French police assault banned pro-Gaza demonstration in Paris

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On Thursday evening, thousands gathered at the Place de la République in Paris in opposition to the Israeli onslaught against the Gazan population and the French government's support for these horrific crimes. Protesters gathered despite a ban and the systematic intimidation of perceived protesters by heavily armed police in the surrounding area.

An initial notice banning the planned protest was received by the Solidarity for Palestinians in France on Wednesday. On Thursday a judge ruled against an appeal lodged by the association absurdly stating, "the prefect of police, by prohibiting the demonstration in dispute, did not cause a serious and manifestly illegal attack on the freedoms of expression, assembly and demonstration."

At Thursday evening's protest, Paris police kettled protesters before dispersing them with tear gas, water cannon and charges. Ten people were arrested, and 24 received 135-euro fines.

BRAV-M units, which played a central role in the violent repression of the protests against Macron's pension cuts, were also deployed in Paris on Thursday evening. As throughout the repression of protests following the police murder of Nahel Merzouk and during mass strikes against Macron's pension cuts, BRAV-M officers charged protesters and obstructed journalists reporting on the clashes.

BRAV-M officers also stormed a restaurant to arrest suspected protesters.

In a memo to French police chiefs, Interior Minister Gérald Darmanin declared, "Pro-Palestinian demonstrations, as they are likely to generate disturbances to public order, must be prohibited," adding that "the organization of these prohibited demonstrations must give rise to arrests." However, local prefectures had already taken the initiative to outlaw protests earlier in the week.

The Interior Minister justified his crackdown order on France Inter on Thursday, citing "100 antisemitic acts" and adding that "24 people have been arrested." Without providing further details, it is not clear how many of the acts are racially motivated attacks against French Jews and how many are political opposition to the crimes of the Zionist state mischaracterized as antisemitic to justify Macron's crackdown.

Justice Minister Eric Dupont Moretti warned on Wednesday that "statements hailing the attacks, presenting them as legitimate resistance to Israel" constitute "antisemitic crimes."

It is now illegal in France for organizations or individuals who oppose the Israeli onslaught against the Gaza Strip, which has already claimed 1,500 lives including those of 500 children, to gather and publicly express so. As the police assaulted protesters in Paris, French President Emmanuel Macron reiterated his total support for Israel's right to defend itself in a televised national address.

The French police state's repression of the Paris protest on Thursday night took place amid an anti-democratic crackdown on opposition to the Israeli onslaught in France and throughout Europe.

Earlier in the week a protest organized for Wednesday by the Palestine Action Comittee was banned by the Gironde prefecture. A protest planned for Monday evening was banned in Lyon. In Marseille, 200 people gathered at the city's old port on Tuesday despite a ban imposed by the prefecture. Protests in defence of Palestinians have also been banned in Britain and Germany.

Like its counterparts across Europe, the Macron government is deeply hated by French society for its attacks on living standards, its construction of an ultra-

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violent police state and its racist attacks against the democratic rights of France's eight-million strong Muslim population.

Without a majority in parliament and widely despised, Macron governs against the will of the French people. In April, 62 percent of the population wanted a prolonged general strike to defeat Macron after the president forced through his unpopular pension cut with the anti-democratic 49.3 provision of the French constitution. Whilst in August 40,000 police officers were deployed throughout the country to put down youth riots following the police murder of Nahel.

The banning and suppression of pro-Palestinian protests is a continuation of Macron's brutal repression of opposition protests in France throughout the year. Before this week's arrests, over 8,000 people had been arrested in the repression of mass protests that followed his pension cuts and anti-police violence protests following the police murder of the 17-year-old Nahel in July. Dozens have been gravely injured by police assaults and the use of flash grenades.

Its crackdown on pro-Palestinian protesters reflects the Macron government's fear that domestic opposition to its support for the Israeli slaughter of Palestinians could reignite the massive social struggles that took place in France in spring and summer. Workers and youth must oppose Macron's anti-democratic attempt to strangle opposition to the Israeli regime's oppression of the Palestinians.

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