

# Strong left-wing alliance sets the stage for Sarkozy's defeat

By AURELIEN GIRARD  
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PARIS—Emboldened by what has been described as an “overwhelming victory” in the first round of regional elections on Sunday, the French opposition Socialist Party has made a deal with other left-wing parties to try to defeat Nicolas Sarkozy's centre-right UMP across France.

Socialist General Secretary Martine Aubry made the “grand slam” during regional elections a key move in the reconstruction of her long-divided party in order to be anchored in the French territories for the presidential elections of 2012.

Aubry's comments to the media in recent days made it clear that there is only one target: Nicolas Sarkozy, and only one message: That French people suffer because of the “unfair and ineffective” policies of Sarkozy's government.

“French voters have sent a clear and strong message. They refuse a divided, worried and weakened France, they want a stronger and more just France,” Aubry told l'Express newspaper.

## LOW TURNOUT

Voter turnout in Sunday's poll was just 46.35 per cent—the lowest in any French regional election ever. The last time first-round elections were held in 2004, voter turnout was 62 percent.

Socialists are interpreting the low participation rate as a proof of widespread discontent with Sarkozy for failing to protect jobs and pensions.

The Conservative camp however claims that the turnout shows that Socialists have been unable to mobilize voters in their “veto the president” campaign.

“Where is there a ‘punitive vote’ when half of the voters did not even go to the polls?” asked UMP Secretary General Xavier Bertrand on TF1 TV.

On Monday, however, Prime Minister François Fillon had to discipline his own camp after some voiced that it is already too late to reverse the trend of defeat.

“All of those who expect, by their criticism, to weaken our majority,



France's socialist leader Martine Aubry casts her vote in the regional elections on March 14, in Lille, France. DENIS CHARLET/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

make a mistake against this majority. Once the second round is over, it will be time to look for some lessons in the way we have managed things ... But between the two rounds, we have to engage together.”

## REBIRTH OF FAR-RIGHT

### FRONT NATIONAL

Particularly controversial inside UMP is the role played by immigration Minister Eric Besson in the high number of votes obtained by the far-right Front National in southern France. Many argue that Besson's failed “national identity” debate only served to promote Front National's anti-immigration stance.

“Front National is still a national power, very likely an ever-growing power,” Front National President and founder Jean-Marie Le Pen told reporters.

Le Pen added that voters should “elect Front National regional

counselors, as they will be the only opposition voices in these bodies.”

At the national level, Front National rose from 6 percent of the vote in the 2009 European elections to 12 percent in this recent vote, scoring as much as 20 percent in some regions.

## LEFT-WING VICTORY IN SECOND ROUND?

France will go to the polls for the second round of voting on March 21 to elect representatives in 26 regions.

In that round of elections, left-wing parties—mainly the Socialist Party and the green party Europe Ecologie—will run separate candidates in three regions. This situation, known as a “triangle,” occurs when several candidates garner more than 10 percent of the vote during the first round of regional elections, and thus survive to the next round rather than merging

their party lists.

However, a large victory for the left-wing in most regions—projected by the polls for the last several weeks—still seems likely given their showing of 30 percent in the first round, and the quick alliances that have been built to defeat Sarkozy's UMP.

Regional voting has traditionally mirrored the national government in reverse: Right-wing leaders headed most French regions in the 1980's when the president was socialist François Mitterrand.

Now that conservatives have executive power plus a strong majority in both parliament houses, the regions are inclined toward creating a counter-power in a vivid expression of democracy.

It remains to be seen if UMP will be able to keep one of the two regions it currently controls, and if a government shuffle will follow the results of the second round.



Falun Gong practitioners walk in a parade in Manhattan, New York, holding photos commemorating practitioners that have died in China, June 6th 2009. MINGGUO SUN / THE EPOCH TIMES

## Judge shocked by system behind ‘fine-tuned’ Falun Gong persecution

By JOAN DELANEY  
Epoch Times Staff

An Argentina judge made a landmark decision last Dec. 17 in ordering the arrest of China's former communist chairman Jiang Zemin and another top party official for “crimes against humanity” in the persecution of the Falun Gong spiritual practice in China.

