

# Macron, Le Pen court Mélenchon voters in second round of French election

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Ahead of the second round of the French elections, President Emmanuele Macron and Marine Le Pen are multiplying their cynical media appearances to win the votes needed to get elected. In a second round that is too close to call, the two candidates are turning to the voters of Unsubmissive France's (LFI) Jean Luc Mélenchon, who came in third with 22 percent of the vote.

Against the two reactionary candidates, the Parti de l'égalité socialiste (PES) calls on workers and young people to reject both Macron and Le Pen and to fight to mobilize the working class around a boycott of the presidential run-off.

Elected by a wide margin against Marine Le Pen in 2017 with 66.1 percent of the vote against 33.9 percent, Macron is no longer certain to be re-elected. Unlike the last election in 2017, Macron does not have large reserves of support. The traditional parties that ruled during the Fifth Republic and called for a Macron vote, the Gaullists and the Socialist Party, collapsed with 4.8 percent and 1.8 percent, respectively. Even their few remaining voters may not vote for Macron.

Marine Le Pen is expected to get the votes of far-right media pundit Eric Zemmour, who obtained 7 percent in the first round.

In the media, the possibility of a victory for Marine Le Pen is being raised as the gap between the two candidates narrows ahead of the April 24 vote. On March 12, Macron stood at 58 percent in the polls; with just under two weeks to go until the second round, Macron has only 51.9 percent.

A Macron adviser before the first round feared that a Macron-Le Pen run-off "will be a difficult duel" as there will be no common "Republican front" formed by all the bourgeois parties opposed to the neo-fascists. Bernard Sananès, the head of the Elabe polling

institute, said: "The Republican front was already in trouble in 2017, but it is now clinically dead."

According to an Odoxa poll for L'Obs, more French people who will vote to block either of the two candidates now want to block Emmanuel Macron (19 percent) than Marine Le Pen (18 percent).

The victory of either candidate will depend on the electorate of Jean-Luc Mélenchon. He obtained 22 percent of the vote, especially among young people and workers who oppose war and austerity. Mélenchon finished first in Marseille and the Paris metropolitan area and performed well in Lyon, finishing second, well ahead of Le Pen and the ecologists who hold the mayor's office.

Thirty-nine percent of Jean-Luc Mélenchon's voters intend to vote for Macron in the second round, and 24 percent for Le Pen, according to one poll. The remaining 37 percent plan to abstain, vote blank or null.

Macron and Marine Le Pen understand this well and are launching their campaigns for the second time through appeals to Mélenchon's electorate. Macron, who is planning a very unpopular pension cut that would raise the retirement age to 65, is cynically trying to present a more "caring" face, according to members of his government. On the sidelines of a trip to the north of France, he also said that he "would not rule out a referendum on any reform whatsoever," including the pension cut.

Macron stressed that he intends to work closely with the unions. "There is a deadline on [raising the retirement age to] 65 in 2031, but if there is no agreement on that and I feel that the situation is too tense, I am ready to review it. I want to discuss this immediately with the political parties and with the trade unions."

He will go to Marseille, the southern city which voted

for Mélenchon in the first round. This Wednesday morning on France2, he attacked the remarks of Marine Le Pen on journalists of “Quotidien” and on the death penalty. He criticized Le Pen’s “method which consists of changing the Constitution under the pretext of consulting the people, which consists of choosing journalists, which consists of telling us on the same day: ‘Do I want to reintroduce the death penalty? I’m not against it, unless of course we put people in prison for life.’”

On Tuesday, Marine Le Pen said she wanted to “revitalize” France’s institutions and democratic functioning at a press conference at Vernon, proposing a “referendum revolution.” She added, “A referendum is not dangerous, giving the people a say is not dangerous, what is dangerous is not giving it to them.”

In front of the journalists she also criticised Macron’s pension reform and his manoeuvring to grab left-wing votes. “There is nothing to expect from Emmanuel Macron in this area. In reality, retirement at 65 is his obsession: it’s all he talks about, it’s all he plans, and he was very unhappy during the last five years that he couldn’t go through with this reform. All French people are extremely intelligent, all have understood that this is Emmanuel Macron’s manoeuvre to try to recover, or at least to attenuate, the opposition of left-wing voters.”

Marine Le Pen said on TF1 that she had “the most protective program” for the French people and praised the “overall coherence of her programme.” On Wednesday morning, she went to a cement factory and warned that France is “facing a wall of inflation that is coming. ... Prices are rising, will rise in the coming weeks. There is a form of denial by the government. Macron’s France is a France that is going to come to a halt.”

Workers and young people can expect nothing from either Macron or Marine Le Pen, regardless of Macron’s criticism of the far-right nature of Le Pen’s policies or Le Pen’s attacks on Macron’s social policies.

Macron has pursued a violently reactionary policy. By decree, he imposed the labour law that facilitates mass dismissals and slashed the wages of railway workers. Faced with his unpopularity, he has cultivated the far right, saluting the Nazi collaborationist dictator Philippe Pétain against the “yellow vest” movement.

His Interior Minister Gérard Darmanin, a sympathiser of the far-right Action française made a law imposing discriminatory obligations on Muslim associations and even called Le Pen “soft” on Islam.

On the global COVID-19 pandemic, he pursued the European policy of “living with the virus,” which has led to 1.8 million deaths in Europe.

This filthy record now allows Le Pen to fraudulently pose as a defender of the population’s social rights. Le Pen is, however, a neo-fascist who, if elected, would pursue a policy as bloody as Macron’s, including drastic attacks on immigrants’ rights. Her policies, like Macron’s if re-elected, will be shaped above all by NATO’s push for war with Russia, global inflation and the appalling losses caused worldwide by the pandemic.

The Parti de l’égalité socialiste’s call for an active boycott of the second round and independent political mobilisation of the working class is the alternative to these two reactionary candidates. It is inseparable from the mobilisation of workers against imperialist war, the anti-scientific policies of the ruling elite on the pandemic and the plunder of society by the financial aristocracy.



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