

French Socialist Party whips up law-and-order hysteria after Abdeslam arrest

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While the French political establishment applauded the arrest on Friday of Salah Abdeslam, a suspect in the November 13 terror attack in Paris, the ruling Socialist Party (PS) is whipping up law-and-order hysteria and demanding more attacks on democratic rights.

On Saturday, President François Hollande convened a meeting with Prime Minister Manuel Valls, Interior Minister Bernard Cazeneuve (Interior), Jean-Yves Le Drian (Defence), Jean-Jacques Urvoas (Justice), Jean-Marc Ayrault (Foreign Affairs) and top military and intelligence officials. Sources in Hollande's entourage said, "The objective, after the arrest of Abdeslam and several of his accomplices, is to get an overview of the operations carried out in the struggle against terror networks in France and in Europe."

French Prime Minister Manuel Valls declared, "Of course, we are proud of this arrest ... it's an important step in the struggle against terrorism, but the threat remains very high, as high, or even, perhaps, higher than before the November 13 attacks." He continued, "Other networks, other cells, other individuals, in France and in Europe, are organizing to prepare new attacks. We must be mobilized, on the national and European level, in international cooperation against these cells, against this organization, against the Islamic State, against Al Qaeda."

A crying contradiction underlies the position of the French government: the same Islamist forces it cites as a threat in France are those it relies upon in the NATO powers' bloody Middle East wars. Viewed from this standpoint, Valls' statement amounts to an admission that the PS' foreign policy has not only devastated Syria, but laid the basis for a series of terror attacks in France itself that is for all practical purposes endless.

In Libya, France and the NATO powers armed and financed Al-Qaeda-linked Islamist forces to oust the Gaddafi regime in 2011, killing tens of thousands of people and devastating the country. After the Libyan war,

France, the United States and their regional allies including Saudi Arabia and Turkey began stoking a civil war in Syria to topple President Bashar al-Assad's regime. As in Libya, the imperialist powers cultivated Islamist terrorist groups, which they armed, financed and trained to fight Assad.

In a 2014 interview with *Le Monde*, President François Hollande proudly said that France had directly supplied arms to the rebels against Assad. He said, "We must not relax the support that we have granted to the rebels, who are the only ones participating [in the war] with democratic intentions."

This is a cynical fraud. The ruling elite and the media were either silent or accused Assad as their proxy forces carried out hundreds of suicide bombings in Syria, killing thousands, that inflamed a war that has killed nearly half a million and forced ten million people to flee their homes.

Particularly in the early stages of the war, as the NATO-backed Islamist opposition sought to sow terror and destabilize the regime, it staged repeated mass terror bombings. These include the December 2011 Damascus bombing, killing 44 people and injuring 166, and the May 2012 Damascus attack that killed 55 and injured 400. In February 2013, a series of bombings in the capital Damascus killed more than 80 and injured at least 250 others.

In the November 13 terror attacks in Paris, the methods visited by Islamist forces against the population of Syria, with the blessings of NATO, were used in France.

The hypocrisy of the European ruling class, who viewed Islamist terrorist forces as a legitimate tool of their foreign policy, while insisting that they were waging a "war on terror," is sickening. Final responsibility for the November 13 attack and Charlie Hebdo attack in Paris lies with the reactionary foreign policy of imperialism.

While Paris' claim that it is fighting terrorism is a threadbare lie, there is no question that the pretext of the

“war on terror” is serving to pave the way for police-state forms of rule, with the declaration of a draconian state of emergency after the November 13 attacks. This also saw the deployment of 10,000 armed forces under the so called “Sentinelle” operation across France.

Supposedly to fight terrorism, the government is planning to post military forces throughout France indefinitely. Last week, Defense Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian presented a report proposing stepped-up use of armed forces on French national territory. Under the mission statement outlined in the report, the military, working with departmental prefects (police chiefs), will have increasing freedom of action under the Sentinelle plan.

The aim of these deployments is not to wage an all-out struggle against Islamist terrorism, which is in fact a key tool of the foreign policy of French imperialism’s NATO and Persian Gulf allies. Rather, it aims to stabilize the unpopular PS government and shift the political atmosphere far to the right, allowing it to ram through even more reactionary attacks on the working class at home.

The additional benefits that accrue to the PS from whipping up police hysteria are clear. Abdeslam’s arrest comes amid rising opposition among youth and workers to the PS’ pro-business Labor Code reform, designed to dismantle remaining protections which are offered to the working class and allow for direct collaboration between the bosses and the trade unions to slash jobs and working conditions. It is bitterly unpopular.

Faced with rising popular opposition, the PS will seek to use this arrest as much as possible to reinforce the prestige of the military and intelligence agencies, to whip up the worship of the police, in order to discredit the protests and ram through basic attacks on workers’ rights.



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