

# War on Gaza: Former French PM de Villepin Denounces ‘Greatest Historic Scandal’

The former right-wing premier under Jacques Chirac vilifies the French political and media response to Israel’s onslaught

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*Former [French](#) Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin condemned the ongoing “silence” surrounding [Israel’s war on Gaza](#) and criticised the French government’s “stepping aside” on the conflict during a radio [interview](#) with France Inter on Thursday.*

When asked to comment on the appointment of Michel Barnier as prime minister and the political and economic challenges facing France, de Villepin concluded the interview by expressing his anger over the French political and media response to Israel’s war on Gaza.

When the journalist brought up the conflict and cited the death toll as provided by “[Hamás’ health ministry](#)”, de Villepin quickly [interrupted](#) her.

Dominique de [@Villepin](#) à Gaza, "les corps sont en morceaux, les cœurs sont en morceaux, les âmes sont en morceaux, les têtes sont en morceaux" [#le710Inter pic.twitter.com/Zlkg3zRcBf](#)

— France Inter (@franceinter) [September 12, 2024](#)

“I hear that all the time... It is not only the Ministry of Health of Hamas that says that there are 40,000 dead; there are probably many more. Let’s not give the impression that this is a truncated figure,” he said.

Visibly angered, he continued: “No, it is, unfortunately, an everyday reality. In Gaza, bodies are in pieces; hearts are in pieces; souls are in pieces; heads are in pieces.”

On Thursday, [Palestinian](#) authorities announced a new toll of 41,118 dead in Gaza and an additional 95,125 wounded since the war began nearly a year ago.

De Villepin said it seems there is “no prospect” of reconstruction on the horizon. “Israel is creating the conditions for a reoccupation [of Gaza],” he said.

“Whether it is in the southern line or in the line that cuts [the enclave] in the middle, the creation of a perimeter around, Israel has taken back possession of Gaza. Gaza is completely besieged.”

De Villepin warned that “at a time when the West Bank itself is breaking down, as we can

see in the north and in the south, we are in front of a real pressure cooker”.

The former centre-right prime minister, who served under Jacques Chirac from 2005 to 2007, [went on](#) to describe Gaza as “undoubtedly the greatest historic scandal, which no one talks about in this country anymore”.

“It is silence, a lead weight; the media doesn’t discuss it... I have to turn to Google to find news that gives me the number of deaths in Gaza. It is a real scandal in terms of democracy,” he said.

“And all this in the name of what? War. It is war; that’s how it is. However, it is not quite a war like the others. These are civilian populations who are dying. We are in Absurdia and France is stepping aside.”

When asked what France, the European Union or the [United States](#) should do, de Villepin pointed out that the West has “levers in terms of armaments, in the economic field”. He said: “We continue to accept trading with territories where Israeli colonisation is active... but we refuse to [use these levers] under absolutely unheard-of arguments.”

“Israel must be allowed to wage its war to the end?” he questioned. “But to what end? Yoav Gallant, Israel’s minister of defence, says that Hamas has been eradicated in Gaza, so what is the end?”

### ‘Not Surprised by This Hatred’

De Villepin, renowned for his February 2003 [address](#) to the United Nations Security Council as foreign minister, where he voiced France’s opposition to an allied [military intervention](#) in [Iraq](#), has long been a vocal critic of Israel’s policy in the Palestinian territories.

Following the Hamas-led attack on Israel on 7 October, which killed around 1,200 people and saw about 250 others taken captive, de Villepin [said](#) he was “not surprised by this hatred”.

“I am surprised by the scale, the horror, by the barbarity that was expressed on 7 October, which calls on all of us to act with humanity and solidarity towards Israel and the Israeli people,” he said at the time.

“But I have to say it and I say it with infinite sorrow: I am not surprised by this hatred that has been expressed. When we remember Gaza – since 2006, the wars of 2008, 2012, 2014 and in 2021 – when we remember this open-air prison, this pressure cooker, [it is no surprise] that such a situation could invite hell on Earth.”

In the tradition of former President Charles de Gaulle, who predicted in November 1967 following Israel’s capture of Palestinian territories that it was setting up “an occupation that will inevitably involve oppression, repression and expulsions and a resistance to this occupation [that] Israel in turn [would] class as terrorism”, de Villepin stressed that “Israel cannot be safe until there is recognition of a Palestinian state alongside it that shares responsibility for security in this region.”

While current French President Emmanuel Macron has repeatedly called for a ceasefire in Gaza and condemned attacks against civilians, the declarations have seemingly fallen short

of translating into effective action and using the means at France's disposal to pressure Israel.

In June, when asked about the possibility of France recognising the state of Palestine, following the lead of several European countries such as Spain, Norway and Ireland, Macron [responded](#) that it was not "the right solution".

"It is not reasonable to do it now. I denounce the atrocities that we see with the same indignation as the French people. But we do not recognise a state based on indignation," he added.

[Rights groups](#) and investigative media have also criticised the lack of transparency surrounding French arms sales to Israel.

Last week, an [article](#) by French media outlet Mediapart examined "the millions of euros of French weapons delivered to Israel".

According to a defence ministry report to parliament obtained by Mediapart, France delivered €30m (\$33m) worth of military equipment to Israel in 2023.

However, since the report does not specify the months, the outlet noted that it is impossible to determine whether these deliveries continued after Israel's offensive on Gaza began on 7 October, adding that the Ministry of the Armed Forces was unable to clarify the issue.

Meanwhile, activists in the country have condemned the increased repression of pro-Palestine voices since 7 October, with hundreds of investigations being launched into remarks about the Israel-Palestine conflict under the so-called "[apology for terrorism](#)" offence.

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