

French high school students stage mass walkout in solidarity with striking refinery workers

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On Tuesday, over 100 French high schools were blocked across France, according to the La Voix lycéenne student union. On top of the blockades, across the country students protested outside hundreds more schools on Tuesday morning. Protesting students expressed their support of striking refinery workers and opposition to the austerity policies of the Macron government.

Students walked out in conjunction with the October 18 cross-industry strike in response to the Macron government's requisitioning of striking refinery and fuel depot workers.

The new wave of school walkouts comes just six months after large numbers of high schools and universities were occupied by students to protest against the far-right policies of Macron and neo-fascist Marine Le Pen in the lead up to the second round of the French election.

Speaking to *L'Est Republicain*, Dora, a high school student, explained, "We are here against the repression and police violence that are only increasing." She said high schools were also protesting "in support of our teachers" and "in support of refinery workers."

Dora added, "we are against the pro-high school reform and the Parcoursup [university admissions] system." Macron's reform of vocational high schools and the Parcoursup university selection system are widely detested policies that aim to restrict the access of working class students to higher education.

In the eastern city of Mulhouse, 12 high schools were blocked according to *L'Alsace*. One student interviewed by the publication on Tuesday morning said striking students "support the general strike movement" and added, "I am 17 years old but I am also

a future worker. The issue of wage increases concerns us all."

Many students also protested to oppose the government's discriminatory anti-Muslim legislation and deepening cuts to national education. In French public schools, young Muslim women are subject to a strictly enforced ban on any fabric that covers their hair or face.

High-school protesters also expressed their disgust toward recent events at lycée Joliot-Curie in Nanterre, where students have been violently assaulted and then arrested by heavily armed police on two occasions in the last week. During Tuesday's walkout, high schoolers across France carried signs reading "support for Joliot-Curie."

On October 11, the Joliot-Curie lycée in Nanterre was the scene of a police provocation against students. The high school was blocked by students protesting the cut to the after-school tutoring program and the government's imposition of its discriminatory dress code. Police then attacked the protesters with tear gas and rubber bullets. Following the attack, the police arrested 14 students.

Again, on Monday morning, police assaulted protesters at the same school and employed similar tactics against students at other schools. Once again, tear gas was used against students at Joliot Curie and five additional minors were arrested.

Following the violence against Nanterre students, during the school strikes on Tuesday morning the police used tear gas against hundreds of students at the Lycée de la Tourelle in Sarcelles. Later that day, multiple people were injured in the Paris march as the police repeatedly charged unarmed protesters and beat

them with batons.

Reports were also released on Tuesday night of a police raid made by 30 officers at the lycée Évariste-Galois at Beaumont-Sur-Oise on Monday. Again, the cops tear gassed students and went on to arrest three of them.

In the last two years, the police have violently cracked down on high-school students protesting conditions in schools and the far-right policies of the Macron government. In November 2020, students protesting the reopening of schools during massive levels of COVID-19 infection and death were violently repressed, as were high school and university students who occupied schools and universities, including the Sorbonne, in April of this year.

In one incident reflective of the disgust felt by young people towards the political and media establishment, students at lycée Hélène Boucher in Paris refused to speak to BFMTV journalists about their blockade of the school, stating “We don't want TV that relays false information.”

The impulse of protesting high-school students to solidarize themselves with the struggle of striking refinery workers and other striking sections of workers is healthy. The massive social ills that concern young people and students, including the current economic crisis, global warming, COVID-19 pandemic, education cuts, and the threat of the NATO-Russia war in Ukraine developing into a nuclear conflict, can only be overcome on the basis of an international mobilization of the working class.

As workers in France come into open struggle against the ruling class, a simultaneous movement of workers against capitalist governments' policies of inflation, austerity, and war, is taking place across the globe. Transport workers in the UK, teachers across Europe, and air traffic controllers across Africa are currently on strike.

Students and youth opposed to the inflation, war, deadly policies of the ruling class must enter the struggle to build this movement of international working class, the only revolutionary force in capitalist society. The first step for students is to support the International Youth and Students for Social Equality's (IYSSE) initiative to build a socialist movement of young people against imperialist war.



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