

French Interior Minister Manuel Valls proposes mass deportation of Roma

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French Interior Minister Manuel Valls has once again turned on the Roma, demanding their expulsion to Eastern Europe. His comments, attacking the Roma ethnicity as a whole, illustrate the reactionary nature of the Socialist Party (PS), which is reacting to the unpopularity of its policies of austerity and war by fomenting racism and moving towards the positions of the neo-fascist National Front (FN).

On September 24, Manuel Valls stated: “The Roma should go back to Romania or Bulgaria and stay there.” The following day, he confirmed his words asserting: “I have no correction to make, my words only shock those who are ignorant of the issue.”

Valls’ comments, suggesting that he would support the forcible deportation of an entire ethnic group, show how far the decay of democracy has gone in France. Sections of the PS, obsessed with racial prejudices and dismayed at the rise of the FN in the opinion polls, have arranged for the deportation of Roma from several French towns, notably Marseille.

Viviane Reding, the European commissioner for justice, responded to Valls’ statements on radio France-Info: “We have European rules which have been signed by France, rules on the right to travel freely for three months. These people are not Roma, but individuals. It’s the responsibility of a judge to rule if they can be evicted if they’ve broken the laws of the state concerned.”

Reding said that she suspected the French government of electioneering prior to the March 2014 municipal elections, accusing it of raising the issue in order to divert attention from its unpopular policies.

She said: “If I’m not mistaken, elections are in the air in France. Whenever people don’t want to talk about important things such as the budget, debts, they yet again discover the Roma.”

Even though she drew attention to Valls’ reactionary views, no confidence can be placed in Reding or the European Union to guarantee democratic rights in Europe. The EU is systematically imposing cuts in the living standards of the workers in its different member countries. In this way, it is contributing to the crisis of capitalism and social oppression which underlie the European governments’ decision to encourage race hatred and neo-fascistic sentiments.

Reding in particular, has already criticised the deportation of Roma by the previous French government under President Nicolas Sarkozy, starting in 2010. After the European media had openly rejected this criticism, the EU gave the French state full rein to attack the Roma.

Valls has received the PS government’s support. Government spokesperson Najat Vallaud-Belkacem defended a policy “applied with firmness and humanity by Manuel Valls,” asserting that “repatriation in one of a range of solutions.”

Vallaud-Belkacem’s statement reflects the lying cynicism of the government, which applies the term “humanity” to describe a racist policy that entails expelling the Roma, destroying their encampments and constantly denouncing them in the media.

The humanitarian organisation Amnesty International contradicted Vallaud-Belkacem’s assertions about the government’s measures. According to the organisation, the Roma “continue to be the victims of forced evictions despite an August 2013 interministerial circular, and these expulsions are on the increase ... The situation is as damning, if not worse, as what we found in 2012.”

Roma persecution has deep objective roots in the world economic crisis and the exacerbation of political tensions in Europe. Workers are angry at the austerity

measures and the wars being carried out by the PS government: after over a year in power, François Hollande is the most unpopular president since the founding of France's Fifth Republic in 1958. The government is continuing to impose the reforms demanded by the financial aristocracy and is even trying to accelerate them.

The fact that the capitalist crisis, which started five years ago, is not boosting the official "left," such as the Left Front or the New Anti-Capitalist Party, goes to show the bankruptcy of these parties. They are politically dependent on the PS, which they supported by calling for a Hollande vote in the second round of the presidential elections in 2012 while admitting that he would carry out austerity politics.

Since then, they have worked to ensure that no independent movement of the working class against the PS would emerge. They are maintaining a politically criminal silence on the neo-fascist drift of the government which they helped to elect. This enables the far-right party to pose as the only opposition to the PS' reactionary agenda.

Faced with social anger which mainly benefits the FN, the PS foments racism to divide the workers, effectively appropriating part of the neo-fascist programme. This favours the development of the influence of the FN, which it legitimises.

The media attention given to Valls reflects the rightward movement of the whole of bourgeois politics in France for over a year, with the growing influence of the forces of law-and-order and far-right nationalism.

The role of the Minister of the Interior, in particular, has become ever greater since the presidency of Jacques Chirac ten years ago. Sarkozy's position as France's "top cop" facilitated his accession to the presidency in 2007.

During Sarkozy's presidency, this ministry was always given to his closest collaborators. Characters like the Internal Intelligence Chief Bernard Squarcini, who made no secret of his relations with Corsican mafia circles, played important roles in the Sarkozy administration.

Under Hollande, the Ministry of the Interior has been entrusted to Valls, who is one of the PS' more explicitly pro-law-and-order figures. Hollande's unpopularity is profiting Valls, whom the bourgeois press is at present tipping as a future presidential

contender.



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