

Macron mobilizes 15,000 cops as protesting farmers threaten to blockade Paris

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Over the weekend, protesting French farmers released plans to blockade Paris and major economic centers in the capital region starting today. After French Prime Minister Gabriel Attal's concessions announced on Friday failed to stem farmers' anger, an emergency cabinet meeting was held where it was decided to mobilize 15,000 cops to keep farmers from strangling Paris' main motorways and economic hubs with farm equipment.

Many of the farmers' blockades that were in place at the end of last week were pulled back after Attal's Friday speech, in order to prepare a new wave of disruptions across the country and to target the capital for the first time since the protests began.

The Seine-et-Marne branch of the National Federation of Agricultural Owners' Unions (FNSEA) announced it plans to block the A4, A5 and A6 motorways as they join onto the Parisian ring roads starting at 2 p.m. on Monday. The Parisian regional branch of the Young Farmers union announced plans to block other major motorways around the capital and that they would also target the Rungis market, the largest food market in the world by turnover, which supplies produce for Paris and the surrounding region.

According to other regional sections of the farmers' unions, plans to mount blockades have also been prepared for other regions. Michel Joux, president of the FNSEA Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes, told BFMTV, "We are going to intensify our action at the national level. Our Parisian friends are going to block Paris. We are going to lay siege to France's second-largest city, Lyon." On Sunday, a blockade cut circulation on the A7 motorway between Lyon and Marseille.

After the emergency cabinet meeting on Sunday evening, fascistic Interior Minister Darmanin announced that 15,000 police officers would be

mobilised on Monday to "ensure that no tractor enters Paris and the large provincial towns" as well as to the Rungis Market and the Parisian airports. Before the meeting started, a gendarmerie unit with armored vehicles had already been deployed outside the Rungis market. Helicopters will also be mobilised against the farmers.

Darmanin said that "it is a difficult week that is starting" and warned that circulation in the Paris area would be "extremely difficult" on Monday.

On Sunday, the Macron government laid out a strategy of combining vague promises of more concessions with threats of a violent crackdown. After the half-measures announced by Prime Minister Gabriel Attal failed to stem the protests, he conceded on Sunday that he had "not responded" to "all the unease and all the unhappiness" of farmers but "resolved to move ahead quickly."

Later on Sunday Marc Fesneau, the Minister of Agriculture, promised new measures, both at the European and national level, to be announced on Tuesday. The cabinet was then convened for a 6 p.m. meeting and decided to mobilize 15,000 cops against protesters.

An anonymous high-ranking police official told the right-wing daily *Le Figaro* that their concern is "the number of machines that could come together." The 1,000 multi-ton tractors heading for Paris could "be a headache for police forces, who don't have equipment to remove them as they do for poorly-parked cars." The police official said their plan was to block farmers "some distance away from Paris" and hope that "farmers would not risk breaking their machines, which they use to work, by forcing a police barricade."

The government is making plans for the repression of the farmers in case it cannot engineer a stand-down,

working through the pro-government bureaucrats who lead the farmers' unions. Official circles mainly fear that popular sympathy for the farmers' struggle could reignite the wave of mass protests and wildcat strikes independently of the union bureaucracies that broke out in the country in April 2023 after President Macron forced through his pension cut.

Workers must oppose plans for a crackdown on farmers, who are protesting hardships created by European Union (EU) military build-up and plans to slash EU food production. These plans are directed above all against the workers. However, workers cannot wait for the union bureaucracies to organize such opposition. General Confederation of Labor (CGT) union President Sophie Binet has issued a vague call for a "convergence" with farmers, but the union bureaucracies do not intend to take any action that would lead to an overt clash with the Macron government.

Exploiting the inaction of the union bureaucracies, neo-fascist National Rally (RN) leader Marine Le Pen has begun campaigning among farmers, denouncing the EU and the FNSEA, the farmers' union closest to the government, while posing as a defender of French farmers. On Thursday, she spoke at a farm to warn of a "crisis that is starting and that can be long, violent and brutal."

"The FNSEA has already lost control. I think that for a long time, farmers have no longer been able to rely on their unions," Le Pen said. She blamed the FNSEA and President Emmanuel Macron for having "covered the agricultural world with charges, norms, taxes and injustice." She hailed farmers' union bureaucracies closer to the RN like the Rural Coordination, which, she said, "warn of the consequences of the EU and reject the government's bogus offers."

Interviewed about Le Pen's comments, RN lawmaker and Rural Coordination farmers' union official Christophe Barthès told *Le Monde* he hoped the farmers' unions would maintain control: "For the time being, the union is holding back the anger. But it will have to get most of its demands to keep the rank-and-file from getting the better of them."

Le Pen and the RN are not friends of the farmers, but of the riot police Macron is sending to assault them, seeking to block the entry of broader layers of the working population into struggle against Macron. They

clearly aim to profit politically, notably in this year's European elections or in the 2027 French presidential elections, from Macron's repression of farmers and workers and the bankruptcy of the union bureaucracies and their pseudo-left political allies.

This underscores the necessity, as rail workers in Germany mount a powerful nationwide strike, of organizing an international movement in the European working class against war and against the EU.

The French farmers' movement erupted last week in the wake of farmers' actions in Germany and Poland since the beginning of the year. On Sunday, Belgian farmers also blockaded the E42 motorway just north of Namur. The eruption of social opposition across Europe reflects the international nature of the struggle against capitalist governments' austerity policies and the impact of the NATO-proxy war against Russia in Ukraine on social conditions across Europe.

EU governments have sent hundreds of billions of euros in military aid for the war and used it as a justification for a massive rearmament campaign. All of these measures have been funded by deep cuts to social programs—particularly, in France, to pensions, and also to farm subsidies. Farmers were heavily impacted by hikes in fertilizer prices, which rose sharply in early 2022 and are still twice the price they were in 2020.

The threat of a violent crackdown on the farmers' protests underscores the urgency of the PES' call for a wide mobilization of the working class to support farmers' demands and defend them from state repression. Just like workers across Europe, French farmers and their colleagues across the continent are under attack from the European ruling class in order to fund their mad plans for escalating war against Russia, Iran and China.

It is only through a mass mobilization of the working class and a frontal assault on the wealth of the capitalist class that the food supply can be secured, war averted and the investment obtained to support farmers and create an ecologically sound, sustainable agricultural system.



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