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Nuclear democracy

- Homepage - News - Communiqués -

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On 23 March 2008, Bruno Guigue, the sub-prefect of Saintes in Western France, was dismissed for publishing, under his own name without reference to his official position, a article of commentary that did not please the government. On 25 March 2008, Stéphane Lhomme, the spokesperson for the "Sortir du nucléaire" network (nuclear phasing-out), was summoned and placed in custody by the DST (the internal state security department) for publishing a document from the EDF (Electricité de France) showing how fragile an EPR reactor would be in the event of an air crash.

Meanwhile, on 21 March we invited M. Bernard Kouchner, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and M. Jean-Claude Mallet, chairman of the commission writing the White Paper on Defense and National Security, to expound their viewpoints - which we do not share - at the 3rd Rally for International Disarmament, nuclear, biological and chemical (the 3rd RID-NBC) at Saintes on 9-11 May.

This prompts the following question: Is nuclear disarmament one of the subjects the French are permitted to talk about? We are feeble enough to think it is, and so are the City Councillors of Saintes: on 5 May 2008 they voted unanimously to affiliate the city to "Mayors for Peace" and to grant a subsidy for the 3rd RID rally.

Under these circumstances, and in the interests of balance, we have felt constrained to invite MM. Guigue and Lhomme to speak during the panel discussions, Bruno Guigue concerning the Israel-Palestine conflict in the "nuclear powder-keg" of the Middle East, and Stéphane Lhomme on the role of the EPR in nuclear proliferation. For our part, we assure the Government that any representatives it sends will have the right to completely free speech. We hope that they will not subsequently be dismissed or summoned by the DST in the name of "defense secrets".