

With permanent state of emergency, Macron plans authoritarian rule in France

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After the government of newly-elected President Emmanuel Macron announced last week its intention to extend the state of emergency until November, press reports yesterday confirmed that Macron intends to pass a law making the state of emergency permanent. This would signify the indefinite suspension of basic democratic rights in France, the effective ending of any oversight of police by the courts, and an attempt by the ruling class to turn France into a dictatorship.

A law “to reinforce the struggle against terrorism and interior security” was approved in the Defense Council on Wednesday. A copy was provided to *Le Monde*, which reported its contents yesterday: “According to the bill, which *Le Monde* could access, the most severe measures of the state of emergency created in 1955 during the Algerian war—notably imposition of indefinite house arrest, the closing off of public areas, bans on public protests, and arbitrary searches and seizures during day and night time—will be inscribed in law with only marginal modifications.”

The judicial branch would be reduced to impotence, and the police and intelligence services given unchecked powers, *Le Monde* explained: “All these measures would be taken at the initiative of the Interior Ministry and the police prefects, without the intervention of a judge.”

Another measure, titled “surveillance and other individual obligations,” lays out punishments that can be applied to “anyone who gives serious reasons to think that his behavior constitutes a threat of particular gravity to security and public order.” It would also allow the interior ministry, which reportedly wrote the law, to force people to wear electronic tagging devices. Remarkably, this measure was reintroduced into the law even after it was ruled unconstitutional following its application under the state of emergency in

December 2015.

Macron’s attempt to make permanent the provisions of the state of emergency is an illegitimate measure, based on political lies. It aims to shred basic democratic rights inscribed in the French constitution, including the right to strike and protest, as a result of the bitter experiences of the working class with fascist dictatorships in the 20th century. Without those rights, state-armed vast police powers can rapidly evolve into a criminal regime employing police terror against the working masses.

Until now, the state of emergency was imposed supposedly as a temporary measure, but constantly renewed, after the 13 November 2015 terror attacks in Paris. The media and the previous Socialist Party (PS) government justified it based on the claim that it was the only way to help the police deal with the existential threat of attacks by Islamist terror networks active in France. This claim is a reactionary lie.

These terror networks are closely monitored by France’s vast intelligence services and used as tools of the foreign policy of France and the other NATO powers. This is why all the organizers of major terrorist attacks in France were known, without exception, to the intelligence services—including most prominently the Kouachi brothers who led the *Charlie Hebdo* attack and Abdelhamid Abaaoud, who led the 13 November 2015 attacks. They were allowed to travel freely and prepare their attacks, as these networks are intelligence assets operating under state protection.

Though thousands of people are active in France and across Europe in the Islamist networks recruiting fighters for the Syrian war, only a handful were detained on terror charges under the state of emergency. While they continued to operate and receive NATO armament and assistance in Syria, they

were used as an excuse to push through drastic attacks on democratic rights that would previously have been unthinkable.

Yesterday, Macron's measure met with bitter denunciations from legal experts and organizations representing the judiciary branch. "This is an unacceptable passage of the state of emergency into the law of the land," Professor Paul Cassia told AFP. He warned that punishments "posing a particular threat to civil liberties" could be imposed "based on suspicion alone."

Both of France's principal magistrates' unions condemned the bill. The Trade Union of Magistrates (USM) called it "scandalous" and the Magistrates Union (SM) said it is a "juridical monster."

Macron's moves to build a dictatorship in France must be taken as a warning by workers. Macron knows his plans for deep social austerity, a costly military build-up coordinated with Berlin, and the return to the draft are deeply unpopular and will rapidly face mass opposition. His target is not Islamist terrorists, but the working class, who face a confrontation with the Macron government with revolutionary implications.

Significantly, the day before the Macron government approved the bill for a permanent state of emergency, Prime Minister Edouard Philippe unveiled the explosive measures it intends to use to deregulate French labor law. These measures are to be imposed by the executive by decree, without a vote in either house of parliament, after an enabling act is voted handing over absolute power on social spending to the president.

This essentially dictatorial set-up is squarely aimed at the working class. In the name of boosting French corporate competitiveness, it aims to scrap the existing obstacles on corporations' ability to hire and fire. Philippe called the cuts "indispensable and urgent." The planned cuts also reportedly include new attacks on pensions and unemployment insurance.

By suppressing penalties for improper job termination, and allowing companies and trade unions to negotiate contracts violating industry-level agreements and the national Labor Code, the bill reintroduces all the measures removed from the labor law last year amid mass protests. Even without these measures, the law was opposed by 70 percent of the population. Now Macron intends to trample public

opinion, forcibly reintroducing all the most unpopular measures and using them to attack social rights obtained in the 20th century by generations of struggle.

The government also plans to limit opposition from the trade unions by buying them off, resolving the problem of their illegal financing by the state and the employers by making this financing legal. Macron plans to install a so-called "union cheque," a sum of money provided by the company to the workers, but that the workers are required to hand over to a trade union of their choice. While the money nominally transits through the hands of the workers, it comes not from the working class, but from corporate management, which intends to dictate the policy of the unions.

These policies are a political indictment of the policies of Jean-Luc Mélenchon, the leader of the Unsubmissive France (UF) movement. Yesterday, he criticized the measures as a "social coup d'état" and endorsed the claim that the law signified a "return to 19th century conditions" for working people. He added that his movement was "alone in presenting a humanist and Republican opposition" to Macron.

In fact, the Macron government's plans expose Mélenchon's repeated attempts to stimulate illusions in Macron. After offering to serve as Macron's prime minister in order to offer Macron "the trained hand of a wise man who knows where the happiness of the people lies," he also said he would meet with Macron government ministers to discuss their legislation. With these demagogic claims, Mélenchon offered political support to Macron as he prepared the framework for a capitalist dictatorship in France.



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