

Dear Sir,

Following your comments to Nicolas SARKOZY concerning the human rights situation in our country and in the world, I would like to assure you that he read your letter with all the attention it warrants and that he wished to provide you with detailed responses.

Women's rights:

Nicolas SARKOZY is of course in favour of France's ratification of the Council of Europe's Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence signed in Istanbul on 11 May 2011. France has been supporting an ambitious text on the subject since 2009 and was the first to sign it. Violence against women is unacceptable. Everything must be done to prevent and punish it. The French government has moreover taken action in this domain. The fight against violence against women was designated as a "Great National Cause" in 2010. Furthermore, a law concerning violence against women as well as domestic violence and its effects on children was passed on 9 July 2010.

The Roma in France:

The Roma are European nationals to whom the same rules as any other citizen apply. Freedom of movement is the same as for the nomadic people in our country. They therefore have the same obligations to fulfil. We will make sure to apply this common principle to all citizens.

Syria:

France has played a leading role in the negotiations within the Security Council for reaching a resolution on Syria. Nicolas SARKOZY has personally very firmly denounced the human rights violations committed by the Syrian authorities. The attitudes of China and Russia will obviously be decisive with regards an upcoming resolution. For a start, the mission led by Kofi ANNAN must enjoy unreserved support from the Council members.

Russia and China's support to the 21 March declaration concerning this mission represents significant progress from this point of view. The negotiations within the UN framework must be continued with the aim of a crucial objective: an effective end to all violence. In order to bring the Security Council to the French and European position on this issue, we must continue the work that has been started, so that China and Russia withdraw their support for Bashar AL-ASSAD.

By defending human rights, France is showing itself truly faithful to its international calling. The fundamental importance that the President of the Republic intends to give to individual freedoms in defining our foreign policy is especially visible in the interventions carried out by France in the Ivory Coast and in Libya. This commitment can also be seen by the regular contacts with the key figures and organisations which, within civil society, work to defend human rights, under what are often very difficult circumstances. However, the analysis of the specific situations in each country must determine the desirability of such meetings. Indeed, it is the concrete improvement of individual freedoms that must be the priority for our acts.

Afghanistan:

In order to defend human rights, we have had to intervene in Afghanistan. Our troops will be completely withdrawn from Afghanistan by the end of 2013. This decision in no way means that France is going to end its action. Even though our co-operation is currently suspended (training and combat-aid operation), our civil and technical co-operation is designed to grow. Our commitment can be seen in the fields of health, education, agriculture, cultural exchanges and infrastructures. The international action in Afghanistan has already made it possible to build 3600 schools since 2001 and to send 6 million children – including more than 2 million girls – to school. Educating the future generations seems to us to be the surest way to promote the cause of women and the rule of law.

Accountability:

The most serious crimes committed over recent years in certain countries of the African continent, such as Ivory Coast, Guinea, or the Democratic Republic of Congo, must be punished most severely. Without that France can be accused of interfering in the political decisions made in these three countries, Nicolas SARKOZY wants those responsible for serious crimes to be brought before competent and independent courts as soon as they are identified and arrested, The measures taken recently by the Ivorian president, for example, show that it's possible to reconcile concern for justice and the necessity for national reconciliation.

China:

The close relations that France maintains with China in no way imply any form of support to the measures taken by the Chinese government to limit the exercise of individual freedoms. In dealing with his Chinese interlocutors, the President of the Republic has sought to establish direct, frank and constructive dialogue on all subjects, notably the most difficult ones. Hence Nicolas SARKOZY wanted to meet the Dalai Lama in December 2008, just as he has wished for the last two years that France take the initiative in the European declarations calling for the liberation of Liu XIAOBO.

Russia:

Just as for China, France has laid the foundations for a constructive dialogue with Russia. This dialogue has never prevented us from reasserting how important respect for human rights is for us, especially in the Caucasian regions undergoing conflict. For example, Nicolas SARKOZY intervened in the summer of 2008 to reassert our position clearly concerning respect for the independence of Georgia. The President of the Republic has never hesitated to intervene or take action when human rights violations were clearly identified.

Accountability for serious crimes:

Whatever their nationality, those responsible for crimes involving serious violations of human rights must be prosecuted, tried and sentenced. This position, rigidly defended by France, fully justifies that the legal proceedings currently undertaken by French courts continue. Nicolas SARKOZY is therefore prepared to intervene so that France's partners respect, effectively, the individual rights guaranteed by French and international law and that court decisions are implemented.

Sexual orientation and gender identity:

To be persecuted because of one's sexuality is shocking and unacceptable. France fully supports the struggle carried out within international bodies, especially by many non-governmental organisations, in order to fight discrimination based on sexual orientation, as in the cases of discrimination based on ethnic origin or political and religious beliefs. In this respect, Nicolas SARKOZY wants France to be able to take a clear stand, especially within the UN Human Rights Committee, against states planning to penalize homosexuality with the death penalty. This retrograde legislation, which is still in force in nine countries of the world, must be unanimously condemned in the international arena.

Throughout his term of office, Nicolas SARKOZY has thus been able to uphold our principles resolutely and firmly and to maintain openness towards the different countries of the world. In this respect, he has been faithful to the history of our country and to our diplomatic tradition. Please be assured that the fight for human rights will remain his course of action.

At your disposal for any further information,

Guillaume LAMBERT

Campaign Director for Mr Nicolas SARKOZY