

Police raid on Mélenchon: The state attacks the Unsubmissive France party

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Yesterday's police raids on Jean-Luc Mélenchon's home and the headquarters of his Unsubmissive France (LFI) party in Paris are a major attack on democratic rights. It is a political operation launched on false pretences against an organization that received the votes of 20 percent of French voters in the 2017 presidential elections. If the first target is Mélenchon, fundamentally its target is rising opposition in the working class to President Emmanuel Macron's government.

Around 100 police, according to LFI estimates, woke up Mélenchon and searched his apartment and those of his aides, and collected all the data on the computers in the headquarters of LFI and of the Left Party (PG), an allied political party founded by Mélenchon in 2009.

Mélenchon filmed a video of his apartment occupied by police and calling on his supporters to protest outside LFI headquarters as it was raided. "I look funny because since 7 a.m. I have been the target of a police raid at my home, at the headquarters of the PG and of LFI. ... My entire place is filled with people: please go and tell everyone this is a political act, an act of political aggression."

Prosecutors reportedly cited two cases to justify the raid: last year's allegations that Mélenchon paid LFI staff improperly using funds provided for aides to LFI Members of the European Parliament (MEPs), and allegations of corruption in LFI's campaign finances.

These dubious accusations do not justify the police raid launched on LFI. The first came last year from neo-fascist MEP Sophie Montel, who explained after making it that it was simply "me sticking my tongue out" as revenge for state allegations of corruption in the National Front's finances. At the time, Mélenchon reacted by threatening to sue on defamation charges, and the story rapidly faded from public attention.

The second comes from various sources, including the Anticor association, charging LFI with having overpaid services furnished by associates of Mélenchon. Some of these charges, such as those targeting the Médiascop company held by Sophia Chirikou, the head of Mélenchon's public relations in the presidential elections, have already been thrown out. Mélenchon's campaign finances have in the meantime been approved by state authorities.

The *Parti de l'égalité socialiste* (PES) has documented its political differences with the anti-Marxist and anti-Trotskyist populism of Jean-Luc Mélenchon, a former Socialist Party government minister. But this type of police operation targeting LFI is an attack on democratic rights that threatens everyone, and the PES defends LFI against an assault prepared through de facto collaboration between the police, the far right, and the Macron government.

A political decision was taken to use these allegations as a pretext to carry out searches and seizures at the headquarters of the organization that received the most left-wing votes in 2017. The campaign of Macron and his Republic on the March (LRM) party faces similar accusations, which are now common in French elections, but it naturally has not faced similar police raids.

Above all, even if the courts were legitimately investigating corruption allegations, it would not justify collecting all the electronic data of an organization with approximately 240,000 sympathizers—the overwhelming majority of whom have no connection to these cases. The most serious questions are posed. What data have the security forces collected on LFI sympathizers and voters? And what do they plan to do with the masses of files they have harvested?

These questions have particular urgency, amid the

rapid drive to police state rule and the repudiation by the ruling class of all the social and democratic rights won by the European working class in the 20th century, after the Russian revolution and the defeat of fascism. After a decade of deep capitalist crisis since the 2008 Wall Street crash, the bourgeoisie is taking ever more violent measures targeting social opposition.

Macron, widely despised as the “president of the rich,” is seen with contempt in the working class. His attack on rail workers’ and government workers’ wages and conditions, and his plans for historic cuts to pensions, health care and unemployment insurance provoke deep opposition among workers that terrifies the political establishment. It reacts by building a police state to repress opposition to the policy of enriching the financial aristocracy and devoting hundreds of billions of euros to the army—policies being carried out across Europe.

Between 2015 and 2017, France lived under a state of emergency that suspended democratic rights and massively increased police powers to launch raids and impose house arrest without charges. The state of emergency was used as a pretext to launch violent police attacks on mass demonstrations against the Socialist Party’s (PS) draconian, anti-worker labour law.

The unpopularity of Macron, who took two weeks to find ministers to work with him, so he could name his new government after a spate of ministerial resignations, is part of a crisis of rule and a collapse of European democracy. In Italy, a neo-fascist government is threatening mass deportations of refugees. And top German officials, including Interior Minister Horst Seehofer, have come out in support of neo-Nazi riots in Chemnitz, where rioters attacked Jewish businesses.

The accelerating collapse of European democracy vindicates the PES’ criticisms of Mélenchon. Having declared the death of the left and of socialism in his book, *The Era of the People*, Mélenchon refused to give any line during the second round of the French presidential elections between Macron and neo-fascist candidate Marine Le Pen—ignoring the PES’ call for an active boycott of the elections and capitulating to the claims that Macron was the democratic alternative to Le Pen.

This year, Mélenchon supported the policy of the trade unions who negotiated the privatization of the

National Railways (SNCF) and the attacks on railworkers and invited right-wing politicians to discuss war and military issues at the LFI summer school. At the time, Mélenchon said, “When it is a matter of protecting the state and Republican norms, we come together with the right and I’m not afraid to say it.”

Mélenchon is now faced with the poisoned fruit of the illusions he sowed, and the right-wing forces he cultivated. Yesterday, at the National Assembly, he was reduced to asking whether France was still a democratic regime, amid the jeers of conservative and LRM deputies.

The decisive question is to unify and mobilize the working class in an international and revolutionary movement in the defence of democratic and social rights, and opposing war and the militarization of society. This means undertaking a struggle for socialism, making a ruthless break with the nationalism and the ties to the right wing and to social democracy promoted by Mélenchon. In the face of the dangers revealed by the attack on LFI, this entails defending the rights of Mélenchon, and of his movement, against the police state.



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