

French outraged by treatment of Strauss-Kahn...

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French Socialist politicians voiced outrage on Tuesday at the parading of IMF chief Dominique Strauss-Kahn handcuffed and unshaven in the United States before he has a chance to defend himself on charges of attempted rape.

Arrested on Saturday and charged with sexually assaulting a chambermaid at a luxury New York hotel, Strauss-Kahn was made by police to walk manacled in front of cameras on his way to a courthouse, and his appearance before a judge was televised.

Former Culture Minister Jack Lang described the treatment of the Socialist presidential frontrunner -- whose political career is now in tatters -- as a "lynching" that had "provoked horror and aroused disgust."

The U.S. justice system, he said, was "politicized" and the judge appeared to have been determined to "make a Frenchman pay" by denying the head of the International Monetary Fund bail even though his lawyer had offered to post a \$1 million bond.

To many Americans, the handling of Strauss-Kahn reflected an egalitarian tradition that all crime suspects get the same treatment, regardless of their wealth or power.

Socialist Party leader Martine Aubry denounced "degrading images" and said France was lucky to have a law on the presumption of innocence that bars media from showing defendants in handcuffs before they are convicted.

Former Justice Minister Elisabeth Guigou, who drafted that law, called the pre-trial publicity "absolutely sickening."

"The power of these images of a Dominique Strauss-Kahn who hasn't been allowed to shave, tired, and not dressed properly, all that offends human dignity," she told Europe 1 radio.

Another respected former justice minister, Robert Badinter, who pushed through the abolition of the death penalty in France, said the IMF chief had been subjected to "death by media."

"Never forget it's not just judges that are elected (in New York), but prosecutors. And the chief of police is elected. And clearly, in public opinion, to exhibit a powerful rich man in the presence of a victim from a very poor background, electorally, it pays off."