

High school students and ambulance drivers join ‘Yellow Vest’ protests in France

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With a fourth consecutive Saturday of mass demonstrations against French President Emmanuel Macron’s regressive taxes planned this weekend, tens of thousands of high school students throughout France have staged demonstrations at their school buildings.

Students staged demonstrations at 200 schools across the country on Monday, up from 50 on Friday. They expressed their solidarity with the ‘Yellow Vest’ protesters opposing president Emmanuel Macron, their opposition to Macron’s pro-corporate restructuring of university admissions, his mass layoffs of teachers, and his plans to reimpose the military draft.

The same day, dozens of ambulance drivers protesting changes to their working conditions blocked a bridge leading to the National Assembly. Statements are circulating on Facebook indicating that petrol refinery workers will strike today in support of the protests.

Protesters wearing yellow vests have staged demonstrations not only in France, but in Belgium and Bulgaria, where they have set up blockades of major roads, as well as the Netherlands. Opposition to Macron, austerity and the high cost of living is intensifying across Europe.

The anger of workers in France and all of Europe, growing for years, is developing in opposition to inequality, the politics of militarism and austerity of Macron and the European Union, and against the brutality of the police forces dispatched against the protesters.

After the confrontations between protesters and police on Saturday, students staged protests at over 20 high schools in the *banlieues* east of Paris, another seven in Paris, 17 in Bordeaux, 13 in Marseille, five in Montpellier, multiple in Lyon, four in Dunkerque and a large number in Toulouse. Thousands of high school

students protested in Toulouse, Dijon, Nice, Pau and Limoges, where farmers participated by dumping manure in front of the police prefecture.

“We are against the reforms of the high schools and the universities,” said Lea, a high school senior. “We are also part of the ‘Yellow Vests’ movement; we are wearing the vests because we are worried about our future.”

“There are classes that are overflowing, but we are also supporting the ‘Yellow Vests.’ For us, in a year or two, we’ll have to pay for fuel as well. We are studying to earn nothing,” said another student.

Police forces are violently confronting the protesting students, and scuffles have broken out in multiple cities. In Paris, bus shelters and cars have been set ablaze during clashes between hundreds of students and police in Aubervilliers, while violence also occurred in Chelles and Gagny. In Dijon, teachers announced their support for the student protesters.

In Toulouse, eight people were injured, and police arrested 11 high school students after confrontations between students and police in the Arenes quarter. The mayor of Toulouse, Jean-Luc Moudenc, closed multiple train stations in the city, denounced the “extreme left” as responsible for the protests, and called on the state to consider re-imposing a state of emergency.

In the meantime, the overwhelming popular repudiation of Macron, the banker-president, is only deepening. When he arrived at the Champs Élysées on Sunday to inspect the damage following the previous day’s events, passers-by booed and chanted “Macron, resign!”

Cultural figures have expressed their support for the ‘Yellow Vests,’ including Pamela Anderson, who wrote on Twitter, “I despise violence... But what is the

violence of all these people and burned luxurious cars, compared to the structural violence of the French—and global—elites?” Anderson added that she hoped the energy of the protesters would be used to construct “equal and egalitarian societies.”

Witness reports continue to emerge of the extreme violence unleashed by police and provocateurs against protesters. An 80-year-old woman died in hospital in Marseille after being hit with a tear gas cannister directly in the face, while she was attempting to close her window shutters to protect herself from tear gas. A demonstrator in Toulouse remains in a coma after being struck by a projectile, likely a stun-grenade, in the head.

One “Yellow Vest,” Yannick Krommenacker, shot a video recounting his experience in the protest, entitled “Marching for the revolution.” He said, “I was hit by an intentional bean-bag gun shot in my right hand, which was holding my phone. Then I fell to the ground. I was hit with kicks [by the police] to the face. I lost consciousness for a few seconds, before I was taken to the hospital. The police kept me for 35 hours under watch, but no charge was laid against me, because the police knew well that I hadn’t committed an offense.”

Krommenacker has filed charges of “armed violence” against the police who detained him.

Police union officials confirmed that their agents are infiltrating the demonstrations. “In the ultra-right and ultra-left movements, we are collecting information proactively, via infiltrations. But the yellow vests are a new and little structured movement,” said police union officer Guillaume Ryckwaert—therefore requiring greater and more intense infiltration.

Demonstrators have accused the police provocateurs of instigating violence aimed at turning public opinion against them and discrediting protesters who are in the overwhelming majority peaceful.

The reaction of the political and media establishment and the trade unions underscores that the ruling elite has nothing to offer the masses of the population besides austerity and repression. Committed to an austerity program that is rejected by 80 percent of the population, the representatives of the financial aristocracy have no other response than to call for the re-imposition of a state of emergency and the intervention of the military against the population. The suspension of democratic rights would be in this case openly tied to the efforts by Macron to impose the diktats of the

banks on workers.

Macron’s government has already let it be known that it is considering imposing a state of emergency and banning demonstrations. Government spokesman Benjamin Griveaux revealed on Sunday that Interior Minister Christophe Castaner “has discussed a state of emergency.” He added, “The president of the Republic, the prime minister and interior minister will first make an assessment of yesterday’s events and see what measures we can take.”

The editorial of *Le Monde* by Jérôme Fenoglio insisted that alleged attacks by “Yellow Vests” against police “must be condemned without reservation” and denounced the “outpouring of rage and hate which is spilling out, for hours, in the posh areas of the capital.” He demanded that the unions take control of the movement, declaring they “would be crucial for channeling a movement of this sort.”

In fact, the demand that the unions take control of and “channel” the demonstrations has been the demand of the pseudo-left organizations like the New Anticapitalist Party (NPA). But the unions have sought to stifle and suppress every expression of social opposition to Macron’s austerity, and it is entirely logical that the demonstrations have emerged outside of their control.

In fact, certain sections of the French trade unions are calling for the violent repression of the “Yellow Vests.” This is the case for the Police-Alliance, closely tied to the neo-fascists, which denounced the “insurrectional” protests. The union called for “reinforcement from the army” to suppress the demonstrations.



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