

Algerians in France protest in solidarity with strike wave in Algeria

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As youth and broad sections of workers are striking and protesting against the Algerian regime, Algerians around the world are mobilising in solidarity. On Sunday, protests again unfolded in Paris and Marseille, attended by 10,000 and 6,000 people, respectively, a week after 1,000 Algerians protested in Montreal, Canada.

WSWS reporters interviewed protesters in Paris, who had gathered on Republic Square. They demanded not only that President Abdelaziz Bouteflika abandon plans to seek a fifth term, but also the downfall of the Algerian regime and a profound social transformation. Nearly 60 years after the Algerian war ended the French colonial regime in 1962, and an Algerian capitalist regime took power promising to build a socialist society in the country, the failure of these promises and the growing anger in the working class are deeply felt.

The WSWS interviewed Ali, a telecoms engineer at Bouygues, who said: “We are all here, all the Algerians are mobilised today against the regime, against the system that has controlled Algeria for more than 50 years. Indeed, we are not only against a fifth term, but also against the system and the regime. ... Today we are French, we are Algerian too, and we will always remain both French and Algerian, but we are here to give our support to the Algerian people.”

Ali stressed that the strikes and protests in Algeria, like the demonstrations of the “yellow vest” movement in France, are part of an international resurgence of the working class: “We are very well aware that all of the existing regimes are regimes that try to enrich the wealthy and to impoverish the poor.”

He added, “We know very well that many French people today cannot live on their minimum wage jobs or on their pensions. So, we must think about everyone

and be together in this struggle against the current regimes.”

Ali also stressed the deep disillusionment with the ruling National Liberation Front (FLN) in the Algerian population: “Unfortunately, during the war [for independence], there were killings, assassinations, and after independence those who were left were corrupt. It started with Ben Bella and Boumédiène—they loved Algeria, but as I see it, also they were dictators in fact. So there, since 1962, we have always had a state of chaos, and until today, we have still not really managed to build a country. ... We will try to start over again from scratch, because for the time being, nothing has really been built since independence.”

The WSWS also interviewed Samir, an Algerian worker in Paris. He explained, “Today, I am here to support my Algerian brothers in their struggle against this corrupt system—Bouteflika and his party, the FLN. We would like to see this system totally uprooted, because the problem in the end is not Bouteflika, the problem is the Bouteflika system.”

Samir added that the regime systematically tramples underfoot the interests of the working class in Algeria. Asked whether the trade unions in Algeria work to defend their members, he replied: “No, no, above all they are corrupt. ... The situation is deeply rooted also in France that the French people do not feel they are represented by the unions; in Algeria, it is the same thing, except there is a more acute sense of not being represented. It is something that is well known in France, it is similar in Algeria, but we can say Algeria suffers from the problem to a greater degree.”

Samir also took his distance from the Workers Party (PT) of Louisa Hanoune, which is closely linked to the regime: “Honestly, I never felt particularly warm towards them, especially due to their leader Louisa

Hanoune. Basically, this party has humanist values, it says it wants to see workers protected. But in reality, there is nothing behind this rhetoric. They are an empty shell.”

Nafi, an Algerian entrepreneur in France, told the WSWS he was there to appeal to the French people to oppose their government’s attempts to support the Bouteflika regime.

The Algerian regime, he said, “has support from France and many European peoples. For my part, I am asking the French people to look into this subject, to look at the Évian accords [that ended the Algerian war in 1962]. They will realise that the French system did many bad things. And French people are wonderful and extraordinary, they do not need to accept things that are done in secret in their name.”

He concluded, “So I ask all those who are in France to pressure the French government not to support Bouteflika and to participate in future in our common struggle of the Algerians and of the French.”

The WSWS also interviewed Aquila, who said: “I’m Algerian, I live in France, but my presence here today is to tell the Algerian people that we are with them. We support your demands for a clean regime, a regime that would finally respond to the aspirations of the people for justice, democracy and equality for all Algerian citizens. We are here to tell the Algerian people, who have risen up as one man, that this regime that has starved the Algerian people, has pillaged the country for more than 20 years now—it must go and it must leave space for young Algerians.”

Aquila stressed that she was thinking of refugees dying in the Mediterranean after fleeing Algeria: “In the Algerian protests, we say we do not want to leave, we do not want to die in ships on the Mediterranean Sea. What we want is to live in our country, with dignity.”

She added that the Algerian regime “that has been there over the last 20 years has only destroyed the country. They pillaged the country and filled their pockets. They all have bank accounts overseas, while the Algerian people live in the most abject misery. Our youth have no work, our youth do not have training. Their children are all studying in the best European universities, while Algerian youth when they turn 20 have no perspective for the future.”



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