

“Yellow vest” protesters support revolutionary movement in Algeria

Our reporters
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At the 18th successive “yellow vest” protest on Saturday, protesters called for the continuation of the movement and support for growing struggles in Algeria.

After four months, it is clear that the “yellow vest” protesters have become engaged in a struggle longer than initially anticipated, whose international character is more and more evident. The eruption of protests and strikes by millions of workers and youth in Algeria is developing towards a revolutionary confrontation with the country’s military dictatorship. The regime of Emmanuel Macron, supported by the banks and the European Union, has revealed that it is as equally unresponsive to the just demands of workers as the bloody dictatorship presided over by Abdelaziz Bouteflika.

WSWS reporters spoke with “yellow vest” protesters on the Champs-Élysées who were peacefully demonstrating their opposition to Macron. Agnes, Patrice and Dany, workers from Picardie, a region hard hit by unemployment and deindustrialisation, described the conditions that pushed them to protest.

“We cannot live anymore,” Patrice said. “We are trying to keep our heads above water. So here we are, we have had enough. It’s always the same people who take the spoils from our labour. And then the factories closed, one after the next. So now we are the forgotten. ... Nothing has replaced it, no industry. All that is left are the administrative posts that are in the process of disappearing. It’s just a dormitory town. We’ve had enough of Macron. We cannot wait until 2022.”

They declared their support for the movement in Algeria and hope that it will result in something other than a reshuffling of personnel with younger members leading the same policies as Bouteflika.

“In the end we hope that if Algeria gets a younger government, it will not be like with Macron,” said Patrice. “He had beautiful words, he was young, he seemed to be the ideal son-in-law, and in the end it turns out to be an

impossible nightmare. We wish other things for the Algerians. ... And that they not make the same mistakes as us.”

They also noted their support for a struggle organised independently from the union apparatuses, which they rejected after long experience of the bankruptcy of the official political establishment in France.

Patrice said the unions “are very timid. We opened the door slightly for them, but in the end we do better without them. Seriously. The unions have funding from the state, and the high-ups are paid by the state. The base tries to move, but the leaders don’t. That’s what blocks everything. They are paid by the government, so we cannot move forward.”

She added that “the union heads want to keep their privileges, telling themselves that they don’t want to get too dirty. So, with all the privileges they have, they’re not going to try to lose them.”

The WSWS also interviewed Dorian, an independent contractor who joined the “yellow vest” protests from its beginning on November 17. “I’ve been here since the start, from the roundabouts,” he said. “Nothing has changed with regards to what Macron promised us. I don’t think anything has changed actually.

“What pushed me to protest at the beginning was being fed up with the purchasing power. I’m self-employed, so I do OK. But at the end of the month, there is barely anything left compared to the price of gas and other things. Everything goes up every year, and it’s harder and harder. We can work, work and work, and there’s still no way out of it.”

Dorian also underlined his support for the protests in Algeria against the FLN dictatorship. “They’re right because the people were not free until now. They want a new generation with a new politics.”

French workers face a similar problem, he said, tied to the intransigence of the Macron regime. “It will not

respond, as I see it. So, we have to overthrow it, basically.”

We spoke to Patrick, a former manager from the Lyon region who works at present in disabled care, who also expressed his support for the protests in Algeria. “We understand them completely, because they were under a dictatorship. For us it’s not a dictatorship, or it’s concealed here. But you have here 1 percent of the population controlling all of France’s wealth, and there is the bottom 99 percent that works for it.

“There are a lot of people who earn 2,000-3,000 euros per month and don’t get by. What we fear is that our children will not be able to live. On top of that, we have become a police state: you come once to demonstrate, you get hit and tear-gassed. At a certain point there is no respect for the people.”

Describing his own conditions, Patrick said: “I had a company, but it went bust. I had to pay for it. Now I work for 650 euros a month. Luckily my wife is a nurse, and we can meet our needs, but I wake up at 5 a.m. to earn 650 euros, and this is with subsidised housing. We are over-taxed. We give everything to the multinationals. I worked for one, they evade the law all the time . They are never audited. We are run by a mafia; that is impossible.”

Patrick also expressed anger towards French state repression and complicity between the police and the extreme right suppressing demonstrators. “In Lyon, the fascists came and were protected by the police,” he said. “It’s not normal. We went to find the police so they would defend the ‘yellow vests,’ and they left running in the other direction.

“In Lyon, there were 50 of them who were protected by the BAC police. We saw it. They are infiltrated by the BAC. We get searched—and they go back with metal bars and baseball bats and hit the ‘yellow vests.’ And they’re allowed to. Go to Lyon at the protests and every second time, we see, everyone knows them—the police don’t change around. ... The BAC called my wife a whore ‘yellow vest.’ You don’t speak that way to people.”



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