Federal Judge Octavio Aráoz de Lamadrid asked Interpol to issue an arrest warrant against Jiang and former security chief Luo Gan after four years of investigating charges of torture and genocide against the Falun Gong group.

In an interview from his office in Buenos Aires recently, Lamadrid, who stepped down as a judge shortly after his ruling, said that taking on the case was simply something a judge does “because it is his duty.”

The criminal case was filed in 2005 by a lawyer on behalf of Liwei Fu, the head of the Falun Dafa Association in Argentina, when Luo Gan was on a private trip in Argentina. The case was accepted by the Argentina Federal Criminal Court and assigned to Judge Lamadrid to handle.

The ruling set a historic legal precedent for Argentina through its reliance on principles of extraterritoriality to prosecute foreign defendants for crimes against humanity.

Lamadrid, 40, grew up in Buenos Aires in a family of judges. His grandfather was president of the Court under the government of three former presidents. His father, now a lawyer, was a judge for 15 years, and all his brothers are also lawyers.

“The complaint was accepted basically under the principle of universal justice, under which all civilized countries—including China because she signed those treaties—are responsible for. That is, giving any citizen of the world access to justice to be able to go to a court and claim his or her rights,” he said.

The judge's decision was based on evidence that included the oral testimonies of 17 victims of torture and other forms of persecution. He also took into account the testimony of doctors, United Nations' reports, and research by human rights groups such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch.

“The UN reports are very convincing,” said Lamadrid.

Lamadrid also relied on the testimony of two Canadians—David Kilgour, former Canadian Secretary of State for Asia Pacific, and David Matas, an award-winning human rights lawyer—for their investigation of large-scale organ harvesting of Falun Gong practitioners for profit by the regime. The two recently were nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize for their work.

Through studying the evidence, Lamadrid said he was “surprised” by the magnitude of the torture and the extent the Chinese regime goes to in carrying out its campaign of persecution.

“They fine-tuned a very clear method,” he said. “All this structure, all this organization is what most surprised me. We are talking about something that happens far away us, which we do not see, which we cannot touch, but there are a whole lot of people who are subject to torture, and so many things are happening to them. When you can see that behind it there's a system, it is very shocking.”

Jiang Zemin, who both held the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party and the title of Chinese President, set up an extrajudicial agency—the 610 Office—to specifically handle Falun Gong and assigned Luo to head it.

Judge Lamadrid described the 610 Office as a “Chinese Gestapo” with the objective of exterminating thousands of innocent people (including women, the elderly, and children) under the control,

direction, supervision, and coordination of Luo Gan, the accused.”

“The genocidal strategy ... comprised a broad range of actions arranged in total contempt for life and human dignity,” Lamadrid wrote in his decision.

“The designated purpose—the eradication of Falun Gong—was used to justify any means used. Therefore, torment, torture, disappearances, deaths, brainwashing, psychological torture were everyday occurrences in the persecution of its practitioners,” he said in the decision.

Under the ruling, if Jiang or Luo travel to a country that has an extradition treaty with Argentina, they may be detained, transferred to Argentina, and brought before the court.

Jiang is widely acknowledged as the initiator and primary driver behind the campaign launched in 1999 to “eradicate” Falun Gong, which had about 70 million adherents in China at the time.

The regime's “first big mistake,” said Lamadrid, is that it freely admits to having banned the practice of Falun Gong.

“If they want to persecute practitioners of a religion and prohibit it by law, they are showing the entire world that they are carrying out a religious persecution, which is prohibited by all the conventions signed by all countries around the world, including China.”

He explained that if China were a signatory to the Rome Statute, the regime could be brought before the International Criminal Court.

The Falun Dafa Information Center, which monitors the persecution of Falun Gong, has detailed the deaths of 3,000 practitioners. The persecution against the group is also commonly cited as among the most severe human rights abuses in China.

Regarding the ruling, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Jiang Yu accused Falun Gong of using “foreign court proceedings to bring false charges” in order to damage China's relations with other countries.

According to VOA News.com, Jiang curtly suggested that the Argentine government “properly handle this.”

