



## **Interview given by M. Jacques Chirac, President of the Republic, to the Israeli newspaper Haaretz , published on 22 July (excerpts)**

Paris, 19 July 2005

**QUESTION** In the wake of the London bombings, one question is of particular interest to the Israelis: are the Europeans, and particularly the French, now going to understand better the Israelis who have to confront Palestinian terrorism? For example, do you have more understanding for the targeted elimination of terrorists in the Palestinian Territories?

**THE PRESIDENT** First of all, the Europeans didn't wait for the attacks in London before unreservedly mobilizing against terror. Every day, together, coherently, and with the world's other major countries, they are strengthening their ability to fight terror. We understand [your situation] very well, have always condemned terrorist acts of which the Israelis are victim and consider that any terrorism, regardless of the reasons invoked for it, is despicable and must be condemned.

**QUESTION** Do these terrorist attacks bring France's analysis of terrorism closer to that of Israel, the United States, the United Kingdom?

**THE PRESIDENT** Terrorism is always unacceptable. Nothing can justify it. It uses major causes as an excuse for the indiscriminate slaughter of innocent people. It's one of the faces of modern barbarity.

No country is safe from it. France herself has been a victim of terrorism and has never underestimated the threat. On the contrary, she is in the vanguard of the battle against this scourge. She stands four square with the United Kingdom, as she does with the other countries which have been hit and, sadly, Israel is in the forefront of these.

We must intensify our efforts, which means even greater international coordination of the work of the intelligence services, police and judicial systems. France, who is already active in all these areas, is ready to go even further. This action must be conducted in accordance with the law and our values. This is why we insisted that international conventions define terrorism and establish the framework for international action. This is why we are insisting that this battle be conducted with due regard for the great principles of the rule of law, democratic life and respect for human dignity. But we also have to attack everything fuelling hatred and frustration: unresolved conflicts, religious intolerance, rejection of the Other and the



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inability to escape poverty and vulnerability. We must deprive the terrorists of this breeding ground, which serves them as a pretext and they are prospering in.

**QUESTION** How would you describe bilateral relations between Israel and France? Is there a prospect of improving them?

**THE PRESIDENT** France is Israel's friend. She is so for historical reasons, her long and ancient friendship for the Jewish people, her admiration for this people's contribution to world civilization and also the very strong feeling that Israel's existence and legitimacy are indispensable in a world which has known the horror of the Holocaust. There are also strong ties uniting our two peoples. The French people, who have in their midst the third-largest Jewish community in the world after Israel and the United States, want to step up our links with Israel.

Notwithstanding the misunderstandings, the reality is one of a strong relationship. Our cooperation is exemplary in all areas: cultural, scientific and economic. Israel and France also decided in 2002 to strengthen it still further. It is a success, as evidenced by Mr Sharon's visit to Paris, which follows President Katsav's State visit to Paris in February 2004 and the many meetings between our two countries' foreign ministers over recent months. So the reality is one of substantial, trustful and friendly political dialogue, resting upon the strong belief of France and the French that Israel is a great country, a friend.

**QUESTION** Where is the peace process now?

**THE PRESIDENT** Israel, the Palestinian Authority and the international community share a common objective: to put an end to a fifty-year-old conflict. To do this, we have an instrument accepted by all sides: the Roadmap. This document not only describes the necessary stages to achieve peace, but also sets out a framework for the final settlement: two States living side by side, an Israel assured of her security and a viable Palestinian State. Its implementation is therefore urgent.

The circumstances are conducive to this: on one side, Mr Sharon's courageous decision to disengage has created a positive momentum; and, on the other, Abu Mazen has pledged to put an end to the violence. (...) We must not allow this window of opportunity to close. In the autumn, after the withdrawal, we must all work together to reactivate the Roadmap.

The European Union and France want to contribute to this, first by helping to make a success of the withdrawal from Gaza, which presupposes helping in its economic development, then by strengthening Abu Mazen to enable him to deal with the extremists and, finally, by shouldering all our responsibilities in the Quartet, of which the EU is a member.



QUESTION Why is France seeing a new outbreak of anti-Semitic acts?

