

French health unions file strike notices against mandatory vaccination

Anthony Torres
8 August 2021

In the context of protests called by the far right against the Macron government's "health pass," the health wing of the Sud trade union has filed a notice for indefinite strike action by health personnel against the law. Protests were held again on Saturday, involving approximately 240,000 people across the country, according to the government's own figures, including approximately 17,000 in Paris. On Thursday, the Constitutional Council published a statement that the government's law was legal, including the requirement that health personnel be vaccinated.

The healthcare branches of Sud and the General Federation of Labour (*Confédération générale de travail* —CGT) are demanding the "ending of compulsory vaccination" for health care workers and the "freedom to choose" for every individual whether or not to be vaccinated. In a statement, Sud denounced sanctions against health workers who refuse vaccination: "The exemptions open a dangerous precedent. They permit the employer to carry out sanctions (suspension of work contract and of pay), for a reason that should fall under medical secrecy and the jurisdiction of occupational health and safety."

In addition to the repeal of the health pass and ending compulsory vaccination, Sud's statement includes other demands, including for a minimum wage of 1700 euros, the reopening of closed beds or the unconditional recognition of coronavirus infection as an occupational disease for all health staff and social workers.

In Marseilles, Sud and the CGT have published notices for an unlimited strike at the Marseille Public Assistance hospital beginning August 4 and the Édouard Toulouse hospital beginning today. In Lyon, Sud Santé has also published a strike notice, which began on July 29. In Corsica, in Bastia, the CGT of the hospital centre of the Haute-Corse municipality filed a

strike notice on Friday, July 30, while a rally was held the same day.

There is legitimate anger among nursing staff against the criminal policy of "herd immunity" that has been pursued by the Macron government and the European Union. The pandemic has brought the health system to the brink of collapse as a result of the austerity policies of successive governments, sacrificing the lives of health care workers. Macron's "health pass" is part of a policy pursued by the ruling class throughout the European Union to impose a return to work and school reopening, allowing the virus to spread in defiance of scientific recommendations.

However, the policy of the trade union bureaucracies is reactionary, diverting the anger of health workers behind an anti-scientific, anti-vaccine perspective advanced above all by the extreme right, which advocates for an unchecked spread of the coronavirus.

Compulsory vaccination against many diseases, including COVID-19, is not an attack on democratic rights. It is part of the social gains obtained by the struggles of the working class in the 20th century, which have improved working-class life expectancy. Vaccination against the coronavirus is a basic requirement of public health and self-defence of the working class, including health care workers.

The fight against the pandemic and police dictatorship is an international one, which must be conducted scientifically through the mobilisations of workers independently of the trade unions, which are in the thrall of the financial aristocracy. The strike notice filed by the CGT and Sud occur under conditions of demonstrations called by neofascists Florian Philippot, Nicolas Dupont-Aignan and Marion Maréchal Le Pen against vaccination and for the lifting of all health restrictions.

This phenomenon is not isolated to France; all over Europe, far-right forces are organizing demonstrations against the health restrictions advocated by scientists.

In Italy, in Milan, Turin, Rome, Naples and other cities, several thousand people took to the streets this weekend at the call of the far-right party Fratelli d'Italia to demonstrate against the requirement of a Green Pass for certain activities from August 6.

In Germany, in Berlin, hundreds of hostile people defied the ban on demonstrations and gathered illegally in the streets of the city on Sunday, causing scuffles with the police. They were politically dominated by far-right and fascist forces who openly display their attitudes via Third Reich war flags and anti-Semitic symbols.

Sud falsifies the origin of the demonstrations called by the far right to conceal their alignment with the political activities of neofascists across Europe. It claims to call for workers “to participate in the social mobilizations and the defence of freedoms that are being built and that have nothing to do with the rallies initiated by the extreme right and conspiracy movements, which we are fighting against.”

Notwithstanding the fact that Sud and the CGT call for workers to join separate rallies, in parallel with those of the extreme right, the protest movement as a whole against Macron’s law has been initiated by the far right.

Moreover, the site Permanent Revolution, which is close to the Sud trade union, admitted that the anti-vaccine demonstrations were called by the far right: “While the far right was able to intervene and call for a mobilisation, the general tint of the demands is marked by confusion, expressing an initial politicisation. A politicisation that is marked by the discrediting of the claims of the government, which has opened up space for doubts, some of them legitimate, about vaccination.”

Explosive anger is rising across Europe and internationally against the ruling elite, which has refused to take the necessary health measures to stop the pandemic. An international health and political crisis has developed, with the possibility of an independent intervention by the working class to impose a scientific health policy. In March 2020, it was the spontaneous walkouts by workers across Italy and Europe that imposed a strict lockdown to allow workers

to shelter in their homes.

The CGT and Sud are trying to line up angry and desperate health care workers behind the far right, to prevent a fight for a scientific policy against the virus.

The anti-vaccine campaign of the neofascists, encouraged by the financial aristocracy, is aimed at enforcing a further turn to the right in official politics, so that the billions of euros that are required to vaccinate the population will not be diverted from the corporate bailouts adopted by the EU. Indeed, the trade union apparatuses will be well compensated via the bailout funds that pass via the major corporations and their labour relations “social partners.”

The Socialist Equality Party is fighting to mobilize workers internationally to stop the pandemic and the capitalist elites’ race to dictatorship. Building rank-and-file committees at every school and workplace would ensure the safety and health of workers and youth and mobilize them for a scientific health policy and against both Macron and the danger of a far-right coup. The building of an International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-file Committees, independent of the national trade union apparatuses and their pseudo-left allies, is the necessary basis for such a policy.

This implies the closure of nonessential workplaces and the expropriation of the financial aristocracy to allow the population to be sheltered and vaccinated as widely as possible, and a policy of education of the working class on the necessity of such a policy.



To contact the WSWs and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)