

# Address to the French people

Thursday, 12 October 2023

**Emmanuel Macron**

People of France,

My dear compatriots,

On Saturday, Israel experienced the worst terrorist attack in its history. Hamas put into action a plan unprecedented in scale, barbarism and toll.

A whole country was surprised at daybreak by shooting and an invasion both sudden and bloody. Hundreds of infants, children, men and women were hunted down, abducted, murdered and taken hostage. Whole kibbutzim and villages were decimated, in blind, murderous hatred and a wave of absolute cruelty.

In the last 18 months, the world has already seen the return of war to Europe, be it in Ukraine or against Armenia, but this new violence has shocked a nation and the world as a whole.

I speak in all our names when I say that we share in Israel's grief. That we are thinking of the terror felt by the Israeli people. That we are thinking of the families who know that they have lost one of their own, and those who await news of a loved one. That we are thinking of this people, in this difficult time and in mourning. That we stand with them.

The people of France are deeply acquainted with this pain. We too have mourned victims who were mown down in a festive setting, carefree young people leading ordinary family lives. We know through experience that nothing can justify terrorism. There can never be a 'yes but'.

France condemns these atrocities in the strongest terms. We must be clear. Hamas is a terrorist movement. It seeks only the destruction and death of the people of Israel. Acting as it does, it is fully aware of the fate to which it has criminally, cynically exposed the people of Gaza. This is not a war between Israelis and Palestinians. It is a war waged by terrorists against a nation, a country, a society. Against democratic values.

We have assured Israel and its people of our unwavering solidarity and our support for their legitimate response to terrorist attacks. Israel has the right to defend itself by eliminating terrorist groups, including Hamas, through targeted actions while protecting civilian populations, because that is the duty of democracies.

We know that the only response to terrorism, the only possible response, is always a strong and fair response, one that is strong because it is fair.

We are also connected to Israel through the pain of bereavement. At this time, 13 of our compatriots have died in these attacks. Not since the Nice attack in 2016 have so many French citizens been murdered by terrorists. Tonight, all French people are grieving for them, just as we worry about the fate of our 17 compatriots, children and adults, who are missing, some of them no doubt held hostage.

Tonight, I am thinking of their families. I want to say to them that, working alongside the Israeli authorities and our partners, France will do everything in its power to bring them home safe and sound. Because France never abandons its children. We will do everything we can to ensure that these hostages are released, regardless of nationality.

More generally, we are making every effort to ensure families without news of their loved ones are kept informed, to guarantee repatriation, to keep everyone up to date and to help. A first chartered flight will land in Paris tonight. Other flights are planned in the coming hours and days, and we have stepped up our resources to provide support on the ground to the almost 200,000 French citizens who currently live in Israel. We stand with you and will continue to stand with you.

I know that many of you are worried about a tragic spiral of violence in the region. I have spoken several times with Israeli President Isaac Herzog and with his Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu. I have also spoken at length with the main leaders of the region's countries, with those of the Palestinian Authority, Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia and Qatar. We and our European and American partners share the same priorities: providing strong and comprehensive support to Israel, preventing the conflict from spreading to neighbouring countries, particularly Lebanon, and coordinating international humanitarian efforts.

We cannot resign ourselves to endless war in this region. The fight against terrorism cannot replace the quest for peace. The conditions for a lasting peace are known: essential security guarantees for Israel and a State for the Palestinians. That is what France has always staunchly championed and it will continue to do so.

I repeat: the security of the State of Israel, a determined fight to eradicate terrorism in the region, and respect for the legitimate aspirations of all are, for us, indissociable. Those who conflate the Palestinian cause with a justification for terrorism are making a triple mistake: moral, political and strategic. On the strength of its clarity and consistency, France has the responsibility to promote peace and dialogue. It will do so.

My dear compatriots,

This event is sending shockwaves through Israel, the Middle East and beyond.

This barbarism deeply injures the universal human conscience.

It is particularly affecting our fellow citizens of the Jewish denomination.

Our first duty is to guarantee their safety and that of all our citizens on our national soil, and to ensure that no word, no act of anti-Semitism, no stigmatization, is allowed to flourish. I know the worry and sometimes the fear that many of you are feeling at this very moment. Tonight, I want to say that the Republic will be there to offer protection and it will show no mercy to anyone who promotes hate.

On Saturday, I asked the government to step up our protective measures for schools and places of worship and culture. The security of 582 of them has been reinforced. Some 10,000 police officers and gendarmes are on duty. Our armed forces are mobilized under Operation Sentinelle. Prosecutors have been instructed to prosecute anti-Semitic acts and apology of terrorism with the utmost severity. Demonstrations that could give rise to inappropriate behaviour will be banned. Our vigilance is total, too, when it comes to the expression of hatred on social media and terrorist threats.

But our duty is also to remain united as a nation, and as a Republic. It is this unity that will shield us from all forms of excess, abuses and hatred.

Let us remember all the serious crises we have got through together. Let us remember how we have stood together whenever we have been confronted with terrorism.

I know, as I was saying, the fear felt by our citizens of the Jewish denomination, the fear that the resurgence, there, of anti-Semitic violence, may lead here to words, insults and acts aimed at them. And

I also realize the concern of our citizens of the Muslim religion that conflation might prevail over reason. We fight and will always fight so that nobody need fear on our soil.

There must be no suspicion or division among us within our nation. We must remember that anti-Semitism has always been the prelude to other forms of hatred: one day against Jews, the next against Christians, then against Muslims, and finally against all those who are still the subject of hatred, because of their culture, their origin or their gender.

Let us not engage in ideological adventures in imitation of others or as a result of projection. Let us not add national divides to international divides through delusion or calculation. Let us stand utterly firm against all forms of hatred. Faced with these events we have seen, my dear compatriots, we must condemn terrorism and defend our values of fraternity.

That is the very meaning of the meeting I instigated earlier with the leaders of all the political parties represented in Parliament and the presidents of France's three constitutional chambers. It was a discussion built on respect, pluralism and diversity of opinions, but above all, concord and unity. The unity of our Republic is a strength for ourselves and for our cohesion, that enables France's unique yet universal voice to be heard.

Tonight, I ask that we remain united. United for ourselves, and united to bear together a message of peace and security for the Middle East. That is how we will be equal to our own history: that of a Republic that protects each individual and a nation that defends the ideal of peace. I am confident we can do that.

Long live the Republic! Long live France!