

French active-duty soldiers publish letter threatening a military coup

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On Sunday evening, French neo-fascist magazine *Valeurs actuelles* (*Current Values*) published a new letter signed by up to 2,000 active-duty military personnel. Denouncing Muslims and France's working class suburbs, it endorses an April 21 coup threat in *Valeurs actuelles* issued by 23 retired generals and also confirms that active-duty officers support such a coup.

The April 21 letter demanded President Emmanuel Macron act to stop an alleged "Islamization" of France and threatened a coup. Inaction, it said, would lead to an "explosion and the intervention of our active-duty comrades in a perilous mission to protect our civilization's values and safeguard our compatriots on the national territory." In such a "civil war," the April 21 letter added, "the deaths, for which you will be responsible, will number in the thousands."

The May 9 letter, also addressed to Macron and the government, declares: "Yes, our superiors are correct in the content of their letter, in its entirety. We can see violence in our cities and towns. We see communalism growing in public areas, in the public debate. We see hatred of France and of its history becoming the norm."

Warning of a coming "civil insurrection" in France, it asserts that the army will follow the government's orders to fire on the people: "Yes, if civil war breaks out, the army will maintain order on its own soil, because it will be asked to do so. That is even the definition of civil war. No one can desire such a terrible situation, neither our superiors nor ourselves, but yes, again, civil war is being prepared in France and you know this perfectly well."

This letter must be taken as a warning to the working class in France, across the NATO alliance, and internationally. World capitalism faces its deepest social and economic crisis since the 1930s due to the pandemic and mounting working class anger after governments' calls to "live with the virus" have led to millions of deaths. The threat that far-right networks in NATO's

tightly integrated armed forces could organize coups and set up bloody dictatorships is deadly serious.

It comes not only after Donald Trump's historically unprecedented attempt to organize a coup on January 6 in Washington, to halt the certification of his election defeat, but after a six-month campaign of coup threats by fascist officers in the Spanish army. These officers began their coup plotting after strikes in Spain, Italy and across Europe compelled European governments to organize a hard lock-down in the initial months of the pandemic last year.

A campaign is clearly underway in French military and neo-fascist circles to prepare a coup. On April 17, far-right politician Philippe de Villiers published a hysterical, fascistic appeal in *Valeurs actuelles* titled "I call for an insurrection," blaming among others the Communist Manifesto, identity politics and Swiss bankers for the pandemic.

Four days later—on the 60th anniversary of the failed April 21, 1961 Algiers putsch by generals hoping to prevent Algerian independence from France, a putsch that de Villiers' father supported—the first coup threat appeared.

On May 7, *Le Parisien* reported that *Valeurs actuelles* was contacting active-duty personnel to publish a new letter, which appeared two days later. The magazine's director, Geoffroy Lejeune, told the *Le Parisien* the new letter had been widely circulated in the army and received between several hundred and 2,000 signatures. Unlike the April 21 letter, none of its authors or signatories have been identified.

Significantly, the authors of the May 9 letter declare that their willingness to open fire on the French people comes from their deployments both in neo-colonial wars abroad and in policing operations at home. "We are those that the newspapers have called the 'generation of fire,'" it states, adding that in "Afghanistan, Mali, the Central African

Republic or elsewhere, a certain number of us have seen enemy fire. Some have lost comrades. They gave their lives to destroy the Islamism to which you are making concessions on our soil.”

“Almost all of us have experienced Operation Sentinel,” it adds, referring to former Socialist Party President François Hollande’s deployment of 10,000 troops inside France after the January 2015 *Charlie Hebdo* terror attacks: “We have seen our suburbs abandoned, accommodation to crime. We have suffered attempts to exploit us by numerous religious communities, for whom France signifies nothing—nothing but an object of sarcasm, contempt, even hatred.”

The letter also denounces Macron as a traitor, claiming that it is resisting collaboration with Islam as Resistance fighters opposed the French government’s collaboration with the 1940-1944 Nazi occupation of France during World War II. “The warning cry of our superiors echoes earlier events. Our elders are Resistance fighters of 1940 whom, often, people like you called traitors while legalists, out of cowardice, cut deals with evil to limit the damage,” they write.

This equation between Nazi rule and the presence of millions of Muslims who work and live peacefully in France is an odious political lie. It is a further warning that this letter, published in the far-right press, is a fascistic conspiracy against the working class. It is urgent that workers be politically alerted and organized to oppose the risk of a bloody, far-right coup.

The task of mobilizing opposition to plans for a coup and a dictatorship cannot be left to the state authorities or established political parties, which are complicit in the coup plot.

Since the April 21 letter appeared, Macron has maintained a deafening silence on the coup threat. His government worked to downplay its significance, noting that the first letter was issued by retired officers. This is despite the well-known fact that “retired” officers maintain connections to their active-duty counterparts and are used to make political statements in such situations. Since then, the government has been forced to admit that it found at least 18 active-duty personnel among the signatories of the April 21 letter.

Unsubmissive France leader Jean-Luc Mélenchon insisted that the letter had little support in the army and appealed to Macron to investigate the letter, trying to promote illusions that the Macron government itself would fight the coup threat.

The latest letter by active-duty soldiers explodes such

arguments, making clear the April 21 letter has significant support within the military brass. It is apparent that the government’s weak response to the earlier letter is emboldening the far-right officers to accelerate their coup plotting.

This trend continued yesterday. Defence Minister Florence Parly spoke briefly on the latest letter during a visit to a French airbase in Creil, stating, “this column uses the tone and references of the far-right with the aim of dividing our nation.”

Mélenchon criticized the May 9 letter for “dividing” the army and its authors as “cowards” for remaining anonymous. Objecting to the letter on the nationalist grounds that it weakens the army’s ability to wage war around the world, Mélenchon stated that “the strength of the army is its cohesion. For it to be coherent, we must proscribe not only political disputes in its ranks, but also divisive views that invite soldiers to turn against the population.”

Such comments only encourage the coup plotters, who know very well that, especially amid the pandemic, Macron and Mélenchon are far more afraid of working class opposition than of a coup and rely on the security forces against the population.

Macron has systematically built up the police powers of the state. After hailing Nazi-collaborationist dictator Philippe Pétain to encourage riot police attacking “yellow vests” in November 2018, he deployed the army in March 2019 for policing operations in Paris. These troops were authorized to open fire. Now, he is passing a “global security” law to ban filming of police.

Both the April 21 and May 9 letters, in their denunciations of “Islamization,” echo Macron’s reactionary “anti-separatist” law, premised on the lie that France is threatened by a mass separatist Islamic movement.

The danger of military-authoritarian rule in France and across Europe is rapidly growing. The critical task is to politically alert and mobilize the working class, and for this to build the *Parti de l’égalité socialiste*, the French section of the International Committee of the Fourth International, and its sister parties across Europe and internationally.



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