

# French government witch-hunts ex-boxer who punched riot police in “yellow vest” protest

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The government of French President Emmanuel Macron has launched a ferocious campaign against popular support for former professional boxer Christophe Dettinger. Dettinger punched two riot police after they attacked protesters during last Saturday’s “yellow vest” demonstrations in Paris.

The 37-year-old, who won France’s light-heavyweight title in 2007, turned himself in on Monday. The government had announced a manhunt and raided Dettinger’s home after a video went viral on social media showing him confronting a group of heavily-clad riot police and punching one through his shield and mask. Moments earlier, police can be seen charging and tear-gassing unarmed demonstrators. A video from a separate incident the same day shows a man wearing the same clothes as Dettinger involved in a clash between groups of riot police and protesters.

Dettinger has received widespread support from French workers and youth, who have faced endless police assaults on demonstrations against social inequality and the big business policies of the Macron government since the first “yellow vest” protest on November 17. On Sunday, a relative created a fund to support Dettinger on the crowd-sourcing site Leetchi. Within 24 hours, more than 8,000 separate donors had contributed over €115,000.

The donors left hundreds of comments stating their support for him and opposition to Macron’s police repression. One commenter noted: “Christophe needs a lot of support, because the political class and the oligarchs have decided to make an example of him. The police have no right to suppress peaceful protesters, but they’ve been ordered to attack without mercy. When you are faced with such a ferocious police repression, I can understand Christophe’s reaction...”

On Monday, Luxembourg-based news outlet RTL

published a report quoting a young woman in Paris stating that Dettinger had intervened to protect her after an assault by a police officer. “I was already on the ground,” she said, “and Christophe Dettinger came and took the [riot police] officer who was then hitting me and took him off me.” She added that Dettinger had “saved my life.” RTL reported that the woman had filed charges against the Parisian police for intentional violence. Dettinger’s former boxing coach also attested that he had intervened after a woman was assaulted.

The outpouring of popular support for Dettinger and hostility to the police has triggered a nervous and hysterical campaign in the French ruling class, which is seeking to criminalise all resistance to its policies of showering tax cuts on the rich while enforcing brutal austerity on the working class.

On Monday morning, the Junior Minister for Digital Affairs, Mounir Mahjoubi, tweeted, “Apparently it pays to hit a policeman.” Denouncing the fund set up to support Dettinger, he claimed that “everyone must be responsible: this fund is shameful.”

Interior Minister Christophe Castaner intoned against Dettinger’s “cowardly and intolerable” actions.

The most extraordinary statements, however, came from Marlène Schiappa, the Secretary of Equality between Men and Women. On Tuesday, she demanded that Leetchi close the fund for Dettinger. Yesterday, she called for publicly identifying everyone who had donated to the fund. “It would be good to know who donated to this, because I think it’s a form of complicity,” she told Franceinfo. “We have here someone who has committed very grave actions, who hit a policeman exercising his functions, who was maintaining the public order—it is outrageous. To support that is to be complicit in the act and encourage it.”

Speaking to France Inter yesterday, she asked, “who is financing the violence, the rioters?” She then declared ominously: “We have to find out if foreign powers are funding rioters.”

Schiappa’s comments underscore the fact that the government’s hysteria against Dettinger is in reality directed against the entire working class. Confronting growing militancy and opposition in the working class in France, across Europe and internationally, the ruling class is moving rapidly to criminalise all opposition to its policies in the working class and prepare further police-state measures.

On Tuesday, Leetchi ceased accepting all donations for Dettinger. It is now unclear whether Dettinger will receive any donations at all. Crédit Mutuel, the French bank that owns Leetchi, announced to *Le Parisien* that it had frozen funds for Dettinger and had launched an internal investigation into the fund’s legality. “We must verify the legality of this call for donations and also its conformity to our rules and our internal values,” the giant bank declared.

The bank’s statement added that the response previously published by Leetchi, which pointed to the clear legality of a fund to support the legal defense fees for someone charged by the state, was “a lawyer’s response that is irrelevant and totally insufficient.”

The government has already made clear it will seek the harshest possible sentence to set an example of him. Dettinger attended a hearing on Wednesday, where he was ordered to remain in preventive detention until February 13, the date of his trial.

The prosecutor declared that Dettinger’s actions “bordered on attempted homicide,” and demanded that “the judge make clear that there is a red line.” Police have already announced that they have discovered a firearm in Dettinger’s home and will be investigating whether he possesses a license, although it has nothing to do with the case in question.

For the past six weeks, the world’s population has looked on in horror at videos from France of riot police charging peaceful protesters with shields and batons, cracking skulls of elderly citizens, blowing up workers’ hands with flash grenades, and shooting people’s eyes with bean-bag bullets.

This is how the ruling class responds to the first signs of social opposition to its policies. But when a cop is punched, the government, media and banks respond

with shock and horror.

Schiappa’s call for a registry of every individual who supported Dettinger should not be taken as an off-the-cuff remark. After France spent two years under a state of emergency suspending basic democratic rights from 2015 to 2017, the state has granted police enormous powers for mass electronic surveillance and to detain or impose house arrest on anyone the police declare a threat to public order. A police state has emerged and is furiously consolidating its powers in France.

On Monday, Prime Minister Edouard Philippe appeared on national television station TF1 and called for a registry of “yellow vest” protesters, as well as measures to criminalise those who not only organise, but attend a demonstration that has not been declared in advance with the police.

The government has stated it will be stepping up its police mobilisation for the next round of “yellow vest” protests on Saturday in preparation for a further crackdown.



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