Mass police raids in French state of emergency find no terror networks

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A little more than a month has passed since France's Socialist Party (PS) government imposed a state of emergency allowing the police and intelligence services to direct raids and put people under permanent house arrest, effectively bypassing the judicial branch.

The three-month state of emergency, which is to be made permanent by an amendment of the French constitution in the coming weeks, gives a glimpse of the police state the ruling class aims to put in place. The draft constitutional amendment is to be presented to the cabinet today.

Based on mass data collection by the intelligence services, police are mounting vast numbers of operations on a scale unseen in metropolitan France since the Vichy regime.

Over the last month, according to the Interior Ministry, 2,700 police raids and searches have been carried out. This includes 120 searches during the first ten days and an average of forty a day into December. Since November 13, 360 orders for house arrest were signed by the Interior Minister, Bernard Cazeneuve.

Unlimited powers have been given to regional authorities, police and intelligence services supposedly to fight terrorism. This is only the official pretext, however. Of the 2,700 search and siezures carried out, only two preliminary investigations have been opened by the anti-terrorist section of judges in Paris.

This underscores that either the police are covering for the terrorist networks that that exist in France, which French imperialism uses as proxies in the war in Syria, or there is in fact virtually no terrorist infrastructure to be found in France. In either case, the state of emergency is serving as a pretext to impose draconian measures not upon terror networks, but on the French population.

To justify the large-scale house arrests, Prime Minister Manuel Valls declared, "there have been, yes, 354 house arrests—up to December 11—because it's also a way to isolate individuals that may be dangerous for the State, for the public interest and public order."

On the sidelines of the global COP21 climate conference in Paris and following the ban on demonstrations imposed by the state of emergency, seven environmental activists were placed under house arrest until December 12 because of "the seriousness of the threat that [they] represent to the public order." They had been planning to participate in demonstrations against the COP21 summit that the PS had banned.

These individuals considered "dangerous for the State" are not young jihadists who have decided to fight the Syrian regime on behalf of the imperialist powers by joining the Islamic State (IS) or Al Qaeda. Such individuals, as emerged after the November 13 attacks, travel all over Europe with the knowledge of intelligence agencies, who make use of them in the war in Syria.

As Valls' statements make clear, the state of emergency targets social opposition to PS policies.

The November 13 attacks enabled the French government to finalize the implementation of a police state with a now-scheduled constitutional amendment to impose a permanent state of emergency. The aim is to destroy basic democratic rights in order to prepare for a confrontation with popular opposition, particularly in the working class.

Cases revealed by the press give an idea of the large-scale and far-reaching character of the police raids and the powers that the police are claiming.

Mickaël L, a subcontractor in the industrial cleaning sector, was suspected of belonging to "a terrorist and Salafist network." On November 15, he received a

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phone call from a friend whose house had just been searched by a Police SWAT team. His friend said police were looking for him. According Mickaël, the friend "had been involved in the Mohamed Merah affair (a lone Islamist terrorist killed in Toulouse in March 2012)." Mickaël then went to the Toulouse police station and was told immediately that he was under house arrest.

The day following the notification of his house arrest, he went to the police station in Blagnac. He showed a huge tattoo on his right arm depicting a hand holding a rosary to police. "I am a practicing Catholic. The tattoo, I've had it for about four months. I even went to Lourdes with my kids three weeks ago. I love visiting churches and I go there often with the kids to show them." Finally he was officially interrogated on November 24 where he spent only half an hour at the police station.

Leaving the police station in the company of a journalist from *Le Monde* who interviewed him on December 4, he met a police officer who recognized him and said: "It's a mess between services. The Directorate General of Internal Security (DGSI) sends us files like they're throwing them in the trash. I can understand your distress." *La Voix du Nord* reports a story of a young man, Sophiane, whose father aged 67 was "tackled to the ground," on November 17, at Boulogne-sur-Mer (Pas-de-Calais) "after discovering that police officers broke down the door of his apartment, in the absence of any occupants." He was then placed in custody. The police searched the house from top to bottom—all because his son was suspected of taking photos the day before at the police headquarters in Arras where he had been for an administrative formality.

Within the ruling class, some expressed reservations about the effectiveness of police searches and house arrests, fearing the emergence of opposition in public opinion against the state of emergency.

"Often spectacular facts that have been relayed publicly do not appear in the ministries' responses. I think especially of the failure to warn when raiding homes, the brutal way of breaking in and the aggressive handling of occupants who may be minors. What should we conclude? Do we need to go further in our investigation?", said Jean-Jacques Urvoas, PS deputy and intelligence specialist.

He noted there was a risk of "the routinization of certain expeditive measures which cut corners in ordinary law and raise blatant issues about how of the state of emergency is being used".

The fact that the establishment of a police state is the work of the Socialist Party highlights the political bankruptcy of the pseudo-left organizations that supported Hollande in the second round of the presidential elections in an attempt to make workers believe that the PS was more democratic and that it would be easier to pressure it for left-wing policies. Now, the bourgeoisie bases itself directly on the PS and the police to attack fundamental democratic rights.

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