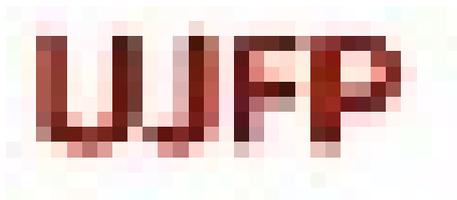
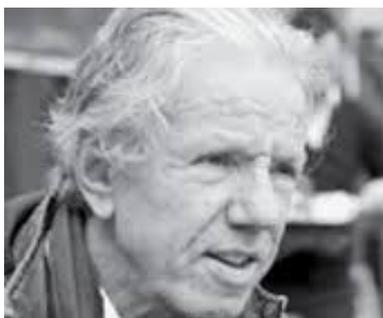


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From Tel Aviv to Marseille: we are all Pierre Stambul

- Call -



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By: Eléonore Merza Bronstein.
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June 9, 2015. Night has fallen on Marseille, it's around 2 am when the Raid (the anti-terrorist unit of the French National Police) closed the whole neighborhood, forbidding any movements in it, and broke down the door of a building. A neighbor, worried by the noise, is stepping out the front door to check what is happening, he is thrown on the floor bluntly.

Among the main missions of the Raid, this elit unit of the French Police, are « Counter-terrorism », « Hostage Situation » and « Mutiny ». They are allowed to intervene nationwide if the situation is risky. The French people know well this impressive unit. In 1993, a man calling himself « H.B » (the Human Bomb) took over a nursery school, strapped explosives to his body and holding the children hostage. After 46 tense hours of negotiation, the Raid eliminated HB and rescued the kids. 20 years later, France is witnessing a series of three gun attacks targetting French soldiers and Jewish civils in the cities of Montauban and Toulouse in the Midi-Pyrénées region of France in March 2012. The massacre at Ozar HaTorah school was the worst school-related attack in French history: four people died: Rabbi Jonatan Sandler who was teaching there, two of his kids: Aryeh Sandler (6 years) and Gabriel Sander (3 years). Miriam Monsonogo, the head teacher's daughter, was 7 years when she was shot in the head. Once again, the men of the Raid are the key figures of the « neutralisation » of Mohamed Merah who was responsible for The Toulouse and Montauban shootings.

But wait. The Raid? In the middle of the night? Is a terrorist living in this building? Are French people in danger in this quiet neighborhood of Marseille? Who the hell is living in this building and deserves to be « neutralized » by our « Men in black »? Who is this man strapped into a chair while his partner is plated wall?

His name is Pierre Stambul. Have you ever heard this name?

I guess most of you, if not all of you, never heard about him since we, abroad, know very little about Jewish dissident voices in Europe, and in particular in France. He is suspected of having killed his wife. But his wife is here, next to him and completely healthy.

In fact, it was a hoax: someone called the police and introduced himself as Pierre Stambul, saying he has just killed his wife and is going to cause a bloodshed with his weapon. This scenario has already happened several times, targeting all the times political activists and French « leftists » journalists, always following the same modele: a call to the police by someone (usually a man) saying he has just committed a crime (usually against his wife) and threatening to continue the massacre. This hoax are always targeting people that are considered as critical against Israel's policy.



Pierre is a known activist and co-president of the French Jewish Union for Peace (UJFP), a secular, universalist Jewish organization affiliated to the European Jews for a Just Peace (EJJP), a federation of Jewish groups in ten European countries. Founded in Amsterdam in September 2002, its principles are the condemnation of all violence against civilians in the conflict; the recognition of Israel's 1967 « green line » borders; the commitment to the Palestinians' right to a State in the territories currently occupied by Israel in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza; the recognition of the right of return of the Palestinian Refugees. UJFP's activists, in the line of EJJP, are supporting the international campaign BDS (Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions).

Here is Pierre Stambul's crime: he is a non-Zionist Jew supporting the BDS Campaign. And he is talking about it, whenever and wherever he is invited to. He is not a self-hating Jew, it's exactly from the bottom of his Jewishness that he stands in solidarity with Palestinians.

On Tuesday 09 of June, a public conference was supposed to be held in Toulouse. Entitled « Antisemitism / Antizionism: who is benefiting from the amalgam? », the conference is one among many events in which French activists, among them Jews, are trying to struggle against the criminalization of the solidarity movement with Palestinians, continuing explaining endlessly that antizionism is not antisemitism. More and more Jewish « other » voices in diaspora and in Israel are heard, they are not self-hating Jews, they fully endorse (express) their identity as Jews and struggle for Human rights, equality and peace. To oppose Israel's policy and occupation, and endorsing the BDS, is not and contrary to what Yair Lapid lately said while inviting in a Synagogue in New York « classic anti-Semitism in a modern disguise ».

After having been held 7 hours in Police custody, Pierre Stambul told us on the phone:

« This arrest did not come by chance, I'm supposed to speak in Toulouse tonight where I will challenge the main narrative feeding the confusion between antizionism and antisemitism, saying loudly that I'm against Israeli policy as a Jew (...) we are touching a very sensitive subject (...) it seems they are trying to silence us and prevent this event ».

Wait. Again. Isn't France supposed to be « the » Land of Human Rights? Weren't the French people demonstrating by millions for the freedom of speech after the terrible massacre of Charlie Hebdo last January?

It seems the freedom of speech does not exactly apply to all in France lately / is granted selectively. In particular when it's touching the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Criticizing Israel has become an offense and a crime, demonstrations against the last Israeli attack on Gaza were forbidden last July and many public encounters were cancelled these last years, mainly in universities.

In March, already in Toulouse, a public encounter held by the far left political party NPA (« Nouveau Parti Anticapitaliste ») on « Apartheid: from South Africa to Israel » in presence of Farid Esak, a South African figure of the anti-apartheid struggle, has been canceled few hours before by the Mayor Jean-Claude Moudenc for « Danger of disruption of public safety ». The Mayor does not hide his friendship for Israel, he is the secretary of the « France-Israeli friendship group » at the French Parliament. For the 67th anniversary of Israel, he held at Toulouse Municipality a ceremony in which he reaffirmed the « lasting and inalienable friendship from the bottom of Toulouse's heart to Israel », not mentioning anything about Palestinians' situation.

In the meantime, the Jewish Defense League (forbidden in Israel and in the US but not in France) has called to demonstrate and to prevent the public encounter, defining UJFP as a « a movement of Jewish traitors and kapos that support our enemies ». But Pierre Stambul made it to arrive in Toulouse and spoke in front of more than 300 people, explaining why he - the son of deported resistant - is standing for justice and why his moral and Jewish heritage allows him to distinguish clearly and loudly anti-Zionism from anti-Semitism.



Photo credits: UJFP/ BDS Toulouse