

# French police crack down on spreading university protests against Gaza genocide

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As student protests across the United States against the Gaza genocide face a coordinated nationwide crackdown, university protests are also spreading across France. Students are protesting in Paris and now Lyon, Montpellier and Rennes, defying a police crackdown to break up university occupations and target opposition politicians with bogus terrorism charges over statements of solidarity with Gaza.

Protests began last week when a group of around 60 students at Sciences-Po, the Institute of Political Studies in Paris, tried to occupy part of their campus in solidarity with Gaza. Fearing an explosion of university protests, police rapidly intervened on Thursday morning, just after the occupation began, to throw the students out of the building.

Student unions at the Sorbonne University held a protest on Pantheon Square against the crackdown at Sciences-Po, defying a ban by the Paris police prefecture, that gathered around 100 students last Thursday. They were immediately surrounded by a large police presence.

Emmy, a student union official, told the press: “We are gathering to show that the students are against the genocide in Gaza, but also that we are demanding answers from our government.” She also condemned the cancellation of meetings by Jean-Luc Mélenchon on Gaza. She noted that a “movement of repression on this topic is currently underway in the universities, either due to the cancellation of conferences or when pro-Palestinians who tried to occupy Sciences-Po’s Paris campus were dislodged by police.”

Two students at the demonstration, Romain and Manal, stressed that the genocide in Gaza was an event to which there has to be broad, active opposition: “Our goal is to make the Palestinian people and their suffering visible. We can’t let certain actions in the

world go unnoticed. We have to say that we do not agree.”

The French protests are taking place against a backdrop of mass protests internationally, including in the United States, Britain, Australia, and France against the genocide perpetrated in Gaza by the Israeli state with the support of the NATO imperialist powers.

The Netanyahu government is preparing an assault on Rafah, where more than half Gaza’s population, about 1.5 million people, have fled. Fearing an explosion of social anger against the mass murder such an attack would produce, governments are launching a systematic campaign of repression and slander, claiming protests against the Gaza genocide are driven by antisemitism.

US President Joe Biden has denounced protests as “antisemitic,” as police units or groups of fascist thugs working without police interference intervene on university campuses to assault students. Dozens or hundreds of students have been arrested at New York University, Cal Poly Humboldt, Yale, the University of Minnesota and other US universities.

In France, all attempts to hold meetings on the genocide in Gaza are systematically censored or disrupted by far-right thugs. At least 626 prosecutions on charges of apologetics for terrorism are underway in France. Rima Hassan, LFI (France Unbowed) candidate in the European elections, who has spoken at protests against the Gaza genocide in Marseille, LFI parliamentarian Mathilde Panot, and Anasse Kazib, from the Morenoite *Révolution permanente* (RP) group, were all summoned for police interviews on suspicion of “apologetics for terrorism.”

LFI leader Jean-Luc Mélenchon saw his meetings in defence of Jean-Paul Delescaut, a General Confederation of Labour (CGT) union official

sentenced to a one-year suspended prison sentence, banned by Lille University and then several other universities. Delescaut's conviction was based on the release of a statement, three days after the October 7 uprising in Gaza, citing repeated UN rulings that Israel's 16-year occupation and blockade of Gaza is illegal under international law.

Mohamed Makni, the Socialist Party deputy mayor of Echirolles, received a four-month suspended prison sentence for tweeting that the October 7 Palestinian uprising was an "act of resistance" against a "fascist" Israeli state. The courts found him guilty of "apologetics for terrorism."

Such prosecutions are based on police state measures creating a pseudo-legal framework to ban opposition to genocide and war. "Apologetics for terrorism" has been defined by the courts to include any statement by which "a reader is incited to have a favorable value judgement erasing moral outrage" against terrorism. As French media denounce Hamas in Gaza or Iran's government as terrorist, this amounts to a blank cheque to Macron to criminalize statements against genocide and NATO's targeting of Iran or other countries for military aggression.

This campaign of repression and slander is aimed at the working class as a whole. Macron and his NATO allies seek to silence any expression of mass opposition among workers and youth, in France and abroad, to the systematic killing of tens of thousands of defenseless civilians in hospitals, refugee camps and during food distributions to Gaza's starving population.

As Macron has made clear by suggesting sending French troops to Ukraine to fight Russia, European governments are preparing a military escalation to directly involve the imperialist powers in a third world war that has in fact already begun. At the same time, however, they are terrified that the deep and explosive opposition among the youth and workers will erupt.

The spread of demonstrations against the Gaza genocide and NATO wars around the world today underscore that these issues are global issues, requiring a coordinated, international strategy.

The spectre of the May 1968 general strike on an international scale horrifies the ruling class around the world. May 1968 began with student protests against the capitalist regime of General Charles De Gaulle. The general strike broke out as the working class entered

into struggle against police, who violently attacked students and young workers protesting in the Latin Quarter in Paris. De Gaulle, who decided he could not count on the army to crush the strike, relied on the Stalinist CGT union bureaucracy to block a revolution and save the capitalist regime.

The example of May 1968 shows the way forward against the escalating police crackdown on youth protests over Gaza, in France and internationally. To protect the movement from police repression, it is necessary to alert and mobilise the only revolutionary force that can end genocide, war and capitalism: the international working class. Students and youth must go to workplaces and alert workers to the genocide and the fascistic police state measures that are strangling opposition.

A coordinated international movement of strikes, demonstrations and meetings must be built against the genocide, including with workers at Google fired for opposing the genocide. Workers cannot wait for LFI or the CGT bureaucracy to initiate such a movement, which they will not do. Indeed, they descend politically from the organizations that, a half century ago, saved de Gaulle's regime from socialist revolution.

This requires building an international, revolutionary Marxist leadership in the working class in struggle against genocide and imperialist war. The Parti de l'égalité socialiste (PES) encourages students and workers to participate in the International May Day Online Rally on this subject this year, organized by the International Committee of the Fourth International. The PES calls on its supporters and readers of the WSWs to register at [wsws.org/mayday](https://wsws.org/mayday) and widely promote the rally.



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