

Prime Minister Valls pledges permanent state of emergency in France

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26 January 2016

On Friday, French Prime Minister Manuel Valls reaffirmed initial Socialist Party (PS) statements after the November 13 terror attacks in Paris carried out by the Islamist State (IS, or Daesh), that the current state of emergency in France must be made permanent.

In an interview with the BBC while attending the economic summit in Davos, Switzerland, Valls proclaimed that France is waging all-out war with IS. “As long as the threat is there, we must use all available means,” he said, adding that the state of emergency must stay in place “until we can get rid of Daesh”.

He continued, “In Africa, in the Middle East, in Asia we must eradicate, eliminate Daesh, it is a total and global war that we face with terrorism. ... We will have to live for decades or for many years with this menace or this threat and that’s why it’s a war. There are many generations that will have to live with this and the crisis will have to be managed in north Africa and the Middle East.”

The implications of Valls’ statements are staggering. Like Egypt, now ruled as a military dictatorship by General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, a personal friend of President François Hollande, France is to be run under a permanent state of emergency lasting generations, perhaps forever. According to Valls’ statement, the French people have effectively lost fundamental social and democratic rights guaranteed to them by the French Constitution.

As if in a slow-motion coup d’état, the ruling elite is moving to transform political life in France, creating an authoritarian regime. Under the state of emergency, public protests are banned, there is no guarantee of freedom of the press or freedom of assembly, and no judicial oversight of arbitrary searches and seizures carried out by police. Already, the government banned protests against the COP21 ecological summit in Paris

after the November 13 attacks and put the organizers under house arrest.

Police can enter anyone’s house, search without warrants, and arrest people on mere suspicion that they are a threat to public order. The state has sentenced Goodyear workers to prison for striking and struggling to defend their jobs, even after Goodyear itself dropped all charges against them.

The arguments provided by Valls to justify the indefinite suspension of democratic rights are a pack of lies. IS (Daesh) is not an unstoppable foe that poses an existential threat to the French Republic and to the French people, leaving the French state no choice but to suspend democratic rights in order to safeguard the very survival of the French people.

IS is, in fact, a political asset of the ruling class of France and of all the major NATO countries. It is a militia operating in Iraq and Syria, financed and backed by key French allies in the Middle East, such as Saudi Arabia and Turkey, as part of the regime change operation to topple Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

This organisation emerged from wars launched under Hollande’s predecessor, Nicolas Sarkozy, who played a central role in pressing for a war, ultimately led by all the NATO powers, against Libya. The NATO powers, led by the United States, France and Britain, encouraged Islamist fighters to come to Libya to act as proxy ground forces whilst they provided aerial bombardments. Many of these Islamist forces were then dispatched from Libya to Syria, as the spearhead of the NATO war for regime in Syria.

Valls’ claim that France and its allies are engaged in total, global war with IS does not hold water. Rather, IS and the reactionary attacks it has carried out in France are being invoked as a pretext to push through vast attacks.

As late as last year, Hollande insisted that France would only attack IS in Iraq—where Paris had joined Washington in bombing IS in 2013 to prevent IS from toppling the US puppet regime in Baghdad—so as to avoid weakening opposition to Assad by attacking IS in Syria.

In his February 5, 2015 press conference after the *Charlie Hebdo* attacks, Hollande explained that France would not bomb IS forces in Syria, but only Iraq. He said, “It is in Iraq that we direct our efforts. Why? Because it is in Iraq that there is a state, sovereignty, and army that can struggle against IS and ensure the reconquest of lost territory.”

That is, Hollande was willing to shield and rely upon IS as a tool of various twists and turns of French and NATO policy against Assad. When IS emerges as a domestic policy issue, however, the PS suddenly insists France is engaged in an all-out war on IS in which no democratic right can be allowed to stand in the way of the assertion of state power.

The claim that the assault on democratic rights is primarily a response to the IS’ terror attacks is a political fraud. This assault is the response of the French ruling class to the worsening class and geo-strategic contradictions of international capitalism, preparing above all for war against the working class.

As a presidential candidate, Hollande said his enemy was “finance”, but once in power, he has pushed for austerity and war on every front. While collaborating with German Chancellor Angela Merkel to impose deeper austerity on the Greek people, he launched wars across Africa and the Middle East and worked closely with the Obama administration to threaten Russia. Social inequality is reaching explosive levels, and Hollande had to admit last year that France now found itself on the brink of “total war” with Russia.

Besides the danger of a major international war waged with nuclear weapons, Hollande fears social anger developing in the working class under conditions where the PS and its political and trade union satellites are thoroughly discredited. The response of the PS has been to dub Hollande a “war president” and a conscious turn towards military and authoritarian forms of rule within France.

During the French invasion of Mali in 2013, French presidential advisors at the Elysée told *Le Point* that they were hoping for a “Falklands effect.” While the

war was presented to the public as part of a struggle against Islamist terrorism, the PS’ main concern was to shift official public opinion far to the right, so as to be able to impose a drastic austerity program.

Pointing to the similarities between the Falkland Island (Malvinas) war and French imperialism’s wars today, *Le Point* journalist Anna Cabana wrote: “When the Argentine troops landed on the Falklands in 1982, Margaret Thatcher decided to reply militarily. The Iron Lady [Margaret Thatcher], deeply unpopular at the time due to her drastic free-market reform policies, embarked Britain on a military adventure that ensured her re-election in 1983.”

The PS’ incendiary and politically criminal policy of launching wars of aggression in an attempt to anti-democratically impose anti-working class policies at home has failed, however. The looting of much of Africa and the Middle East did not make PS austerity any more popular, and social and international tensions have only grown since 2013.

Unable to win over the masses of working people, the French ruling class is preparing to stake everything on a ruthless attempt to repress them.



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