

French neo-fascists who killed Clément Méric receive short jail terms

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On Friday, five years after the murder of left-wing student Clément Méric and after a 10-day trial, the three neo-fascist thugs who killed him were condemned to comparatively brief jail terms. During the trial, the court, which refused to recognize the overtly political character of the murder, obscured the main issues that it raised.

The sentences demanded by the attorney general were already minimal, for a political killing. He asked for 12 years of criminal imprisonment for Esteban Morillo, who admitted to punching Méric twice in the face; 7 years in jail for Samuel Dufour, who had worn combat rings on his fists “intended as weapons”; and 4 years in prison with 2 years’ parole for Alexandre Eyraud, who faced charges of “voluntary violence.”

After less than 10 hours’ deliberation, the court decided on 11 years for Morillo and 7 years for Dufour. Eyraud, who was also present during the assault on Méric, was acquitted. Thirty military police were posted in front of the courtroom to prevent clashes as the verdict was announced.

To justify the sentences he was requesting, the attorney general stressed the collective character of the action: “The group was the motive force of the action. There was among the accused, who professed their love for violence and hatred, a surge of adrenaline, of ill-begotten pride.” He added that “Rather than passing the victims by,” the skinheads suddenly lunged “in front of their adversaries. One, two, three, four...seven seconds, that was all the time it took for the blows to be exchanged,” he said, calling it “inexcusable savagery.”

Witnesses insisted that Esteban Morillo was wearing brass knuckles, and intercepted SMS text messages from Samuel Dufour showed that the neo-fascist thugs indeed boasted of being armed with them. But the court ignored this. Despite the existence of a video of

Méric’s murder, it took the police and the courts five years to launch the trial of his killers.

During the 10 days of the trial, the court only sought to determine who had dealt the fatal blow to Méric and whether the killer or killers were armed. The trial did not seriously investigate the political motivations of the three neo-Nazis who were members of the Revolutionary Nationalist Youth (JNR), the security detachment of the neo-fascist group Third Way.

Esteban Morillo’s lawyer immediately announced that he would appeal the verdict: “The court brought down heavy sentences. We are in total disagreement with this verdict. This trial was the first round. There will be a second.”

The cover-up of far-right crimes by the state and the courts over the last five years and the minor sentences given to the three accused neo-fascists ensure that this is not the last violent crime the fascists will attempt. Indeed, by demonstrating its forbearance and sympathy even before the appeals process starts, the police and the courts are encouraging the neo-fascists and setting the stage for other Méric affairs.



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