

Netherlands set for October snap election amid crisis of bourgeois rule

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As the Dutch ruling class prepares for snap elections on October 29, 2025, the working class confronts a political system lurching further to the right under the combined pressures of militarism, austerity and authoritarian rule. From the fascistic far right to the discredited labour parties and pseudoleft formations, official parties across the board have drafted election programs that serve the ruling political and financial elite, guaranteeing that any coalition emerging from the elections will intensify war abroad while tightening repression at home.

Amid mass anti-genocide protests in The Hague, the collapse of the Dutch government in June—after Geert Wilders’s far-right Party for Freedom (PVV) withdrew from the four-party coalition—was a calculated maneuver by the ruling elite to gain time to recalibrate its methods of authoritarian rule and advance its imperialist interests. This mirrors a broader international and European trend in which the bourgeoisie is deepening militarism and autocracy, fusing nationalist scapegoating of immigrants and refugees with savage austerity.

The ruling caretaker government, led by unelected former spy Dick Schoof, has reaffirmed Netherlands’ €19 billion NATO contribution, escalating the war against Russia in Ukraine and continuing tacit support for Israel’s genocide in Gaza. These actions expose the ruling class’s central priorities: war abroad and the intensification of class war at home.

The political crisis in The Hague deepened in August when all ministers of the New Social Contract (NSC)—the coalition’s second-largest party—resigned after then Foreign Minister Caspar Veldkamp quit in protest at the government’s refusal to impose even minimal sanctions on Israel. The resignations were an attempt to deflect and contain public outrage over atrocities in Gaza. Across Europe, from the United Kingdom to Germany, governments have offered token gestures to limit Israel’s actions, hoping to placate public opinion while maintaining full imperialist support.

The remainder of the caretaker coalition, the People’s Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD) and the Farmer–Citizen Movement (BBB), now holds only 32 of 150 seats—far short of a parliamentary majority. This exposes both the fragility of Dutch parliamentary rule and the bourgeoisie’s reliance on symbolic gestures to mask complicity in imperialist war and domestic class repression.

Despite its weakened position, the caretaker cabinet is pressing ahead with an aggressive war budget. Annual military spending stands at €25 billion, bolstered by an extra €1.1 billion approved in April 2025, while social programs are being gutted: education cut by €1.2 billion, healthcare by €2.3 billion and culture and the arts by €200 million. Combined with 4 percent inflation and up to a 30 percent rise in health premiums, these measures intensify the financial burden on working class households, revealing the social cost of prioritizing war and profit over human needs.

The ruling class’s prioritization of militarism and imperialist war has provoked widespread opposition in the Netherlands, reflecting a broader international trend. In May and June, over 150,000 people marched in The Hague’s “Red Line” demonstrations; a third protest is scheduled for

Amsterdam on October 5, linking solidarity with Gaza to demands for social justice at home.

Students occupied campuses nationwide, such as in Utrecht, Nijmegen and Amsterdam, denouncing the militarization of education and calling for an end to military subsidies. Nationwide railway strikes and a university staff strike in June—though limited and fragmented by the union leadership—illustrated the growing mobilization of Dutch and immigrant workers and youth. As the WSW has emphasized, these struggles cannot be reduced to moral appeals or pressure politics; they must be extended to challenge the capitalist system itself.

A revealing opinion poll carried out by Motivaction International in September found that 42 percent of respondents said the war in Gaza would influence their vote “either slightly or a great deal” in the upcoming general election. In a separate Ipsos/I&O poll, 58 percent wanted the government to be “more critical of Israel.” International questions of imperialist war and genocide are therefore decisive for a sizeable portion of the Dutch electorate in casting their vote.

Furthermore, similar to Trump’s executive order labelling Antifa a terrorist organization—effectively authorizing the branding of political dissent as “terrorism”—the Dutch Tweede Kamer adopted a motion on September 18 urging the government to do the same.

Introduced by Wilders’ PVV and other far-right parties and backed by former Prime Minister and now NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte’s VVD, the motion is the first European parliamentary initiative of its kind. It sets a dangerous precedent for expanding state surveillance and repressing mounting social discontent under draconian law, laying the groundwork for intensified repression and criminalization of left-wing opposition under the guise of combating “domestic extremism.” Dutch media largely ignored the motion, and international outlets downplayed it as “not yet legally binding.”

