

# France's Socialist Party government launches mass expulsions of Roma

Antoine Lerougetel  
10 August 2012

The Socialist Party (PS) government of French president François Hollande is targeting France's ethnic Roma population with forcible dismantling of their encampments and mass deportations.

The Roma are European Union (EU) citizens, mostly from Romania or Bulgaria, but French law requires them to have a work permit and prove they have the means to support themselves if they stay for more than three months. About 15,000 Roma are believed to live in improvised housing encampments on the edges of major cities in France, including up to 4,000 in the Paris area.

Yesterday, 240 Roma were put on a flight from Lyon to Bucharest. Three camps in the Lyon area had been closed down since Sunday, with more than 200 Roma affected. Officials claimed that they went "voluntarily," but one pro-Roma activist said that "this is taking place after months of pressure on the encampments and evictions. These voluntary repatriations are disguised expulsions."

The two camps near Lyon were located in Vaulx-en-Velin, where 150 Roma were evacuated on Monday, and Villeurbanne, where 100 Roma were evicted Tuesday as well as 50 squatters. Reuters reported, "Since then, these families, not all of whom are Roma, are wandering through the streets and along the periphery of the Lyon conurbation, looking for another site, but the police is preventing them from settling."

On Wednesday, after the recent dismantling of encampments in the Paris suburbs, an eviction took place in the 19th *arrondissement* (city district).

On Thursday, two Roma camps near Lille on land belonging to the Lille Urban Community (LMCU) at Hellemmes and Villeneuve d'Ascq, were dismantled. The first, home to 150 to 200 people, was evacuated in the early morning.

PS first secretary Martine Aubry is president of the LMCU, which jointly owns the sites with the state. The LMCU engaged in legal action for the sites to be dismantled.

These policies expose the reactionary character of the PS government, which is continuing the anti-Roma policies of Hollande's predecessor, conservative president Nicolas Sarkozy, without missing a beat. Yann Lafolie, who heads the *Solidarité-Roms* association, told *Libération*: "This is a sign of the authorities to destroy the work of voluntary social organisations. Very many children will be sleeping on the streets tonight. Sarkozy did not evict us. The PS did."

Roseline Tiset of the Human Rights League (LDH) told AFP: "What's inconceivable for us is that people are thrown out without being told where they can go. We expected better after President Hollande's words."

Such comments principally reflect the illusions the LDH and similar "human rights" groups promoted in the PS during the French presidential election campaign. In fact, as the *World Socialist Web Site* reported, Hollande made clear that he would carry out brutal attacks on the Roma (see: "French Socialist Party presidential candidate calls for interning the Roma").

Interior Minister Manuel Valls said in a statement on Wednesday that court orders to remove illegal camps would be executed "with firmness". Unsanitary camps were unacceptable, he said, adding that they inconvenience the working-class areas where they were often set up.

On July 31, he told Europe1: "Prefects have a mission to dismantle Roma camps when there is a court ruling. Things are simple. Yes, when there is a court ruling the camps will be dismantled."

This is yet another attempt to pass off reactionary

attacks on democratic rights on the grounds that they are helping native-born Frenchmen of the popular classes. Such reactionary posturing, which aligns the PS with the policies and outlook of the neo-fascist National Front (FN), demonstrates the PS's deep hostility to socialism and the democratic rights of the working class.

The PS government plans place Roma in so-called integration villages, where the Roma would be forced to remain in ultra-cheap prefabricated housing, monitored by state employees and security forces. These are quite simply ghettos, one step removed from concentration camps.

Eric Ciotti, a deputy of Sarkozy's right-wing UMP (Union for a Popular Movement) party, now in opposition, congratulated Valls: "If he carries them out [the dismantling of Roma camps], I will support him."

These attacks on the Roma are proceeding with the complicity of France's petty-bourgeois "left" parties. The New Anti-Capitalist Party (NPA) has made no official statement on Valls's anti-Roma witch hunt, merely posting an August 4 communiqué by a group in the city of Grenoble noting the continuity between the policies of Sarkozy and Hollande.

Left Party national secretary Eric Coquerel called for "policies which take on in a global manner the problem of internal migrants, which Roma are. They must be able to live properly in this country."

The dishonesty of such a statement is brazen: the Left Party, like the NPA, bears responsibility for the PS government's policies, having called for an unconditional vote for PS president François Hollande in the recent elections. Throughout Sarkozy's term, they backed his racist legislation banning the burqa and similar anti-immigrant policies.

*The author also recommends:*

France's Socialist Party government plans to force Roma into ghettos

[3 August 2012]



To contact the WSWS and the  
Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](http://wsws.org/contact)**