

French actress Gayet speaks out over Syria

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French actress Julie Gayet, whose affair with President Francois Hollande made headlines worldwide, opened the Beirut International Film Festival on Wednesday and criticised "fundamentalism" in neighbouring Syria.



"I am very excited to be here tonight in Lebanon which is hosting more than a million and a half refugees from Syria," said the actress, who is chairing the BIFF jury.

"A hundred miles away, fundamentalism and barbarism are creating tens of thousands of victims. They kill, they torture, they imprison freedom," she said.

In January, French glossy magazine Closer sparked a political earthquake by publishing photographs purportedly showing Hollande arriving for trysts on a scooter at an apartment near his official residence in the heart of Paris. It claimed his affair with Gayet began two years ago.

The revelations led to the break-up of Hollande's relationship with partner Valerie Trierweiler, for whom he left his long-time companion Segolene Royal, France's current environment minister and mother of his four children.

Gayet, a mother of two, dodged questions about her private life.

Also in Beirut for the festival was Juliette Binoche, another famous French actress. The film in which she starred, Olivier Assayas's *Sils Maria*, opened the festival.

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