ANDREW MARR:
Welcome Ambassador.

SYLVIE BERMANN:
Thank you.

ANDREW MARR:
It’s been a very, very grim week for France, but an encouraging week in some respects too just in terms of the huge waves of support around the world, including in this country.

SYLVIE BERMANN:
Yeah, absolutely, and it’s a historic day in Paris. More than one million people will stand together and will march in unity. And we’re very grateful to those who are joining us, including the Prime Minister, David Cameron, and the Head of Opposition as well, Ed Miliband, and other politicians as well. A lot of people also came to the embassy and they signed a condolence book and also sent flowers, like the Mayor of London, and I understand that Nick Clegg will participate in the rally in Trafalgar.
ANDREW MARR:
So this sense of sister cities that you are raising …

SYLVIE BERMANN:
Yes.

ANDREW MARR:
… is being made flesh as it were? There’ll be a big demonstration in London today as well. Now we were talking about unity. There has been some criticism obviously in France that Marine Le Pen wasn’t invited to the official rally. Do you think there is a danger of that unity cracking because the National Front in France, 25 per cent of the vote and so forth, are a major force there?

SYLVIE BERMANN:
Well she can participate and other people from the National Front can participate as well. I mean it’s their decision.

ANDREW MARR:
Now I want you to defend your country against what we were saying in the paper review about there being really quite worrying levels historically of anti-Semitism in France, possibly driven sometimes by an Islamist agenda, and so many Jews in France wanting to go back to Israel. Are you aware of there being a problem with French Jewry as well as with French Islam?

SYLVIE BERMANN:
Well in fact those people who assassinated our journalists, simply they are terrorists, they are fanatics and they are murderers, and that’s what they are in fact. We have the biggest Muslim community in France and we have also the biggest Jewish community. And it’s true that there has been some acts of anti-Semitism, but of course the government will do everything to protect the Jewish; has to protect also the Muslims.

ANDREW MARR:
So do you think this is a very important moment for, as you would say,
rassemblement – not only around the notion of the republic but the French political class coming together and looking again at issues of Jewry and looking again at issues of Islam as they’re treated in France; a moment for reflection and possibly a slightly change of direction?

SYLVIE BERMANN:
Well we have some principles in France and we have, as you say, a principle of laicite, secularism, and it protects all religions. Sometimes it’s misunderstood, but in fact it’s about tolerance and it’s about the possibility of practice any kind of religion. In our constitution, we have - as it is also in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights) the freedom of opinion and freedom of expression, and that is very important.

ANDREW MARR:
Absolutely.

SYLVIE BERMANN:
But unity between those people are very important too. You know what happened here also in London. I received people from the movement Not In My Name and I think this is important. So you can’t consider that those murderers are representing any kind of religion and everybody will be protected in France.

ANDREW MARR:
Ambassador, in the spirit of solidarity thank you very, very much indeed for joining us. It’s very kind of you.

ENDS