

France: Tamils arrested in protest against Sri Lankan mass killings

Antoine Lerougetel
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Monday evening French police attacked a spontaneous street protest by 500 Tamils in Paris' La Chapelle district against mass killings perpetrated by the Sri Lankan army on their people. The police arrested 210 people and held 143 in custody at least until Tuesday.

Over 2,000 Tamils also demonstrated that day in London, without reports of clashes with the police.

The Paris demonstration was an immediate response by the city's large Tamil community to the news of large-scale killings carried out by the Sri Lankan army earlier that day. Leaflets given out at the demonstration stated that these government attacks on the LTTE Tamil Tiger controlled territory had killed 1,496 civilians, including 476 children.

For the last two weeks, there have been demonstrations by the Tamil diaspora around the world against the slaughter of Tamil civilians by the Sri Lankan army, which is closing in on the last remaining 17 square kilometres of territory still controlled by the Tamil Tigers, after three decades of civil war and 70,000 deaths.

On Monday the Rajapakse government gave the Tamil Tigers 24 hours to capitulate, after which it said it would launch an all-out military assault on the enclave. The International Crisis Group said a "humanitarian tragedy" was unfolding in the area, with around 150,000 civilians still trapped there.

At La Chapelle, Tamil youth staged a sit-down protest in the street, blocking traffic. Demonstrators informed the WSWs that the riot that subsequently erupted was the result of a police provocation: a police vehicle drove over the leg of sit-down striker as officers attempted to clear the road. The police launched tear gas canisters at the demonstrators, who flung the

canisters back at them.

Scuffles with the police began, bottles were thrown at them, and three buses received minor damage. *Le Monde* reports: "According to the authorities (*préfecture*), four people, one a policeman, were slightly injured during the incidents." The *préfecture* said that it may press charges for "armed assembly" on those in custody, the bottles being legally defined as weapons.

Demonstrators were chanting: "French people react! Mr. Sarkozy, help us, help us." Some, as in previous protests, brandished placards with photographs of the French president. However, as is plain, the sympathies of the French state do not lie with those many distressed Tamil exiles who have lost loved ones, relatives and friends or have them trapped in the fighting. On the contrary, as it has throughout the civil war, French imperialism continues to show support for the Sri Lankan bourgeoisie, which it believes can best serve its commercial and geo-political interests.

The LTTE, representing the interests of the Tamil bourgeoisie, opposes any policy of ending the war by the uniting of the Sri Lankan working class, Tamil, Sinhala and Muslim on the basis of their class interests against the government of the Sri Lanka bourgeoisie. Even in the face of the hostility of French, British, German and American imperialism to their project of setting up a separate statelet, the LTTE continues to appeal to these forces. Their flaunting of portraits of Nicolas Sarkozy and other imperialist leaders only tends to isolate Tamil protestors from the working class of these countries.

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Sarkozy's attacks on Tamils on Monday are not only an act of solidarity with the Rajapakse government, but

also part of a general state crack-down on all workers attempting to resist escalating unemployment and the loss of rights as the world economic crisis deepens.

The hounding of immigrants, as a vulnerable section of the working class is a preparation for ever deeper assaults on the rights and living standards of the working class and the youth. Many of the 27,000 immigrants seeking residence rights whom the state targets for deportation each year are Tamils.

Even as the police were in action against Tamils in Paris, in the Calais area they were rounding up some 200 immigrants, mainly Afghans trying to reach Britain.



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