

French government moves to prosecute NPA organiser of Gaza protests

By Stéphane Hugues
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The government of President François Hollande has ordered the prosecution of Alain Pojolat, a member of the pseudo-left New Anti-capitalist Part (NPA), who was one of the organisers of two banned demonstrations in France against the Israeli army's mass murder in Gaza.

The trial has been set for October 22 at the *Tribunal de Grande Instance de Paris*, the main court in the city. Pojolat could face a fine of up to €7,500 (nearly US\$10,000) and 6 months in prison.

Pojolat was singled out because he sent the e-mail asking for permission to demonstrate to the Paris Préfecture on behalf of participating organisations, including the General Union of Palestinian Students (GUPS), the French Jewish Union for Peace (UJFP), the *Solidaires* trade union, Ensemble (Together, a member organisation of the Stalinist-led Left Front), and the NPA.

The ban on demonstrations issued by Hollande's Socialist Party (PS) government was itself a grave attack on democratic rights. The PS's decision to prosecute Pojolat is a further attack, intended to silence anyone organising a demonstration against atrocities supported by the French state.

Workers must oppose this political victimisation, which is fraudulently being passed off as a "trial," and oppose all the Hollande government's attacks on democratic rights.

From the beginning of its attack on Gaza, the Israeli government had the support of Hollande and France's ruling PS. In a July 9 phone call to Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Hollande "expressed France's solidarity" with Israel, according to a communiqué from the Elysée presidential palace. The communiqué went on to explicitly endorse the mass killings in Gaza: "It is for Israeli Government to take

all measures to protect its population...."

The PS ban on demonstrations, intended to suppress opposition to the blank cheque for mass murder Hollande had issued to Netanyahu, was based on a cynical provocation.

The arguments of Interior Minister Bernard Cazeneuve justifying the ban cited supposed "anti-Semitic" incidents in previous demonstrations. However, the only incidents that could be confirmed were attacks on pro-Gaza demonstrators by militants of the Jewish Defence League, an extreme right organisation that is banned in Israel.

As the WSWWS reported at the time, Bernard Ravenel, the former head of France's France-Palestine Solidarity Association (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" (see: "French Socialist Party government attacks anti-Gaza war protests").

The PS's decision to prosecute a member of the NPA on this type of fabricated pretext is a warning to the working class.

It is well known that the NPA has the closest possible ties with the PS, having called for Hollande's election in 2012 and supported French wars and interventions in Libya, Syria, Iraq, and Ukraine. If the PS can employ dirty tricks to frame such a thoroughly establishment organisation, it will use every method, even the most underhanded and brutal, to suppress protests in the working class.

The banning of demonstrations and the prosecution of their organisers has the most sinister implications. The Hollande administration is France's most unpopular government since the end of World War II,

launching deep social austerity at home and participating in aggressive imperialist interventions abroad—including NATO's stoking a conflict with Russia over Ukraine that threatens the outbreak of a new world war in Europe.

French imperialism been particularly brutal in its attempt to re-colonise its former colonial empire in the Middle East and Africa. In 2013, Hollande sent the French army into Mali and, in January of this year, into yet another ex-French colony, the Central African Republic, boosting its strategic position in the resource-rich Sahel region.

Hollande's programme is now war abroad and class war at home. To fund these wars and to comply with the European Union's Maastricht Treaty, where new government debts such not exceed 3 percent of GDP, Hollande has announced €50 billion of cuts, mainly in social programmes, to be implemented in the coming months.

If Hollande has been able to proceed, it is because many of the pseudo-left organisations that protested Israel's war in Gaza—like the NPA, the Left Front, and the Solidaires union—have on the other hand actively suppressed working class opposition to Hollande's wars and social cuts. There is, however, ever growing fear in ruling circles of a social explosion of protests against austerity and war in the working class.

By attempting to ban the Gaza demonstrations and prosecuting one of its organisers, the PS is seeking to set a precedent for repression, both legal and physical, of protesting workers and youth in the coming period.

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