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American University of Beirut

Invites you to a hybrid lecture

The Gaza Genocide: Where the European Left and Right Converge

François Burgat

CNRS France (IREMAN Aix-en-Provence)

The stance of French diplomacy and a broad majority of French political elites towards the latest twist in the Israeli-Arab conflict has been marked by a spectacular adherence to the Israeli narrative. This shift has resulted in a near-complete break not only with considering the most legitimate interests of the Palestinians but, more fundamentally, with the most basic requirements of international law, not just humanitarian law. This drift has several socio-political roots. The identification with the narrative of "Palestinian terrorism," which grants Israel an "unconditional right to self-defense," completes the rupture from the more rational interpretation of the conflict once adopted by General de Gaulle: that of Israeli occupation necessarily involving repression, which generates resistance that the occupying side is tempted to criminalize by labeling it as terrorism. The current unilateralism of the elites, as well as a significant part of French public opinion and the political establishment, is rooted in a dynamic that has seen a dramatic shift in the major components of the political spectrum, both right and left. It has seen the far-right and a segment of the right, long focused (before World War II) on their anti-Semitism, irresistibly turn—within the context of the decolonization wave—against these "Muslims," symbols and actors of the "decline" of former colonizers. The rift between the left and the Palestinians has deepened with the "Islamization" of the political lexicon of the Palestinian elites with the emergence and consolidation of Hamas. In the context of Gaza's suffering, growing French support for Israel is much less for a Jewish state than for an "anti-Muslim" state whose practices serve as an outlet for several generations of those traumatized by decolonization.

François Burgat is Emeritus Research Director at France's CNRS (IREMAN Aix-en-Provence). Among other institutions, he ran the French Middle Eastern Institute between 2008 and 2013 and the French Centre for Archaeology and Social Sciences in Sanaa from 1997 to 2003. An expert on Islamist movements, his latest book is titled 'Understanding Political Islam' by Manchester University Press (2019).

Thursday February 13 at 5:00-6:30 pm
IFI Seminar Room- 4th floor (Green Oval)
American University of Beirut

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