

Macron government shifts further right after far-right generals' coup threats

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Amid a series of far-right threats from active-duty and retired military officers in France, the Macron government has adopted a policy of silence and conciliation toward the far-right coup plotters.

The two letters were published on April 21 and May 9. The first was originally signed by 23 retired generals, over 200 former military officers and 1,500 ex-military personnel of lower rank. At least 18 active-duty military personnel have since been confirmed to have signed the letter. Directed to the Macron government, it consisted of fascistic denunciations of the danger of “Islamism” in France and the “hordes of the *banlieues*” (working-class suburbs).

It threatened that unless the government took action, there would be 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 deaths, for which you will be responsible, will number in the thousands.”

The May 9 letter, also published by the neo-fascist magazine *Valeurs actuelles*, was allegedly signed by up to 2,000 active-duty military personnel, according to *Valeurs actuelles*, which has kept the signatories anonymous. The website has since claimed that more than 100,000 people have signed the “petition.” It endorses all the generals’ earlier threats, pledging to fight a “civil war” it blames on “growing communalism in public areas” and “hatred of France and its history becoming the norm.”

President Emmanuel Macron has responded to threats of a military coup by far-right networks in the military with silence. He has not even publicly acknowledged their existence, more than three weeks after the initial publication. Armed Forces Minister Florence Parly and Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin have made only

brief statements in response to the latest letter.

The government has made clear that there will be no legal repercussions for an open threat of a military coup. After Jean-Luc Mélenchon filed a motion for charges to be brought against the signatories, the Paris prosecutor, Rémy Heitz, announced that there would be no charges brought, as “no criminal infraction” had been committed.

Despite Macron’s silence, the issue is followed extremely closely in the Elysée presidential palace. The *Parisien* on May 7 published a report with anonymous statements from government advisors about the government’s awareness and preparations for the upcoming release of the second letter by *Valeurs Actuelles*: “It’s a less trashy tribune than the previous one, but it’s a pain in the ass.” The *Parisien* notes that “the subject is taken very seriously. It has gone as far as the Élysée and the minister of the army.”

A “member of the president’s inner circle” states: “Security is a theme that is rising very strongly in public opinion. We have lived for a year under alarm. Many tensions have built up.” Another presidential advisor states: “we are going to get a beating [in the 2022 presidential elections] if we give a centimeter of space to the opposition,” adding, “we could begin by making trips into the [immigration] detention centers, to make known our policy in returning people at the border.”

In other words, the government’s response to the threat of fascist violence from within the military is to strengthen its anti-immigrant and police-state policies, while protecting the far-right network. This is cynically presented as a response to the demands of “public opinion.”

Accordingly, on April 25, Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin, known to be a former supporter of the far-

right *Action française*, announced that the government would present a new “Interior security and anti-terrorism” law.

The new law includes far-reaching attacks on the democratic rights of the population through an expansion of state surveillance of the Internet. It extends laws currently permitting the intelligence services to monitor the phone traffic of the population to their internet usage. As Darmanin told the *Journal de Dimanche* on Sunday, it permits “the use of algorithms, that is to say, the automatic treatment of internet data.”

Asked if this threatened the rights of the population, he replied: “Let’s stop with the naiveté. All the big companies use algorithms. And would the state be the only one not able to use them?”

This underscores an essential political reality of Macron’s response to the coup threats. The government is politically dependent upon the strengthening of the police apparatus against growing opposition in the working class, under conditions of rising social inequality and mass anger over the government’s criminal and disastrous handling of the pandemic, which has led to over 100,000 deaths in France. The government is far more fearful of a movement in the working class than of far-right officers, even those openly threatening a coup.

This is the context in which the statements of General Charles Lecointre, the chief of the armed forces, must be understood. After the publication of the second letter, Lecointre wrote a conciliatory public letter to the anonymous signatories. While making clear that there was no investigation or legal measures planned against them, he appealed to their “good sense” to resign from the army and defend their political views publicly.

“The most reasonable thing to do is certainly to quit the military to be able to make public, in complete liberty, one’s ideas and convictions,” he said.

There is no reason to believe that the far-right networks in the army have any intention of resigning, but Lecointre’s appeal itself has a reactionary and anti-democratic character. Were the coup plotters to take his advice, they would be effectively constituting a public, far-right tendency made up of former officers with close ties to the French general staff.

Moreover, the letters largely base themselves on the political campaign the Macron government has been waging for the past five years, especially its “anti-

separatism” law targeting Muslims.

Macron has already set the line for his campaign in the 2022 presidential elections by seeking to position himself to the right of Marine Le Pen’s far-right National Rally. In February, Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin held a televised debate with Le Pen, in which he accused her of being “soft” on Islam. “You are acting with softness, Mrs. Le Pen. You have gone so far that you say that Islam is not a problem,” he said. “You should take vitamins. I find that you are not tough enough!”

The entire official framework of the election campaign continues to shift ever further to the right. This week, Michel Barnier, a prospective candidate for the Republicans party, stated that France should place a three- to five-year moratorium on all migration from outside the European Union.

In the fight against the growing fascist danger, the working class cannot depend on any faction of the political establishment. The only way forward is in the development of an independent movement of the working class for the taking of political power and the establishment of socialism.



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