

France bans Israeli companies from weapons exhibition

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Anti-war protests in Paris

Paris, June 2 (RHC)-- France has banned Israeli companies from participating in this year's annual Eurosatory arms and defence industry exhibition in Villepinte near Paris next month, the event's organizers and French authorities have said.

"By decision of the government authorities, there will be no stand for the Israeli defence industry at the Eurosatory 2024 fair," organizers Coges Events said on Friday.

The French Defense Ministry suggested that the decision was linked to Paris's opposition to the continuing Israeli assault on Rafah in southern Gaza. "Conditions are no longer met to host Israeli

companies at the show at a time when the President is calling for Israel to cease operations in Rafah,” the ministry told the Reuters news agency.

Seventy-four Israeli firms were set to attend the event from June 17 to 21 at fairgrounds close to Paris’s main international airport, with Coges previously saying about 10 of them were to exhibit weapons.

Last week, a group of activists issued a legal warning and urged Coges to take measures to avoid buying and selling weapons that could be used in “crimes” committed in Gaza or other parts of the occupied Palestinian territory.

ASER, Stop Arming Israel, Urgency Palestine and the France-Palestine Solidarity Association also warned against profits from the fair “reinforcing the economic power of firms likely to participate in these crimes.”

Coges told the AFP news agency that it was “a fair solely for the presentation of defence and security equipment ... and in no means a place for deals.” Friday’s announcement came just days after Israel bombed a camp for displaced people in Rafah in southern Gaza, setting off international outrage and widespread protests in France.

President Emmanuel Macron also said he was “outraged” over the Israeli air raid that killed 45 people in the encampment.

In previous weeks, France joined other Western nations in urging Israel against invading Rafah, which had become home to hundreds of thousands of Palestinians forcibly displaced from other parts of Gaza.

Israel has ignored those warnings and pushed on with a major offensive against Rafah, displacing about one million people from the city. The assault, which saw Israeli forces take over the Rafah crossing with Egypt, has also worsened the humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

Last week, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) – the top United Nations court – ordered Israel to halt its attacks on Rafah.

At least 36,284 Palestinians have been killed and 82,057 wounded in Israel’s war on Gaza since October 7.

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