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French say no to war



Demonstrators take to the streets of Paris

By **Claire Marshall**

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The heavy thumping beat of the specially recorded rap song "stop da war" booms out across the crowded streets of central Paris.

A man dressed in white with stick-on fluffy wings drifts among the throngs of people as an angel of peace.

Pro Palestinian groups walk draped in the Palestinian flag and a huge red balloon of France's communist party hangs overhead.

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Despite the diversity of the placards and banners being enthusiastically waved, all have a common theme.

As 47-year-old Dominique, a florist from Paris, puts it,

“International solidarity is extremely important now. I am totally opposed to



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"nobody wants war" **what President Bush is doing**

Standing on the top of a van, in between rallying the crowd through a megaphone, a peace activist says the French are against any conflict with Iraq.

"The more President George Bush wants war the more we, the French, will mobilise against him", he said.

Twenty-six-year-old Sara Ann Rosen from New York carries a placard with a cartoon of George W Bush on it, blood dripping from his hands.

Her parents heard Martin Luther King deliver his "I have a dream speech" in Washington in 1963.

Today she is demonstrating against her own country's policy.

"International solidarity is extremely important now. I am totally opposed to what President Bush is doing," she says.

Support for Chirac stance

On a beautiful sunny winter day some people have come to the centre of Paris just to soak up the atmosphere and enjoy a baguette or a cup of red wine from one of the fast food vans.

However the overwhelming message is clear.

With more than 80% of people in France supporting President Jacques Chirac's anti-war stance, this is a huge vote of support for the French president.

However some wonder why this

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impressive show of solidarity has not been mobilised before now.

Thirty-year-old Dien Donne from Burundi complains that it is only when there are problems in the Arab world that people get out to protest.

She believes that when something bad happens in Africa the French don't care unless it's a former colony.

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