

# “Block Everything” September 10 day of action reveals explosive social anger in France

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As the September 10 day of action approaches, France finds itself in a historic political crisis. Prime Minister François Bayrou’s minority government—desperately weak from the moment he took office—has fallen. This opens a period of unprecedented uncertainty and instability in official politics. Pro-Macron parties are in shreds, Jean-Luc Mélenchon’s New Popular Front (NFP) is divided, and traditional right-wing parties discredited. None have managed to stabilize the situation.

In this political vacuum, the threat of a coming to power of the neo-fascist National Rally (RN), and more broadly of fascistic dictatorship, hangs over the entire institutional setup. There is constant discussion in the capitalist media of new elections. However, with a hung parliament and a deeply fragmented electorate, no clear perspective emerges for how a new government would be formed.

It is amid this deep crisis of capitalist rule in France that calls for a day of action to “Block Everything” on September 10 have emerged. A symbol of a growing social radicalization, it reflects the instinctive sense in the working class—well beyond the ranks of those now participating in the movement—that there must be a general strike to fight the power of the capitalist oligarchy.

The movement is provoking panic in the French riot police. An anonymous top Interior Ministry official told the press: “This day of action is unpredictable. The mobilization can remain dispersed, but the flames could also rapidly spread. We fear above all that it could escape the traditional mechanisms of control.” The daily *Le Monde* similarly declared that it is “a heterogeneous mobilization, escaping from trade unions and parties, threatening an uncontrollable conflagration.”

Far-right Interior Minister Bruno Retailleau has mobilized an army of 80,000 riot police to crack down on the protests. “We will tolerate no blockades, no violence, and obviously no boycott actions,” he announced on France2, as he prepared a meeting with all France’s police prefects to coordinate mass repression. Warning of “radicalization [by] extreme-left movements,” Retailleau said riot police “will have clear orders: firmness [and] to arrest as many people as possible.”

The “Block Everything” initiative for a September 10 day of action was born on the Telegram app and on other social media, where they spread very rapidly. Without publicly identified leaders or central structures, it reprises the methods of mobilization of the 2018-2019 “yellow vest” movement: local discussions, actions dispersed in many locations and informal coordination.

Various “Block Everything” collectives in Nantes are announcing that they will blockade warehouses and logistics depots. In Lyon, students are planning to occupy their campuses. In Marseille, sailors from the La Joliette port are planning to blockade the port terminals. In Paris, actions have been announced in several districts of the city.

Participants in the September 10 day of action are planning diverse actions in many forms. In Paris, several collectives are calling for a march on the National Assembly, under the slogan: “It’s not only Bayrou that must fall, but the entire rotten system.” In Toulouse, deliverymen who work on bicycles have announced their participation, with one telling the media: “We have had enough of being exploited, now is the time to strike hard.”

In Lille, students are planning to protest the rise in rents by organizing a symbolic occupation of real estate

agencies. In Bordeaux, dockers are discussing a 24-hour blockade of the entries into the city's port.

The General Directorate of Internal Security (DGSI) has published estimates that around 100,000 people may participate across France, while expressing doubts as to whether they are prepared for a long struggle. However, the decisive issue is elsewhere. The "Block Everything" call has escaped the control of the union leaderships, who do not know how to position themselves in response. It makes clear how protests, and above all mass strike action by the working class, can escape what the French state itself admits are the "traditional mechanisms of control."

Initially, France's main trade union federations—the Stalinist General Confederation of Labor (CGT) and the social democratic Workers Force (FO) and French Democratic Labor Confederation (CFDT)—treated the call with suspicion and barely veiled hostility. At the beginning of September, CGT General Secretary Sophie Binet dismissed it as "a nebulous entity without clear demands, where one can get roped in with reactionary forces."

But amid the rapid spread of support for the mobilization, unions in certain industries began to take a different position. The Pabloite-anarchist Solidarity, Union Democracy (SUD) Rail union issued a call to "make the country ungovernable with strikes and blockades." The CGT's Chemical Industry branch issued a statement declaring: "We will be in the streets and the factories on September 10, not to hold back but to amplify workers' anger."

In Rennes, SUD members announced: "On September 10, we will blockade the industrial zone. This is just the beginning." On the other hand, the CFDT issued a call to "avoid excesses and remain inside the framework of clear social demands," illustrating continuing attempts by broad sections of the bureaucracy to hold back and smother the movement.

The positions of the union bureaucracies are profoundly contradictory. On the one hand, they promote themselves to workers, with the assistance of parties like Jean-Luc Mélenchon's France Unbowed or the Pabloite New Anticapitalist Party, as the best placed organizations to obtain media coverage and logistical support for strike action. However, by tying workers to a perspective of negotiating with capitalist governments, they inevitably become a brake on the

movement, then sell it out.

The decisive question facing workers and youth in this day of action is how to mobilize the working class more broadly in a struggle against imperialist war, austerity and police state dictatorship. Macron's pension cuts and his calls to send French troops to Ukraine for war with Russia are rejected by nine out of 10 people in France. This overwhelming working class opposition must be unified and mobilized against the capitalist oligarchy's plans for mass repression.

Workers must organize themselves independently, in rank-and-file committees to escape the "mechanisms of control," that is, political sabotage by the union bureaucracies. The organization of movements like the "yellow vest" protests and "Block Everything" show how mass action can be organized independently of the unions, via social media. This same principle must be applied to organizing not only one-day social protests but the launching of mass strike actions leading toward a general strike.

Above all, workers in France need to find allies internationally—reaching out to workers in the United States fighting Trump's coup, in Germany preparing strikes against austerity measures designed to fund the government's €1 trillion military spending bill, and beyond. Only such an international struggle can ultimately smash the power of the financial markets and the capitalist oligarchy and pave the way for a socialist revolution.



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