

After Paris attacks, French government steps up police state measures

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16 November 2015

Though the investigation into Friday's terrorist attack in Paris has hardly begun, France's Socialist Party (PS) government is claiming draconian police powers, planning to extend the current state of emergency for three months or more and intensify wars in the Middle East.

Yesterday, during his meeting with MPs at the Elysée Presidential palace, Hollande asked both the National Assembly and the Senate to modify the 1955 state of emergency law. He declared that he wanted to extend the state of emergency for three months and was prepared to extend it further. He said he "would ask the legal commissions of the two assemblies to modify the 1955 law, which governs the state of emergency, to adapt its applicability and duration to the post-attack situation."

A bill to that effect is reportedly under preparation and is due to be presented to the Council of Ministers on Wednesday.

The entire political establishment is exploiting the terror attack to impose authoritarian forms of rule that have been under preparation for a considerable time, trampling basic democratic rights. This goes hand in hand with stepping up major wars in Africa and the Middle East supposedly to fight against terrorism.

The call for extending the state of emergency sets a precedent for sweeping attacks on fundamental democratic rights of the whole population. The state of emergency allows French authorities to impose curfews, carry out arbitrary searches of private homes at any time, censor the press, impose military tribunals, order the house arrest of individuals without trial, close public places, and collect private weapons.

Under the pretext of "national unity," Hollande yesterday met with the leaders of the neo-fascist National Front (FN), the right-wing The Republicans

(LR), the centre-right Democratic Movement (MoDem), and the PS-linked Left Front. All these forces expressed total support for the state of emergency and Hollande's wider agenda of wars and deep attacks on democratic rights.

"We need appropriate responses, a shift in our foreign policy, and a drastic modification of our internal security policies," said conservative ex-President Nicolas Sarkozy (LR).

The political content of the drastic modifications being planned for France's internal regime was highlighted by Hollande's decision to again extend an official invitation to the Elysée to FN leader Le Pen. After meeting with Hollande, Marine Le Pen called for "national unity" and "firm decisions."

Backing the three-month extension of the state of emergency, she said, "we are in principle ... in agreement." As the social crisis deepens in many of France's suburbs, many of which have over 21 percent unemployment, Le Pen requested that the state of emergency "be used to go disarm the suburbs, carry out searches, look for weapons that were already everywhere under Nicolas Sarkozy."

Amid broad disenchantment with all of France's political parties, growing opposition to austerity and war, and soaring unemployment, the ruling class has nothing to offer apart from shifting policies further to the right, intensifying attacks on social and democratic rights.

Le Pen's neo-fascistic rantings are echoed by the openly authoritarian proposals advanced by the established parties of government.

LR General Secretary Laurent Wauquiez said that "the 4,000 people living on French soil who have intelligence files due to their terrorist connections should be placed in specifically designated anti-terrorist

internment camps.”

The proposal to imprison large numbers of people in internment camps, based only on the intelligence services’ say-so that they have some link to terrorism, amounts to a blank check for dictatorship.

On Saturday, Prime Minister Manuel Valls told TF1 television that “we will act, we will strike, we will strike this enemy to destroy it. ... We must annihilate the enemies of the Republic, kick out all of these radical imams, as we are already doing, strip those who besmirch the French spirit of their nationality.”

Friday’s tragedy is the horrific result of the imperialist wars throughout the Middle East and Africa. While cynically claiming to fight terrorism, the NATO powers have used the same reactionary Islamist forces who carried out the Paris attacks as proxies in wars for regime change in Libya and Syria. These Islamist forces have been financed and armed by Western intelligence agencies and their Persian Gulf allies as they stoked civil wars and committed atrocities.

Initial investigations suggest that the terrorists were well known to Western intelligence—as were previous gunmen, such as Amedy Coulibaly and the Kouachi brothers, involved in January attacks against *Charlie Hebdo* and the Hyper Cacher.

The Paris attacks raise serious questions, however, as to how was it possible for suspects, known to the intelligence services for years, to travel, obtain weapons, and prepare a well-planned assault on Friday—apparently totally escaping the vigilance of French, European and US intelligence. Among seven gunmen involved in the Friday’s attack, three men have been identified as French nationals, at least one of whom was known to intelligence services.

The Bataclan theater suicide bomber was 30-year-old Frenchman Ismaël Omar Mostefaï, one of three men who came in a black Polo and attacked the theatre. Convicted of petty crimes between 2004 and 2010, he had been followed by French intelligence since 2010 due to his alleged Islamist radicalization. In 2010, he was flagged with an “S” file, used by law enforcement for individuals considered to be serious threats to national security. He reportedly travelled to Syria between 2013 and 2014.

The two others lived in Belgium. Thirty-one-year-old Ibrahim Abdeslam was identified by prosecutors as the man who rented a Seat vehicle used in the attacks and

carried out the suicide attack at the Comptoir Voltaire café. The other attacker was named as Bilal Hadfi, who is believed to have fought for ISIS in Syria.

French and Belgian police conducted raids over the weekend, arresting dozens of people, including three Abdeslam brothers reportedly involved in the attacks. There is an international arrest warrant out for 26-year-old Salah Abdeslam, who is thought to have rented the black Volkswagen Polo used by the group that attacked the Bataclan theater.

Belgian authorities said they arrested seven suspects allegedly linked to the Paris attacks. Five were arrested in a raid in the Molenbeek-Saint-Jean district of Brussels, where two of the French suicide bombers lived. Mehdi Nemmouche, who killed four in an attack on Belgium’s Jewish museum last year, also lived in the area.

Afterwards, Belgian authorities called for “repression” in the area. Prime Minister Charles Michel said, “I see it is almost always related to Molenbeek. There is a huge problem. ... In recent months, many initiatives have already been taken in the fight against radicalisation, but we also need more repression. We will work intensively with the local authorities.”



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