

No to police-state rule after the terrorist killing of French teacher Samuel Paty!

Alex Lantier

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The beheading Friday of middle school teacher Samuel Paty by a young Chechen Islamist in Conflans-Sainte-Honorine has shocked millions internationally. Quite irrespective of their views on Paty's decision to show his class obscene caricatures of the prophet Mohamed to provoke debate on freedom of expression, masses of people are saddened and disgusted by the grisly murder of a teacher trying to discuss democratic rights with students.

The bankruptcy of communal terrorism is once more exposed. The state uses such atrocities to whip up support for authoritarianism and war. Al Qaeda's September 11, 2001 attacks served as a pretext for US invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq. After the 2015 Paris attacks by the Islamic State (IS) militia, which emerged from the NATO proxy war in Syria, the French state imposed a two-year state of emergency, suspending democratic rights and deploying the army on French soil.

President Emmanuel Macron and the political establishment are exploiting the latest attack to adopt anti-Muslim policies indistinguishable from those of neo-fascist politician Marine Le Pen. Police raids and collective expulsions of Muslims, calls for mass Internet censorship, and bans on social and political groups branded as "enemies of the Republic" are all being massively intensified.

After hailing Le Pen, Interior Minister Gérald Darmanin on Tuesday closed a major mosque near Paris, in Pantin, where 1,500-2,000 people worship regularly.

On Sunday, at a meeting of France's national security council, Macron called for police to terrorize working class areas where most Muslims live in France. "Fear will now change sides," he said, adding that "Islamists cannot be allowed to sleep peacefully in our country." The Interior Ministry has ordered the expulsion of 231 individuals followed by French intelligence and the dissolution of 51 associations.

Macron announced Tuesday the dissolution of the

Cheikh-Yassine Association led by preacher Abdelhakim Sefrioui, who called for Paty's dismissal online. There are conflicting reports as to whether Sefrioui, a former campaign staffer for anti-Semitic Franco-Cameroonian comedian and neo-fascist Dieudonné M'Bala M'Bala, had spoken to the youth who murdered Paty. Whatever occurs in the case of Sefrioui, who is entitled to legally defend his association, the state clearly aims to ban any Muslim association that falls afoul of the police.

Darmanin has also said that the Collective against Islamophobia in France (CCIF), a legal advocacy group opposing anti-Muslim discrimination, is to be dissolved. Its lawyer stressed Monday that "nothing in this association's activities allows for suspicions of any link to terrorism."

There are also growing calls to adopt a law, requiring Internet service providers to take down in 24 hours materials denounced to state authorities as online hate speech. Presented in May by Laetitia Avia, a deputy of Macron's party, the law was struck down as unconstitutional in June by the Constitutional Council. Nonetheless, there are growing calls to resurrect this blatant attack on freedom of speech after Paty's murder.

France's parliamentary parties are all unabashedly appealing to nationalist hatreds. After Jean-Luc Mélenchon of the petty-bourgeois Unsubmissive France party said the country has a "problem" with the "Chechen community," a statement he since dismissed as an "error," Darmanin said he was "shocked" by kosher and halal aisles in supermarkets. Darmanin refused to withdraw this unambiguous appeal to anti-Semitic and anti-Muslim sentiment, when asked.

To be blunt, Paty's murder is a political godsend for Macron. Hated as the "president of the rich" since his brutal police crackdown on "yellow vest" protests against social inequality and shaken by months-long strikes against austerity by transport and education workers in

winter, he now faces rising anger over COVID-19. His call to “live with the virus” epitomizes the ruling elites’ callous “herd immunity” policy amid the resurgence of the virus in Europe. His government is responding by seizing upon Paty’s murder to shift politics far to the right.

The target of this campaign is the entire working class. Moreover, it is impossible to evaluate the political significance of these events based simply on what is occurring inside the borders of France.

This orgy of nationalism and authoritarianism unfolds amid a universal breakdown of democratic forms of rule, even in countries with long democratic traditions. In the United States, President Donald Trump has said he will not honor the election results but will remain in the White House after the November 3 vote. The Democratic Party for its part is downplaying revelations that fascistic militias linked to top Trump administration officials have threatened or, in the case of Michigan, plotted the execution of governors in key states.

In Germany, the neo-fascist Alternative for Germany (AfD) again sits in parliament for the first time since the fall of the Nazis. Far-right networks are making lists of politicians for assassination, but they are given political cover by the state machine and domestic intelligence agencies. Neo-fascists implicated in the murder of Christian-Democratic politician Walter Lübcke, who made statements in defense of immigrants, were released.

In France, the ruling elite has focused for a month on the so-called anti-separatist law proposed by Macron on October 3. Macron claimed that “radical Islam” is at war with the French Republic, on a perspective that is “separatist” but “whose final objective is to take complete control of it.” He called to post police “at the foot of every tower block, and every apartment building” and said the law would require all associations to “sign a contract respecting Republican values,” as defined by the Interior Ministry.

The Muslim minority, which makes up under 10 percent of the population and overwhelmingly consists of oppressed layers of workers, is being singled out as the target of a fascistic campaign. All Muslim opposition to Macron, including peaceful disagreements with reactionary bans on headscarves in the schools, is branded as “radical Islam” and a sign one is an enemy of the state. Thus, after Paty’s murder, Macron called Islamism an “ideology of the destruction of the Republic.”

In the 2017 French presidential elections, the *Parti de l’égalité socialiste* (PES), the French section of the

International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), called for an active boycott of the second round between Macron and Marine Le Pen. The PES warned that Macron was no alternative to the far-right, anti-working class policies a President Le Pen would implement.

This warning has been vindicated by Macron’s mass arrests and bloody police repression targeting strikes and social protests, and now his turn towards a fascistic policy. In 2018, he even hailed Nazi-collaborationist dictator and traitor Philippe Pétain as a “great soldier” before ordering riot police to assault the “yellow vests.” Around the world, the levels of social inequality produced by the bourgeoisie’s austerity cuts and revealed in the murderous “herd immunity” policy on COVID-19, which hit workers and the poor hardest of all, are incompatible with democratic forms of rule.

The threat to the Republic—not to the police-state machine, that is, but to the democratic rights of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity proclaimed in the 1789 French revolution—comes not from the country’s oppressed Muslim minority. It comes from the bourgeoisie and its political servants. Macron’s “anti-separatist” policy against Islam is no more compatible with the universal fraternity of humanity asserted in the 1789 revolution, than his tax cuts for the rich and wage and pension cuts for workers are compatible with equality.

The only way forward against the urgent and mounting threats to democratic rights is the political unification of the working class internationally in a struggle for socialism. The foundation of such a struggle is a rejection of nationalism, which the bourgeoisie uses to divide the working class and subordinate it to dictatorial forms of rule, and the struggle to unify workers of all backgrounds with their Muslim class brothers and sisters in the struggle against police-state rule.



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