

French MP in Hitler slur at travellers

A French politician has been threatened with expulsion for suggesting that Adolf Hitler "did not kill enough" Roma gipsies during a row at an illegal camp.



MP Gilles Bourdouleix, who represents a constituency in the Maine and Loire region of west France, was visiting an illegal Roma camp in the town of Cholet, where he is mayor Photo: PHOTOPQR

By Peter Allen, Paris

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In the latest outspoken attack on communities of travellers, MP Gilles Bourdouleix evoked the Second World War Holocaust when the Nazis exterminated thousands belonging to the ethnic minority.

Mr Bourdouleix, who represents a constituency in the Maine and Loire region of west France, was visiting an illegal Roma camp in the town of Cholet, where he is mayor.

Surrounded by armed police, Mr Bourdouleix was trying to persuade the new arrivals to move on.

But as he began to speak to community leaders, some of the Roma gypsies standing by began to make Nazi salutes in his direction.

Mr Bourdouleix was recorded by a local journalist saying: "Like what, Hitler didn't kill enough."

Challenged about his comment by some of the Roma men, Mr Bourdouleix said: "You compared me to Hitler, do you think that's nice?"

Mr Bourdouleix then accused the community of incest, saying: "The other day, they called me a paedophile, even though half of their children are from fathers and grandfathers."

Fabien Leduc, the journalist who recorded Mr Bourdouleix, has since transcribed a word-for-word account of the recoding.

It has persuaded Jean-Louis Borloo, leader of Mr Bourdouleix's party, the centre-right UDI, that he should consider expelling his colleague.

He said: "Whatever the real and unacceptable provocation the Deputy Mayor of Cholet, Gilles Bourdouleix, was subjected to, nothing justifies the remarks apparently made by him."

Jean-Christophe Lagarde, the secretary general of the UDI party, meanwhile tweeted: "The words of Bourdouleix, even though made in the heat of the moment, were intolerable and incompatible with the values of the UDI."

Mr Lagarde added: "The only possible sanction is his expulsion from the UDI, and this should be adopted by the executive committee next Wednesday."

Mr Bourdouleix denied any accusations of racism, saying his words were "totally skewed" and that he intended to take legal action against Mr Leduc "and all the media outlets who repeat this false quote".

Mr Bourdouleix said what he really said was: "If it was Hitler, he would have killed them all."

French politicians from both Right and Left have launched an onslaught on Roma gypsies in recent years, destroying their camps and deporting them back to countries including Romania and Bulgaria.

Despite this, Roma shanty towns regularly spring up around major cities including Paris and Lyon.

