

“Under both candidates our futures look very bad”: French high schools protest against elections between Macron and Le Pen

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Multiple high schools were blockaded across Paris Tuesday morning to oppose both Emmanuel Macron and Marine Le Pen, who are standing in the French presidential runoff on April 24. These blockades follow demonstrations throughout France over the weekend and the occupation of many French universities last week in opposition to the two extreme-right candidates.

In central Paris, the Louis Le Grand, Lamartine, Henri IV, Fénelon, Balzac, and Lavoisier high schools were all blockaded by students. A number of other schools throughout the capital closed in order to avoid confrontations with student protesters. Jaurès high school in the Paris suburb of Montreuil was also blocked by students.

Multiple universities remain closed in Paris amid further fears from the French government that last week’s occupation movement could rapidly spread. The Nanterre and Sorbonne universities have remained closed from the end of last week. University of Paris-8 in the working class suburb of Saint-Denis, where students had planned a general assembly for Tuesday, was closed by the administration on Tuesday morning. The University of Paris-1 moved courses online, a decision it claimed was “to ensure individuals’ safety.”

The largest high-school blockade was at Louis Le Grand, where hundreds of students gathered to block the school entrance. The high school is across from the Sorbonne university in Paris’ Latin Quarter. When police arrived at Louis Le Grand in the afternoon, students from other schools nearby joined that blockade to protect them. Students blockading the school chanted, “screw the National Front [referring to the former name of neo-fascist candidate Marine Le Pen’s National Rally party].”

Nina, a high-school student from another Paris area high school who had come to help defend the blockade of the Louis Le Grand high school from the cops, spoke to the WSW.

She said, “We came to block the schools because we wanted to support students who were protesting last week. Many of us are 15 and 16, so we can’t vote or even make a blank vote. However, this election threatens us so this is the only way we can make our voice heard. Many of our teachers and school administrators even support us and encourage us to fight for our rights and against fascism, but it is difficult for them to state this openly.”

She explained why students from schools around Paris came to join the blockade at Louis Le Grand: “We came down here to defend the students at Louis Le Grand. My school was closed because we blockaded it this morning, but then the police turned up here and we organized with other students in the area to come here to help them.”

Nina pointed to the violent police removal of students in the Sorbonne last week, saying: “This is the reality in France. The police act like this all the time. Of course they may try to do this to us soon but we are determined to keep fighting.”

Protesting high school students have every reason to expect a violent police intervention. In November 2020, the French police violently suppressed high school blockades against the reopening of schools during the pandemic. Fifteen- and 16-year-old students who were protesting a policy of mass infection carried out by the government, which was forcing teachers and students back into classrooms where the virus spread rapidly, were attacked by police using tear gas.

Asked about the prospect of either candidate winning the presidency, Nina said, “Under both candidates our futures look very bad. I can’t imagine five years under either, under both the climate and discrimination will get even worse. As high school students we see Macron trying to make us pay for university. I want to go to university and [publicly-funded] universities are one of the best things about France.”

Asked about both candidates’ policies against Muslims, she said: “Macron and Le Pen are both attacking Muslims in France. Many of our friends are from Muslim families and both candidates threaten them. We are all the same, race just doesn’t make any difference. [Pointing to a Tunisian friend in her group] He is just as French as I am but he and his family have to worry about being sent back to Tunisia. Having so many different people is another of the best things about France.”

Asked about how to move the struggle forward, Nina said, “This is the beginning of our fight against whoever wins. We need a revolution. We have had one before in France, and now we need one again.”

The growing struggle of French youth against both reactionary candidates underscores the correctness of the Parti de l’égalité socialiste’s call for an active boycott of the second round of the election. Workers and youth must be mobilized, armed with a perspective for irreconcilable opposition to both Macron and Le Pen, and build independent action committees to coordinate the struggle. This is the only way to prepare for the confrontation that will inevitably emerge between the working class and the next president after the election, whichever it is.

These protests also underline the traitorous nature of Mélenchon’s refusal to engage in any political struggle against Macron and Le Pen, despite winning millions of votes and enjoying massive support among youth. Millions of people voted for him to mark fundamental opposition to the policies of both Macron and Le Pen. However, in an interview with BFM-TV on Tuesday night, Mélenchon announced his campaign to become the next Prime Minister of either Macron or Le Pen. This is a statement that Mélenchon can subordinate himself to either one of the two.

This underlines the necessity for the youth to fight for the construction of new revolutionary working-class organizations outside the orbit of bourgeois politics. In

their struggle against a Macron or Le Pen presidency high-school and university students must reach necessary conclusions. To oppose Macron and Le Pen the youth must make a decisive turn to the working class, the only force in capitalist society capable of implementing a socialist programme, and to the *Parti de l’égalité socialiste*.



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