Lamadrid said the fact that the regime commented means his decision has rattled them.

“We are talking about the arrest of a former president and former important official. They are not even acting officials—the Chinese government could have ignored the matter. That a spokesperson expresses the displeasure of the Chinese government is a sign that it is something that pains the Chinese government. This would not have happened if it had not affected them.”

Dozens of civil and criminal cases of torture or genocide were filed against Jiang Zemin in various countries between 2002 and 2005, including Canada, U.S. Australia, Spain and Germany.

The ruling in Argentina follows a similar decision in Spain in November in which five top communist leaders were indicted for their roles in the persecution of Falun Gong by the Spanish National Court.

In that case, Spanish judge Ismael Moreno accepted charges of genocide and torture against five Chinese officials, including Jiang, after a two-year investigation. However, the Spanish case was less far-reaching in that it did not apply the principle of universal justice.

Lamadrid said he hopes the ruling will eventually have the effect of bringing about change in China.

“What I did is a very little step. I hope it has some effects. I hope that this will make China recognize that they are in the wrong and become more pluralistic and open,” he said.

With files from New Tang Dynasty Television.



A Haitian woman sets up her makeshift tent at a camp in Port-au-Prince on March 1. EITAN ABRAMOVICH/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

## Life is perilous in makeshift camps in Haiti

HAITI CONTINUED FROM P1

“The tents were close together and there was no electricity, leaving them completely dark at night and forcing people to shower on the streets,” she said.

Although the Haitian national police presence has increased in Port-au-Prince, rule of law is not strong. There have been reports of national police officers engaging in extrajudicial killing of looters and escaped prisoners.

The Haitian government is now planning to group the homeless from about 900 settlements into five camps in an attempt to increase security for woman and other

vulnerable people and to make the distribution of aid easier.

Initially, the Haitian government had opposed the idea of creating larger camps fearing that they might turn into permanent slums.

In total, an estimated 230,000 people were killed in the earthquake, and another 300,000 injured; 97,294 houses were destroyed and 188,383 were damaged in Port-au-Prince and the surrounding area.

The U.N. together with the Haitian government has issued a \$1.4 billion appeal to provide aid and support. So far only half of the funds have been raised.

## Uganda guards kill three amid sacred tomb fire

By KREMENA KRUMOVA  
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Clashes between police and supporters of Uganda's largest Buganda tribe left three dead, after the Kasubi Tombs were burned down on Tuesday night.

The tombs, built 150 years ago in Uganda's capital Kampala, were put on the UNESCO's World Heritage

List of 890 cultural and natural sites in 2001, describing them as “a masterpiece of human creativity both in its conception and its execution.”

Tension escalated on Wednesday after Uganda President Yoweri Museveni tried to reach the burnt burial grounds of the Buganda Kings, and was hindered by infuriated members of the traditional kingdom.

“Those killed were among a crowd which was stopping the guards to enter where the tombs are located. The guards responded by opening fire and killing three people and injuring several,” Minister of Information for the Buganda kingdom Lubega Segona told AP.

Buganda's King Ronald Muwenda Mutebi II announced a week of mourning.

Some adherents of the kingdom accused the official government of setting the sacred tombs on fire—attaching it to the current disagreements between the country's

authorities and the kingdom of Buganda.

“There are people who want to cause harm to this kingdom. They are keen on destabilizing us and we don't know whether they're behind this,” said Charles Peter Mayiga, a kingdom official.

Police are still investigating the cause of the fire.

After President Museveni took power in 1986, he was supported by the Buganda kingdom.

However, the apparent peace was obscured last year, when police blocked the way of Ronald Muwenda Mutebi, Buganda's reigning kabaka (the title of the Buganda king) from reaching the capital, allegedly for security reasons. The act was taken as an insult by supporters of the kabaka, and they responded with riots which resulted in the deaths of more than 20 people.

The kingdom kabaka wants more political and economical sovereignty from Uganda authorities, but is instead pronounced a “cultural figure” and is advised to “steer clear of politics.”

Uganda is expected to hold its presidential elections in 2011, and some hope President Museveni will step down. However, since he is not showing any signs of resigning from his post the votes could appear tricky.

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