

After Charlie Hebdo attack, France announces draconian anti-terror law

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After a cabinet meeting yesterday morning at the Elysée presidential palace, French Prime Minister Manuel Valls unveiled a draconian new anti-terror law.

Valls announced the proposals after intensive media discussions of a “French-style Patriot Act” and a two-day summit of European Union (EU) foreign ministers in Brussels on counterterrorism. The proposals are part of efforts by governments throughout Europe to exploit the *Charlie Hebdo* terrorist attacks to impose the type of police state measures carried out in the United States after the September 11 attacks.

Valls announced the creation of 2,680 new positions in French military and intelligence agencies to monitor the population and plans to monitor approximately 3,000 people. The program would cost €425 million (US\$492 million) over three years, rising to €735 million once personnel costs are included.

“Today, we must monitor nearly 1,300 people, Frenchmen or foreigners living in France, who are involved in terrorist networks in Syria or Iraq. This is a 130 percent increase in a year,” Valls said. “To this one must add 400 to 500 people involved in older networks or involved in other countries, as well as the main movers in the francophone cyber-jihadist sphere. Overall, roughly 3,000 people must be watched.”

As Valls spoke, thousands of police and military forces patrolled the streets of France, and police raids spread from France to Belgium, Britain, Germany and Greece.

Valls said that 122,000 police, military officials and gendarmes would be mobilized across France. He called the addition of new military and intelligence jobs “a massive effort, but necessary to ensure security.”

Valls made clear that one of the law’s main aims is to escalate mass state surveillance of the Internet and social media sites. “Terrorists often use the same social

networks as the general public. Our program for signaling illicit content has received 30,000 warnings since January 7; that is six times more than usual,” he said. He added that €60 million would be dedicated to “the prevention of radicalization.”

French domestic intelligence will also be authorized to use geolocation trackers on suspects’ cars and electronic devices and plant microphones in their homes. “The law will give services the ability to look at the conversations and documents of people we’re following,” Jean-Jacques Urvoas, a deputy of the ruling Socialist Party (PS), told the *Wall Street Journal*. “When we’re surveilling someone, we want to be able to penetrate directly into his computer.”

French officials will also set up a database of airline passengers by September 2015 and discuss at the European Parliament ways to share airline passengers’ personal data with other European Union countries.

Valls said that on this basis, “France will finally have a legal framework for the actions undertaken by its intelligence services.”

This statement is a backhanded admission that what has emerged over the last decade in France, as in much of Europe, is a regime in which intelligence agencies have assumed enormous powers without any legal foundation.

While the new measures are initially aimed at Europe’s Muslim population, these police state methods will be used against any opposition to the policies of the French ruling class, at home and abroad.

The aggressiveness of the ruling elite’s response to the attack on *Charlie Hebdo* reflects growing fears over the social tensions unleashed by years of austerity and war. The French government’s decision to abandon its opposition to the 2003 US invasion of Iraq and align itself on the US-led war drive in the Middle East has

brought France to the verge of civil war. Muslim youth are increasingly alienated not only by mass unemployment, official encouragement of anti-Muslim racism and clashes with police, but also by NATO wars supported by the entire French political establishment in former Muslim colonies of France such as Syria.

As it implements police state measures and plans military escalation abroad, the French ruling class is promoting anti-Muslim racism and seeking to legitimize the fascist National Front (FN) party of Marine Le Pen. Earlier this month, French President François Hollande invited Le Pen to the Elysée presidential palace.

In a speech on Tuesday preparing the launch of the anti-terror measures the next day, Valls warned of mass rioting in immigrant suburbs, as in 2005 and 2007. “The 2005 riots, who recalls them today? And yet the wounds are still open,” he said. He said that 10,000 cars had been burned and hundreds of police wounded in the fighting.

Amid escalating fear of riots under the far more economically, politically and militarily charged environment today, the French ruling class and military have made plans for large-scale military action inside France. This emerged particularly in a 2008 White Book on defense and interior security, according to research by journalist Hacène Belmessous for his book *Operation Suburbs: How the State is Preparing for Urban War in the Projects*. Belmessous cited Lieutenant-Colonel Didier Wioland, who said that plans had been made for the deployment of 10,000 troops for military operations within France: “On the request of political authorities, the army must be able to intervene when serious situations hit the national soil, and provide this level of forces, essentially land troops... This contingent of 10,000 men can currently be arranged on the national soil, ready to intervene in large-scale events.”

The number of troops deployed in the streets of France after the *Charlie Hebdo* attacks, coincidentally or otherwise, was 10,000.

The basic social constituency for democratic rights is the working class. The more privileged sections of the middle class, linked to the Socialist Party and the pseudo-left, are hailing Valls’ measures.

In a violently reactionary comment in the Socialist Party-linked *L’Obs* magazine, Jean Daniel described

Islam as a “law and order” question, declaring: “Yes, we are at war, and moreover it is a religious war.” He added, “We colonized much of the Islamic world. We showed them that they were inferior on all levels, except perhaps on the issue of prayer. When we adopted them, after having humiliated them first, they felt obliged to come, but humbled. Times have changed.”

Such comments, which effectively provide justifications for race war and military rule, reflect the bankruptcy of the capitalist elite in Europe.



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