THE PRESIDENT One of the constants of my political action is an unrelenting battle against the horror of anti-Semitism and every form of racism and rejection of the Other. This is why I deemed it essential, back in 1995, to recognize France's responsibilities in the Holocaust. This is why I considerably strengthened the battery of judicial and police weapons against all forms of anti-Semitism and incitement to racial hatred. These are acts unworthy of a civilized people.

Sadly, like the rest of Europe, France is confronted with the worrying persistence of anti-Semitic acts. She isn't anti-Semitic, far from it, but she has to fight against the activities of extremists driven by stupidity and violence. As the Israeli authorities recognize today, we have taken exemplary measures to eradicate this scourge. Educating young people, punishing the guilty, cooperating with our European partners are our priorities. We shall not relax our efforts.

(...)

QUESTION How do you see the situation in Iraq?

THE PRESIDENT Whatever France's positions may have been with respect to the Iraq war, since the vote on UNSCR 1564 she has been encouraging the establishment of a democratic, legitimate and strong Iraqi government. Her readiness to contribute to this is shown by her offer to train security forces and the decisions taken to reduce the Iraqi debt.

France is keen to see all components of Iraqi society find their due place in the exercise of the responsibilities. She considers the maintenance of Iraq's territorial integrity essential.

QUESTION If Iran, especially after the last elections and, despite all your efforts, decides to ignore these and, in spite of everything, pursue the development of nuclear weapons, will you support strong-arm tactics against her, for example with sanctions or even a military attack if the sanctions don't work?

THE PRESIDENT You know the position of France, who is making active efforts to combat all forms of proliferation. The prospect of Iran equipping herself with nuclear weaponry is unacceptable to France, her partners and the entire world. When the IAEA showed that Iran had conducted a secret programme, we, with the Germans and British, liaising with Russia and keeping the United States fully in the picture, initiated a dialogue aimed at prohibiting any proliferating activity. We did this, of course, under IAEA control.

We are asking Iran for concrete guarantees on the peaceful and civilian nature of her nuclear programme, i.e. in particular that she has renounced all



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activity related to fissile material production. In return, we are ready to conduct with her a policy of dialogue and cooperation in the areas of diplomacy, the economy and energy, recognizing her right to civilian atomic energy under international control. At the moment, her proliferating activities have been suspended. The negotiations are continuing. What is essential is to maintain the international community's unity. So far we have succeeded in doing this, as the G8's support for this initiative has just demonstrated.

I can't tell you what the result of our action will be. I hope it will succeed and eliminate the danger of proliferation. If this were not to happen, the matter would, of course, have to be referred to the Security Council.

QUESTION And at that point, a military attack if nothing works?

THE PRESIDENT (...) Military attacks are not a solution to any problem. There are civilized means of resolving problems and we hope that these will bring a positive result. If, I repeat, there were a problem, I think the matter should be referred to the Security Council.

(...)

QUESTION Isn't Muslim immigration changing the nature of French society?

THE PRESIDENT France has always been a country of immigration. Our country's secular tradition today allows it to welcome Muslim immigrants just as in the past it has welcomed immigrants of all beliefs. This is a natural process of social, economic and cultural integration, which, as in the case of the other waves of immigration, is in the process of succeeding.

The French model rejects any form of splitting society into communities (communautarisme). This means that all candidates for immigration must accept the laws of the Republic, which affirms the equality of citizens before the law and refuses to accept an individual's rights and duties being defined by race, religion or culture. In France everyone is respected, everyone is free to make their choices and live by them, provided they pay due regard for those of others. But no group can claim to come between Republican law and the citizen. This applies to everyone. And while it is clear that integration takes time, because it involves moving from one society and culture to another, the vast majority of immigrants and their descendants feel themselves completely French and share the republican ideal. They are French in every respect and France is proud of them.

QUESTION. What do you think about Hamas?

THE PRESIDENT Hamas is a terrorist organization which can't be an interlocutor of the international community so long as it does not renounce violence and does not recognize Israel's right to exist. This is the unambiguous position of the EU and it will not change.

