

Mobilize the working class against French police murders and state repression!

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France has erupted in three days of mass protests following the police murder of a 17-year-old youth, Nahel, in Nanterre, outside of Paris. The government of President Emmanuel Macron is responding with a brutal crackdown, enforced by police organizations that are making openly fascist statements demanding violence.

Protests and rioting in cities throughout France come in the wake of mass protests and strikes by millions of workers against Macron's pension cuts, the largest movement in France since the May 1968 general strike. These protests were strangled and suppressed through the combined efforts of the trade union apparatus and the various "opposition" parties.

The eruption of rioting and looting after Nahel's murder reflects the frustration of youth and workers after this sell-out, which was designed to leave them with no visible way forward for a political struggle against Macron.

Macron is responding by pressing the offensive with a brutal police crackdown. Yesterday, Macron's ministers announced curfews and bans on protests in the majority cities and said that military police will use armored vehicles against rioters. Their staff confirmed that nothing is "off the table," including a state of emergency suspending democratic rights, so police can jail or impose house arrest on anyone without trial.

Macron has also called for internet censorship, demanding that social media sites like TikTok and Snapchat take measures to eliminate "the most sensitive content" and identify to the government users who "call for disorder or exacerbate the violence."

The police organizations are demanding blood and repression in the working class districts of French cities. In a fascist screed, the police threatened on Friday to "put those we arrest out of action."

The joint communiqué declared: "Faced with these savage hordes, asking for calm is no longer enough, we must impose it. ... It is time not for trade union action, but for combat against these vermin."

The police officials' description of millions of working people as "vermin" not only reveals the toxic state of mind of the police—in which a cop could gun down Nahel at point blank range and in cold blood, then lie about it in official documents until he was exposed by camera footage. It also starkly underscores the political situation facing the working class. The capitalist state, led by the "president of the rich," is mobilizing its heavily-armed police assault squads for war on the workers.

Macron has encouraged these fascist sentiments among the police. He reacted to the first major protests of his presidency, the 2018-2019 "yellow vest" protests against social inequality, by appealing to the riot police with the claim that Nazi-collaborationist dictator and convicted traitor Philippe Pétain was a "great soldier." He then named Gérald Darmanin, a sympathizer of the fascist *Action Française*, as interior minister. Darmanin is now infamous for his denunciations of Muslims and of kosher and halal food.

This crisis sharply reveals political issues facing workers internationally, as these same essential processes are underway in countries across the globe. Three years ago, the police murder of George Floyd led to mass protests across the United States and calls to illegally send the US army against protesters by then-President Donald Trump, in what was effectively an attempted military coup. Since a general strike toppled Sri Lankan President Gotabaya Rajapakse last year, the government has relentlessly prosecuted those involved in the protests.

It is urgent that working class mobilize against

military-police repression and to defend democratic rights, in France and internationally.

It should be recalled that the general strike of May-June 1968 was the intervention of the working class following the brutal actions of police against students at the Sorbonne. Now one has a savage police murder of an unarmed youth, followed by mass arrests and repression targeting working class communities throughout the country.

Workers throughout France are outraged over the imposition of pension cuts through government decree, in open defiance of the will of the vast majority of the population. Three-quarters of the French people opposed the cuts, which Macron rammed through without even a vote in parliament, sending riot police to assault anyone striking or protesting.

During the struggle, two-thirds of the French people, overwhelmingly in the working class, told pollsters they wanted to stop Macron by blocking the economy with a general strike.

Everything was done by the union bureaucrats and the various pseudo-left parties to evade the central issue: that Macron had to go and that power had to be transferred to the working class.

Union boss Laurent Berger denounced a “dangerous political climate” and “insanity that could take over this country with violence.” Berger was not criticizing the violence of Macron’s cops, but protests by workers and youth against Macron. This is because the union bureaucracies are not opponents, but servants and defenders of the police state machine.

The pseudo-left parties of the affluent middle class all adapted to the bureaucracy’s ending of all effective strike action against Macron after May Day. Jean-Luc Mélenchon’s New Popular Union sent a few impotent petitions to Macron, while Juan Chingo of the *Révolution Permanente* group declared the situation was “not revolutionary.”

This supposedly “not revolutionary” situation has now developed into the explosion of social unrest throughout the country.

Workers cannot leave the youth to fight on their own. All the actions of the government, which are acquiring an ever more reckless and authoritarian character, will be directed at every manifestation of opposition to the dictates of the corporations and the financial elite.

The turn to police violence and dictatorial forms of

rule, in France and internationally, is inextricably connected to extreme levels of social inequality and the escalating war of US-NATO imperialism. Confronting mass social anger at home, the capitalist ruling elites are responding with violence.

The *Parti de l'égalité socialiste* (PES), the French section of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), calls for the building of rank-and-file committees among workers and youth to mobilize opposition to the new police state measures Macron is preparing.

Rank-and-file committees should coordinate strikes and protests against Macron’s measures, defend individuals victimized by the police state, and rally the untapped mass opposition to Macron in the working class into a movement to bring him down.

A mass movement in the working class can and must be built to bring down this government, which is rotten through and through. This requires a ruthless break with the union bureaucracies and their pseudo-left appendages, and building rank-and-file committees in the working class—towards which workers can transfer state power in France and internationally in the course of a struggle for socialism.



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