

# Fascistic provocateur Eric Zemmour announces his presidential campaign bid in France

Will Morrow  
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Last week, Eric Zemmour, the fascistic television personality and convicted racist provocateur, posted an online video formally announcing his bid in the 2022 French presidential elections.

For months, even before formally announcing his election campaign, Zemmour has enjoyed widespread coverage in the French media, which endlessly speculated as to whether he would eventually run. According to a poll by Odoxa-Backbone Consulting for the right-wing daily *Le Figaro*, 86 percent of the population was exposed in some way to Zemmour's campaign launch video, though 70 percent said they opposed it.

Zemmour's candidacy testifies to the turn by the French ruling class toward authoritarianism and dictatorship. His campaign video declares in a paranoid tone that France is on the verge of civil war, overwhelmed by Muslims and immigrants. It is largely based on the fascist "theory" of the "great replacement," which motivated the white supremacist terrorist massacre of 51 Muslims by Brenton Tarrant in Christchurch, New Zealand in 2019.

"For years, the same feeling has been suppressing, haunting you," the video begins. "A feeling ... of dispossession. You walk in the streets of your cities, and you don't recognise them..." These statements are overlaid with videos and images of immigrant tent encampments, protests, veiled Islamic women and professional footballers kneeling in opposition to racism. "You have the feeling of no longer being in the country where you were born. ... Then you realise that your feeling of dispossession was shared by everyone."

Zemmour demagogically denounces the "elites" who have "contemptuously dismissed you. The powerful,

the elites, the intellectuals, the journalists, the academics, the sociologists, the unionists, the religious authorities, have said that these subjects were theirs, that your thoughts were wrong, were harmful.

"Immigration is not the cause of all our problems," he states, "though it exacerbates all of them. ... That is why you often struggle at the end of the month. ... For decades, the governments of the right and the left have drawn us down a catastrophic path of decline. Right and left have both lied to you. They have concealed the gravity of our decline and hidden the reality of our replacement."

His denunciations of the "elites" notwithstanding, Zemmour is a political mouthpiece for sections of the financial aristocracy. A longtime right-wing journalist and writer, he became the prime personality of the CNews television network, created by billionaire Vincent Bolloré in the aftermath of the "yellow vest" protests.

Zemmour has been promoted because his policies have support within the French financial elite. As revealed in an article by *Le Monde* last week, he is a frequenter of the elite Parisian clubs where the financial elite meets and discusses its policies. Two weeks ago, on November 18, he dined with 240 CEOs at the Circle of the Union, a Parisian club for the ultra-wealthy near the Élysée presidential palace, which was followed by a book signing. He also took part in events at exclusive gatherings like the Jockey Club and the Club de l'Automobile.

It is no coincidence that Zemmour is being promoted amidst the coronavirus pandemic. He is an advocate of open herd immunity and an opponent of any even limited social distancing measures in the face of the

virus. The French ruling class is determined to proceed with the Macron government's policy of opposing any lockdown measures that would impinge upon its profit-making operations.

The ruling elite knows it is deeply isolated and sitting on top of a powder keg of social inequality and anger over the 120,000 largely avoidable deaths in the COVID-19 pandemic. In April, a collection of retired and active-duty generals and soldiers signed an open letter in *Valeurs Actuelles* pledging to join a civil war and kill thousands of people, supposedly to protect French civilization.

In a further sign of Zemmour's close ties to the army, it was announced on Monday that retired Major General Bertrand de La Chesnais will be his campaign director.

Zemmour's candidacy is just one particularly toxic expression of the rightward lurch of the entire French political establishment and its turn toward authoritarianism. Marine Le Pen, the leader of the far-right National Rally, announced on November 15 that she was prepared to have Zemmour in her government "of national unity."

On Saturday, Zemmour addressed an open letter to supporters of France's The Republicans (LR) who had backed Eric Ciotti, who was defeated in the presidential primary vote this weekend by Valérie Pécresse. Ciotti campaigned on the basis of attacks on immigrants and warnings of the "replacement" of the French population.

The Macron government itself has continuously worked to legitimize Zemmour and lay the groundwork for his rise. Since coming to office, Macron has shut down more than 70 mosques and imposed an "anti-separatism" law, which targets religious associations supposedly in order to fight the danger of separatist Islamist communities in France. His interior minister Gerald Darmanin is engaged in continuous provocations against the more than five million Muslims in France, declaring last year that Islamist "separatism" begins with supermarket aisles with halal and kosher food.

In a prime-time television interview on the TF1 evening news after announcing his campaign, Zemmour intensified his anti-Muslim campaign. He declared, "I do not distinguish between Islam and Islamism, because they are the same thing."

In that interview, Zemmour was asked whether he could win women's votes, given his well-known statements on men being the "primary" sex. He replied that his program is the one that "best defends women," asking: "What is it today that threatens women? Who spits on a woman when she is wearing a dress? Who wants to veil women? Who threatens their liberty?"

The same argument, using the supposed defence of women's rights to justify anti-Muslim policies, is supported by the entire French political establishment with burqa bans and other anti-democratic measures.

There is no "democratic" faction of the capitalist political establishment. Macron has spent his presidency building up the apparatus of a police state and deploying riot police and the army against "yellow vest" and other social protests. His pursuit of "herd immunity" since the end of the first lockdown in 2020 has led to the unnecessary deaths of tens of thousands of people.

Like Trump in the US, Zemmour demagogically attempts to exploit genuine social anger over inequality and the pro-business policies of the political establishment and channel it into right-wing attacks on migrants and Muslims. His rise would have been impossible had it not been for the right-wing policies pursued by the Socialist Party and Communist Party of France, which once held the allegiance of millions of workers, as well as their associated trade union apparatuses.

Zemmour is being brought forward by the French ruling class under conditions of rising anger in the working class at the murderous policies pursued by the French and European governments throughout the pandemic, which have ensured the enrichment of the financial elite and the impoverishment and mass deaths for the broad mass of the population. The fight against the danger of fascist dictatorship today is inseparable from the struggle to build an independent political movement of the working class against capitalism and all its political representatives.



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