

Macron refuses to name New Popular Front to French government

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After President Emmanuel Macron finished a round of talks with leaders of France's parliamentary parties on Monday, he refused to select a prime minister to try to assemble a majority in parliament. Instead, the Elysée presidential palace issued a communiqué stating that Macron would not name a prime minister from the New Popular Front (NFP) led by Jean-Luc Mélenchon, which won a plurality in the July 7 elections.

Macron's trampling on the election results has exposed the intractable crisis of French democracy and his own deep ties to neo-fascism. His refusal to allow the election winners to try to assemble a majority in parliament has left France without a government for nearly two months. To explain this position, however, the Elysée stated that the NFP is unacceptable to legislators from the far-right National Rally (RN) and Macron's own Ensemble coalition, pledging that they would band together to bring down any government the NFP formed:

A government based only on the program and the parties proposed by the alliance with the most legislators, the New Popular Front, would be immediately censured by all the other groups represented in the National Assembly. Such a government would thus immediately have a majority of over 350 deputies against it, effectively blocking it from acting. Given the views of the political leaders that were consulted, the institutional stability of our country therefore compels us not to take this option.

Macron's pledge to work with the RN to block an NFP government is setting into motion an explosive confrontation with the working class. Macron is despised among workers for ruling against the people, after

pushing through pension cuts last year, sending riot police to assault mass protests and strikes against the cuts. Fully 91 percent of French people reject Macron's cuts, and a similar proportion oppose his call to send French troops to Ukraine for war with Russia.

The constant diversion of social wealth by the capitalist class towards imperialist war and massive bank bailouts in the face of deep popular opposition, above all, in the working class, is leading to a breakdown of democratic forms of rule.

Outgoing Prime Minister Gabriel Attal's caretaker government has reportedly begun preparing an austerity budget to freeze social spending. Since caretaker governments traditionally cannot take budgetary decisions, this only underscores the illegitimacy of the Macron regime. It will provoke bitter opposition in the working class against austerity, global imperialist war, and French and NATO backing for the Israeli regime's genocide in Gaza.

A debate is raging in the French ruling class over what coalition government to assemble to try to suppress and politically strangle this opposition. In the run-up to the July 7 elections, Macron carried out extensive discussions with the far-right RN to prepare for the installation of a far-right government. However, the elections led not to a victory of the RN but of the NFP, as millions of workers, particularly in the major cities, voted for the NFP to block the neo-fascists.

The Elysée communiqué issued an appeal to Mélenchon's allies in the NFP—primarily, the big business Socialist Party (PS) and its traditional allies, the Stalinist French Communist Party (PCF) and the Greens. It called upon them to split the NFP, abandon Mélenchon and join the parties of Macron's coalition in a governmental alliance backed by the traditional right. Imploring the PS, PCF and Greens to “cooperate with other political forces,” the communiqué stated:

Discussions with the LIOT group and the EPR, MoDem, Horizons, Radicals and UDI sketched a path towards a coalition and possible collaboration between different political sensibilities. These groups have made clear they are open to supporting a government led by a personality that would not come from their own ranks.

But for now, the PS and its allies have rejected Macron's appeal and denounced his refusal to let the entire NFP form a government. The PS attacked Macron's "intolerable" policy as a "coup" and "the rejection of a left-wing government, because he rejects and has contempt for its program." Green Party leader Marine Tondelier denounced Macron's "dangerous democratic irresponsibility" as a "shame," pledging to "keep fighting for the will of the French people: three-quarters of them want to break with the Macron regime."

PCF National Secretary Fabien Roussel said he would only meet publicly with Macron "to build a broad government led by Lucie Castets," the 37-year-old Finance Ministry bureaucrat Mélenchon has approved as the NFP's proposed prime minister.

Mélenchon for his part repeated the threats made by his France Unbowed (LFI) party to present a motion in the National Assembly to impeach Macron. "The popular and political response must be rapid and firm," he tweeted, pledging: "The motion for impeachment will be presented."

Tuesday, the Union of University Students (UE) and the National High School Students Union (UNL) called for nationwide protests "against Emmanuel Macron's autocracy." Shortly afterwards, LFI issued a call to join the UE-UNL protests. For now, the PS has not issued a statement of support or a call for participation in the UE-UNL protests, however, which are called for September 7.

A powerful movement must be built among the youth and, above all, to mobilize the working class to bring down Macron's police-state dictatorship. The military aggression abroad and class war at home waged by Macron in France and the governments of all his NATO allies must be stopped. A critical warning must however be addressed to the workers and youth: This cannot be done on a national perspective of building a capitalist government led by the NFP and, in particular, by the PS, a bourgeois party deeply hostile to socialism and the working class.

For all of the proclamations of unbridgeable differences

between various political parties that are supposedly blocking the formation of a government, the differences of policy separating these different parties are in fact relatively minor. The NFP has endorsed in its program calls to send troops to Ukraine and to build up the military police and intelligence services at home. On the basic agenda of imperialist war abroad and class war at home, the PS and Mélenchon do not represent a fundamentally different policy than Macron.

Moreover, despite Mélenchon's threats to impeach Macron, and Macron's insistence that he will not accept a NFP government, the basic form of the government they are proposing is also similar.

The NFP has 193 of the 577 seats in the National Assembly. Under these conditions, Mélenchon's threatened impeachment motion is set to fail, as have repeated censure motions LFI submitted against Macron earlier in his presidency. Moreover, whatever government the NFP might form, even if it included LFI and Mélenchon, would depend on reaching an agreement with Macron and the raft of small, right-wing parties allied to him—as Macron is currently proposing.

Indeed, by offering to back a PS-led government in which LFI would have no ministers, Mélenchon has signaled that he is open to a compromise on the issue most clearly separating Macron from the NFP: whether Mélenchon and his party would participate in the government.

Because they do not have fundamental differences with Macron, Mélenchon and the NFP have refused until now to call protests or strikes against Macron's trampling of the election results. As protests against Macron begin again, the critical question is for youth and workers to take control of their own struggle away from the NFP bureaucracies. The protests and strikes of the recent period against the Gaza genocide, pension cuts and wage austerity must be developed into a movement of the international working class against imperialist war and for socialism.



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