

France riots

A speech President Chirac must deliver

By Jason Ben-Meir

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Following the riots that took place in France, the US researcher Jason Ben-Meir reflected on how the French government should respond to end the current crisis, suggesting a speech that French President Jacques Chirac has to deliver to the French people.

My fellow citizens of the Republic,

I have come before you as your president to let you know your government's plan to address the terrible violence that has stricken our cities and its aftermath. Our beloved homeland and the enduring principles that guide and govern us, are facing a defining test.

Our democratic form of social justice, which is based on compassion and dignity, has been an example in the world that has benefited humanity. It is in the nature of free nations however, to at times be severely challenged from within, so that they may truly fulfill their promise of fairness and opportunity.



French President Jacques Chirac. Ph: Archives.

Let me first be clear: Those who perpetrate violence and destruction will face the absolute prosecution of the law. As an interdependent nation with a shared destiny of freedom, violent riots are an affront to our country and must end, even by overwhelming defence if necessary.

At the same time, the government extends a hand of reconciliation to the youth and communities who are often unjustly denied our Republic's basic promise. We recognize that there is only one long-term solution to the crisis we now face: new partnerships within our nation that create real opportunities and significantly enhance the lives of those who have been systematically excluded.

The journey of reconciliation that we must take as a nation, is a path to a future we are bound to. We are therefore committed that when the violence ends in our cities, reconciliatory dialogue among communities and neighbourhoods of the Republic will begin. The marginalized seek recognition, and as a nation we must listen to their voices and stories of discrimination, and acknowledge their painful experiences. Trust will develop through this process, especially after we realize and express mistakes of the past.

Creating self-reliant development is a vital and integral part of reconciliation and our plan for the future. We are committed to assisting underdeveloped communities in our homeland by helping them to implement development projects that meet their important needs. Training and education are essential components of this, as is investment in micro-enterprises and community centres. Empowering people to develop themselves and their communities is the basis for peace and the enduring promise of our France.

My fellow citizens, our bold agenda of reconciliation and development will bear consequences beyond the borders of our Republic. The example of peace among us, will inspire peace beyond us. In a growing international struggle between civilizations that use guns and tanks, our France will be the light of the peaceful alternative of partnership and unity. And so again, time has delivered a challenge to our nation, whose just resolution will serve all humanity. We must again answer the call and overcome fear.

Because our commitment to pursue social justice for all citizens is real and binding, continued violence is only for its own sake. For those who hurt others and damage our cities, you will know only one

certain and immediate end, and that is our law derived from the people.

Fellow citizens, do not be discouraged but take heart in our challenge of today. We will succeed because our plan is rooted in our Republic's deepest sense of justice, which is adherence to the rule of law and freedom to achieve our potential.

I am saddened by the riots in our cities. I am taken up by a complete determination to end them and the hope of our France, which is freedom for all its people. Let us stand together as citizens of our dear Republic in this national call to achieve justice for ourselves, and uplift all in the world who bear witness.

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