

IF BIBI WASN'T WANTED, MAYBE OBAMA WASN'T EITHER?

The usual suspects are up in arms that President Obama neither attended nor sent a representative to Paris' unity rally yesterday.

But I wonder whether the US was not invited?

Ha'aretz has a report on how Bibi Netanyahu was not invited – but decided to show anyway, once his political rivals decided to attend. So Francois Hollande invited

French President Francois Hollande conveyed a message to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu over the weekend asking him not to come to Paris to take part in the march against terror on Sunday, according to an Israeli source who was privy to the contacts between the Elysees Palace and the Prime Minister's Office in Jerusalem. The fact that this message had been conveyed was first reported by Channel 2.

After the French government began to send invitations to world leaders to participate in the rally against terror, Hollande's national security adviser, Jacques Audibert, contacted his Israeli counterpart, Yossi Cohen, and said that Hollande would prefer that Netanyahu not attend, the source said.

Audibert explained that Hollande wanted the event to focus on demonstrating solidarity with France, and to avoid anything liable to divert attention to other controversial issues, like Jewish-Muslim relations or the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Audibert said that Hollande hoped that Netanyahu would understand the difficulties his arrival might pose and would announce that he

would not be attending.

[snip]

However, on Saturday night, Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman and Economy Minister Naftali Bennett announced their intention to go to Paris and take part in the march and meet with the Jewish community. When Netanyahu heard they were going, he informed the French he would be attending the march after all.

According to the source, when Cohen informed Audibert that Netanyahu would be attending the event after all, Audibert angrily told Cohen that the prime minister's conduct would have an adverse effect on ties between the two countries as long as Hollande was president of France and Netanyahu was prime minister of Israel.

Audibert made it clear that in light of Netanyahu's intention to arrive, an invitation would also be extended to Abbas. And indeed, several hours after Abbas announced that he would not be traveling to Paris, his office issued a statement stating that he would in fact be at the march.

Meanwhile, Andrea Mitchell tweeted,

Official tells me POTUS/VP weren't invited to Paris + security for them wld have been disruptive – so U.S. signaled France not to invite?

People don't seem to get this, but the same reason (aside from security) why Bibi would be an unwelcome symbol would also make the US an unwelcome symbol. While Bibi is violently occupying Palestinian lands, the US is only just pulling out of Afghanistan, is reentering Iraq, and continues to drone strike in Sanaa. Moreover, Sharif Kouachi tried to travel to Iraq

in 2005 in response to the war and, more specifically, Abu Ghraib. He and his brother did succeed in traveling to Yemen in 2011, and received some training, at a time when AQAP considered the US a key source of grievance. It wasn't so much that these guys started radical and got worse after our multiple wars against Islamic countries; on the contrary, the US was, to a significant extent, the grievance.

That doesn't excuse murder. But if Hollande was trying to eliminate the symbols of aggression against Muslims, then asking Obama to stay away would be of a piece with asking Bibi to stay away, even if Obama (and the US) is far less aggressive about dehumanizing Muslims.