

Antisemitic arson attack hits synagogue in Grande-Motte, France

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On Saturday morning, a man carried out an arson attack on the synagogue at Grande-Motte, near the southern French city of Nîmes. Armed with a handgun and, according to some reports, an axe, he used bottles filled with a flammable liquid to set fire to the entrance of the synagogue and several vehicles in the parking lot. One of these vehicles contained a bottle of gas which exploded, wounding a municipal policeman on duty at the synagogue.

According to police, the man wore a keffiyeh and draped himself in a Palestinian flag during the attack, and did not try to hide his face from security cameras at the synagogue. French military police identified him and hunted him down by tracking his cell phone, which he had with him at the synagogue. They apprehended him Saturday night in Pissevin, a working class suburb of the city of Nîmes. He traded fire with police units, who shot him in the arm and the face before arresting him.

Interior Ministry sources identified the attacker through far-right magazine *Current Values* as 33-year-old Algerian immigrant El Hussein Khenfri. Available information indicates that he carried out the attack driven by antisemitic sentiments inflamed by the Israeli regime's genocide of the Palestinian people in Gaza.

While the attack was reactionary, so are the utterly hypocritical and false denunciations of the attack by French capitalist politicians who back the Israeli genocide in Gaza. It is politically obscene for them to posture as fighting antisemitism in a country where the capitalist state fully participated in the Holocaust of European Jewry during World War II, and when French imperialism and its NATO allies are backing today a new genocide in Gaza.

"Our thoughts go to the worshippers of the Grande-Motte synagogue and all the Jews of our country,"

wrote President Emmanuel Macron on X/Twitter, adding: "The struggle against antisemitism is a struggle of every moment, that of the united nation."

Outgoing Prime Minister Gabriel Attal, who traveled to the scene of the crime with Interior Minister Gérald Darmanin, blamed the attack on left-wing forces sympathetic to the people of Gaza since the October 7, 2023 uprising in Gaza and the Israeli government's launching of the Gaza genocide.

"We see very well that, especially since October 7, certain forces have incited a certain climate, many confusions have been generated by those who incite hatred of Jews in our country," Attal said. He added that he did not "want to go further," since "every person has his or her own idea on this issue." However, capitalist media promptly identified the target of Attal's remarks as Jean-Luc Mélenchon and the millions of workers who voted for Mélenchon's France Unbowed (LFI) party in the 2022 presidential elections and the recent July 7 elections.

The Macron government's attempts to blame antisemitic attacks on left-wing sentiment in the working class are political lies. Racial hatreds and race murder are abhorrent to left-wing workers in France and internationally. Those who incite racial hatreds are not those sympathetic to the innocent men, women and children being massacred in Gaza, but French politicians, starting at the top of the Macron government, who back the Gaza genocide and incite far-right moods inside France.

Indeed, as it has relied ever more on the riot police to repress mass opposition to its policies of austerity and war, the Macron government has resorted to inciting far-right sentiment that is rife inside the police. Interior Minister Darmanin is infamous for his statement in 2011 that he hates seeing kosher or halal foods in

French grocery stores. The most significant statement, however, was made by Macron himself.

In 2018, as he sent riot police to assault “yellow vest” protests against social inequality, Macron hailed Philippe Pétain, the convicted traitor and Nazi collaborationist dictator, as a “great soldier.” It was an unprecedented declaration of respect for far-right politics and collaboration with Nazism by a French head of state.

The Macron government’s legitimization of far-right sentiment ultimately led it to an alliance with neo-fascism in support of the Gaza genocide. Last year, its officials joined leaders of the far-right National Rally (RN), whose founder Jean-Marie Le Pen denied the Holocaust, in marches backing the Israeli government’s war on Gaza. This year, Macron invited Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who now faces international arrest warrants for genocide, to attend the Paris Olympics.

The struggle against antisemitism cannot be waged by uniting France, as Macron claims, especially when the state itself legitimizes political racism and genocide. Indeed, the government’s false argument that opposing antisemitism requires supporting Israel implicitly encourages antisemitism among those who, watching the relentless, industrial slaughter in Gaza, conclude that they utterly oppose the state of Israel.

The attack at Grande-Motte is an urgent warning of the necessity of uniting and mobilizing workers, including Muslim and Jewish workers, in struggle against the capitalist police state and the Gaza genocide.

This underlies the bankruptcy of Mélenchon’s position on the Grande-Motte attack. He responded with a tweet declaring: “Arson attack against the Grande-Motte synagogue. An intolerable crime. Our thoughts go to the worshippers and believers who are thus assaulted. Secularism and freedom of conscience are the daughters of freedom of worship. Let us never forget that.”

Capitalist media and political forces close to Macron responded by denouncing Mélenchon’s tweet, because it did not explicitly refer to antisemitism. These statements, like the Macron government’s previous denunciations of Mélenchon’s statements of solidarity with Gaza as antisemitic, are shameless lies. Opposition to the Gaza genocide, now estimated to have claimed

the lives of over 186,000 men, women and children, is in fact critical to fighting the incitement of political racism by the ruling class and by the Macron government.

But Mélenchon and the New Popular Front (NFP) formed this year by LFI, the big business Socialist Party, the Greens and the Stalinist French Communist Party have worked to stifle working class opposition to Macron—even when Macron refused to let the NFP try to form a government after winning the 2024 legislative elections. The Gaza genocide, Macron’s pension cuts, and his call to send French troops to Ukraine to fight Russia are all massively unpopular. Yet since winning the elections in July, the NFP has called no protests or strikes.

This reactionary suppression of mass political opposition in the working class creates a surreal, demoralizing atmosphere in which political racism flourishes without any visible opposition.

Significantly, an LFI candidate, Charles Ménard, won the July 7 election in Nîmes with 54 percent of the vote. Particularly in immigrant suburbs like Pissevin, where Khenfri lived, there is substantial opposition to Macron and to the Gaza genocide. Yet this opposition cannot find any concrete, collective expression under conditions where the NFP and the union bureaucracies block the building of a movement in the working class against capitalism, war and genocide.

It is in these putrid conditions that more disoriented elements, outraged by the genocide in Gaza, become vulnerable to racist moods and ultimately carry out antisemitic attacks.

The decisive question in combating political racism and genocide is the mobilization of the working class, independently of the NFP bureaucracies, in an international, socialist anti-war movement.



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