist statements will be considered anti-Semitic then hundreds if not thousands of publications in tens of languages will have to be banned by France.

Hollande shared some disturbing statistics: in 2014 there were twice as many “anti-Semitic acts” recorded as in 2013 and ten times more than before the year 2000.

Lest I be accused of “justifying” these acts, let me be clear: nothing, including Israel’s crimes against Palestinians, justifies insulting or attacking Jews as Jews.

But can it be a mere coincidence that 2014 was the year of Israel’s latest horrific massacre of Palestinians in Gaza that was fully backed by the United States and most EU members, including France?

Can it also be a coincidence that 2000 was the year the second intifada began and Israel launched a brutal crackdown that has since killed more than eight thousand Palestinians, often with weapons provided by those same states?

What is the relationship between these facts?

While Hollande insists that “hatred” of Israel is a form of, or a “source” of “anti-Semitism,” he does not acknowledge the role of Israel in generating the intense hostility sometimes misdirected against Jews.

The Palestinian national movement has always correctly insisted that its enemies are not “the Jews,” but rather Israel and the Zionist colonial movement.

Yet it is Israel that continues to insist that it acts in the name of all Jews everywhere.

It is Benjamin Netanyahu who apparently considers himself not just prime minister of Israel but the leader of world Jewry.

It is Israel that has taken the symbols of the Jewish religion – including its most recognized one, the Star of David – and affixed it to uniforms and weapons of destruction and death that are used to carry out atrocities in Palestine and Lebanon.

It is Zionists who have taken holy scriptures and claimed that they provide a license for modern day Brooklynites and Parisians to violently steal land from Palestinian villagers.

It is Israel’s government-financed settlers who torch Palestinian mosques and daub their walls with “[biblical phrases](#).”

It is Israel-government-backed religious fanatics who yearn – and plan – to [destroy the al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem](#) and replace it with a “Jewish temple.”

It is Israel that has [used the Paris Grand Synagogue as a recruiting base for its army](#) and it is Israeli army commanders [who cite Hebrew scripture](#) to justify laying waste to Gaza.

Violent radical Judaism?

If we can say that the horrific actions of Islamic State are a perversion of the beliefs of the vast majority of the world’s Muslims, can we also not say that Zionism is a perversion of Judaism?

CRIF [insists](#) that the Paris attacks be labeled “Islamist.” By the same logic, should we label Israel’s crimes acts of “violent radical Judaism?”

While anti-Zionist Jews, secular and religious, have always insisted that Israel and Zionism do not represent them or their religion or cultures, politicians like Hollande reinforce the false and dangerous association between Jews as Jews on the one hand and Israel’s violent racist colonialism against Palestinians on the other.

Some misguided youths, hearing these messages, may indeed believe Israel’s claim that “the Jews” are the enemies of the Palestinians and direct their anger or hatred towards Jewish targets.

They may hear the Islamophobic diatribes emanating from many right-wing and liberal supporters of Israel and also conclude – falsely – that “the Jews” are the enemies of “the Muslims.”

The message has to be clear always and is worth repeating: words or acts targeting Jews as Jews are never a form of solidarity with Palestinians.

We must be equally clear that opposing and resisting Zionism is not anti-Semitic, but a struggle for liberation for Palestinians and indeed for Israeli Jews.

Repeating history

In his address to CRIF, Hollande spoke about the “Israeli-Palestinian conflict” in the bland terms of the defunct “peace process.”

He reaffirmed France’s commitment to the fantasy of the “two-state solution,” offered to host a “peace conference” in Paris and said that no matter who won Israel’s elections next month, France would work with them “in friendship and trust.”

He offered not one single word of comfort or anger about the suffering of Palestinians in Gaza where there has been no reconstruction since Israel’s summer attack devastated much of the besieged and impoverished territory.

Hollande warned that those who do not learn from history are destined to relive it.

Yet there was not one word about accountability or justice for the Israeli war crimes that left more than 2,200 people, including more than 500 children, dead in Gaza.

Why are 1.8 million Palestinians, mostly refugees from present-day Israel, caged in Gaza under such abominable conditions in the first place?

The answer is simple: their mere existence, the fact that they live and breathe as non-Jews, [is considered a threat](#) to Israel’s self-declared identity as a “Jewish state.”

Palestinians are in a ghetto because of who they are and France’s president has nothing to say about that.

Moving right

While French leaders are doing their best to pander to the prejudices of their audience, it is doubtful it will be enough.

Richard Prasquier, the former president of CRIF, [went on national television](#) to say that Hollande and Valls had not gone far enough.

CRIF’s current president Roger Cukierman provoked anger from French Muslim community leaders by [declaring](#) that “all the violent attacks today are committed by young Muslims.”

Cukierman also praised Marine Le Pen, leader of the racist, anti-immigrant, anti-Muslim and traditionally deeply anti-Semitic National Front, as [“irreproachable.”](#)

Alas Hollande’s ardor to combat racism was nowhere in sight when it came to the fanatical anti-Arab racism of Israel’s leading political parties.

CRIF heard no rebuke from the supposedly anti-racist Hollande for Cukierman’s [public embrace](#) of Israeli ultra-nationalist politician [Naftali Bennett](#), who [boasts about how many Arabs he has killed](#) and [claims](#) that Jewish settlements on occupied Palestinian land are “protecting London, Paris and Madrid.”

Education reform

In his speech, Hollande announced education reforms to reinforce the messages he gave to CRIF. But what France really needs to teach its Jewish and Muslim citizens is that contrary to

Israeli claims, Israel does not represent Jews and that Israeli policies and Israeli crimes are not Jewish policies or Jewish crimes.

The irony is that it might prove more difficult to convince French Jews and French Christians of this than it is to convince French Muslims.

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