

Macron launches anti-Muslim police-state crackdown after terror attack in France

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After Friday's terrorist attack that killed middle-school teacher Samuel Paty in Conflans, the administration of Emmanuel Macron is carrying out a police-state crackdown. Hundreds of people have been deported, more than 50 Muslim associations have been targeted for dissolution, dozens of people are being arrested or raided with no connection to the terrorist attack at all and the government is seeking to criminalize protected free speech activities and eliminate anonymity on social media.

Macron's policy is all but indistinguishable from the fascistic ravings of National Rally leader Marine Le Pen. An atmosphere of anti-Muslim hysteria is being whipped up to justify a further shift to the right of the entire political establishment, expand police powers and curb the democratic rights of the population.

Macron set the tone in his speech to the national defense council on Sunday night, declaring that "the fear is now going to change sides," and "the Islamists cannot be allowed to sleep peacefully in our country." The Republicans leader in the Senate, Bruno Retailleu, replied with an open call to violence, demanding "arms not tears," and attacked Macron for "leading a lexicographical battle while a portion of the country defies the fundamental values of France."

Marine Le Pen called for the use of "force," denouncing politicians who instead "would like us to hold candle-light vigils."

Prime Minister Jean Castex announced Sunday that the interior ministry had requested the immediate expulsion of 231 people from France who were already on government watch-lists for Islamic radicalization, but who had no connection to the Oct. 16 terrorist attack.

In an interview with Europe1 on Monday morning, Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin announced a series

of further police state measures, and personally hailed National Rally leader Le Pen.

"Since this morning, police operations have been underway and will continue in the hours and days to come," he said. He declared that the "dozens of individuals" targeted were "not necessarily connected to the investigation" into the Oct. 16 attack. They were people "to whom we clearly would like to send a message, that which the President announced at the defense council: not a night of peace for enemies of the Republic."

Darmanin added that the government had already drawn up a list of 51 associations that it would seek to legally dissolve as so-called enemies of the Republic over the coming days. The list of these organizations has not been published, but it includes the Collective Against Islamophobia in France (CCIF), a legal advocacy organization that opposes discrimination against Muslims. The government has not attempted to provide any evidence that the CCIF was connected to the Oct. 16 terrorist killing of Paty.

Paty, a middle-school geography teacher in Conflans, northwest of Paris, was attacked by 18-year-old Chechen immigrant Abdoullakh Anzonov as he left school for the day. Anzonov stabbed Paty multiple times before beheading him on the street. Anzonov appears to have been motivated in this horrific crime by a public social-media campaign against Paty, including by the father of one of his students, accusing him of anti-Islamic conduct.

Paty had shown an anti-Islamic caricature by *Charlie Hebdo* to his class as the basis for a debate on "freedom of expression," after warning students who may have found it offensive that they could leave the classroom if they preferred not to see it.

Once again, this week's events have exposed the

utterly bankrupt and reactionary perspective of terrorism. Paty's death is not only a tragedy, but one the French ruling class is now exploiting to justify attacks on the rights of millions of working people.

The only connection to the CCIF provided by Darmanin was that the father of Paty's student had called for people to contact the CCIF to state their opposition to Paty. Besides this, he said he "hoped" the CCIF could legally be dissolved because it "receives government support, tax benefits, and denounces the Islamophobia of the government," and because "we have a number of elements that permit us to believe that it is an enemy of the Republic."

Eighty people have already been arrested for having posted comments online after the attack that implied, "in one way or another," that Paty "had deserved it," Darmanin said.

He added that the government may seek to criminally charge anyone who had simply posted criticisms of Paty online before the attack as accomplices of a terrorist murder. "I would like to say that I agree with this idea that there are sponsors [of a crime] by hatred on social media," he said.

Darmanin made clear that this was part of a broader effort to criminalize political opposition to the longstanding persecution of Muslims in France. "Political Islam leads sometimes to terrorism," he said, "and one has to fight against political Islam with the same strength as against terrorism."

The interior minister has also now taken to declaring that the father of one of Paty's students had placed a "fatwa" against him. From a purely factual standpoint, this is obviously false, since a fatwa is a nonbinding legal opinion on Islamic law made by a qualified individual, such as a scholar, not a public denunciation made by a person who happens to be Muslim. But Darmanin is not concerned with the facts of the case, but with anti-Muslim provocations. He has adopted the term directly from the vocabulary of the extreme right.

Two days earlier, Jordan Bardella, the representative of National Rally, had denounced the "fatwa" that teachers who attempt to teach "freedom of expression" supposedly endure from Muslim parents of students.

The Macron administration is directly pursuing the policies of the National Rally. In an extraordinary exchange, indicating the extent to which the French ruling class is promoting fascist forces, Europe1

interviewer Sonia Mabrouk told Darmanin that "there is someone who has not yet come to power, that is Marine Le Pen, who says 'stop' to the politics of the vigil, 'stop' to this politics. Is she wrong?"

Darmanin responded by hailing Le Pen, saying "I respect Madame Le Pen like all the men and women of politics," but then criticized her for failing to support the government's police-state measures. Le Pen "cherishes the causes that will bring her to power, but she does not vote for any of the laws that we propose, none of the reinforcements of the anti-terrorist struggle. She rejected the phone-tapping laws that we have proposed to the European parliament. She is not in line with the laws of interior intelligence security."

Darmanin's attacks on Le Pen from the right make clear the fraud of the Macron government's claim that it is defending "democracy" and "freedom of speech" against Islam. Macron, who infamously hailed the fascist dictator Pétain in 2017 as a "great soldier," is directly promoting the far right to divide the working class and build up the power of the police against the population.

After two years of strikes and "yellow vest" protests that have been brutally attacked by police, the French ruling class is preparing to suppress an eruption of social anger over the intensifying social crisis and its criminal response to the coronavirus pandemic with a turn to dictatorship.

These events are also a sharp exposure of the entire political establishment and its supposedly "left" flank, which has unanimously lined up behind Macron's campaign. Jean-Luc Mélenchon, the leader of La France Insoumise, declared that he had now been convinced to support Macron's upcoming anti-Islamic law, to be brought before Parliament on December 9. While Macron's government openly adopts the policies of the National Rally, viciously attacks Muslims and erects a police state, Mélenchon declares that workers and youth should support the demand from Macron for "national unity."



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