The merger of Green Left and the Labour Party

In a similar vein, mainstream media plays a crucial role in presenting the merger of GroenLinks (Green Left) and the PvdA (Labour Party) into a single electoral bloc—GroenLinks–PvdA—as a “progressive breakthrough.”

Just as the media avoids labelling Wilders’ PVV as neo-fascist, it brands the new party led by Jesse Klaver and Frans Timmermans as “left.” Timmermans is a seasoned minister under both Balkenende and Rutte governments, former European Commission Vice President and supporter of the US-NATO war in Ukraine. The description of the merger as “left” confers false legitimacy on two discredited parties entrenched in the bourgeois establishment, whose interests align with the upper middle class elite and lack a genuine and significant working class base.

The merged party presents itself as the “rebirth of a centre left” to block

Wilders. Nearly 90 percent of party members endorsed the merger, invoking the urgency of countering the “populist threat.” Having already contested the 2023 elections on a joint list, this so-called “new left formation” is a political trap engineered to re-legitimize the capitalist order and channel mounting popular discontent into a parliamentary dead end. Dutch trade union bureaucrats, such as in the FNV, have eagerly hosted joint meetings with its leaders, presenting themselves as social partners committed to a “peace-first foreign policy.”

Klaver’s objections to the €1.1 billion increase to the military budget—framed as “strategic planning”—and Timmermans’ calls for a “Green-Deal-oriented security policy” have been cast in the media as principled opposition. In reality, both are deeply embedded in NATO and EU military-financial frameworks. Their post-election migration stances furthermore reveal procedural tweaks compared to their former “humanitarian concerns”: Klaver questioned deportation practices without opposing mass expulsions; Timmermans advocated labour-migration limits under the guise of policy coordination.

The newly formed party manifesto, “Een nieuwe start voor Nederland” (“A new start for the Netherlands”), especially the lengthy sections on immigration and domestic and foreign policy, demonstrates how the establishment has lurched further to the right, reducing the rest to demagoguery on acute social issues, such as affordable housing, rising costs and dwindling social spending on healthcare and education.

Similarly, the ex-Maoist Socialist Party (SP) has embraced far-right policies promoted by Wilders. In spring 2024, it voted with the coalition to expand police powers to disperse farmer protests. In September that same year, it backed the military budget as “necessary for security of the Netherlands and Europe.” On migration, it frames immigration as a “competition for jobs” between “native” and “foreign labour,” backing stricter asylum rules, faster expulsions and reduced allowances for Ukrainian refugees.

By endorsing rising defence spending, stricter policing and restrictive migration under successive Rutte governments, the SP has enabled unprecedented police brutality and surveillance, especially against anti-Gaza genocide demonstrators. As the WSWS has repeatedly warned, the SP’s role has systematically enabled the rise of the Dutch far right. Its manifesto, “Super sociaal!”, includes empty words on Gaza and far more empty promises on pressing social questions faced by the Dutch working class as part of the international working class.

The Dutch establishment’s promotion of a “new centre?left” merger must be understood as part of a broader pattern across European capitals: electoral pacts that appear to offer a progressive alternative but ultimately divert social opposition back into stabilizing a rotten and disintegrating political establishment. Everywhere in Europe, formations claiming to represent a “new progressive” or “left alternative” to the far right have proved instrumental to give a breather to the capitalist order in decay.

These political spin-offs fundamentally prevent the working class from breaking free of the capitalist framework, suppress strikes and protests and legitimize war, genocide and austerity under a “progressive” veneer.

The Dutch GroenLinks–PvdA bloc is no exception. Timmermans calls for a “just climate transition” but supports massive subsidies for Shell, Heineken and Philips and the 40 percent defense spending increase taken from healthcare, education and housing. Klaver calls for “fairness” but accepts the EU Stability Pact. On refugees, both parties have backed “managing flows” and “European burden-sharing”—language that justifies Fortress Europe policies and acquiesces to Wilders’ neo-fascist agenda.

Radicalization of youth and workers

The summer months of July and August saw further radicalization of youth and the working class, reflecting broader European developments since, especially in France and Italy. Palestine solidarity protests, continuing into sit-ins and rallies across Utrecht, Amsterdam and Groningen, linked Dutch complicity in genocide to domestic austerity and militarization. The KLM staff at Schiphol went on repeated strikes that continued to be isolated by the trade union apparatus. The “Red Line” marches in The Hague were only the beginning of a broader mass mobilization. Without a revolutionary leadership, however, such movements risk being derailed by outfits such as GroenLinks–PvdA, which claims to “support” them while upholding US-NATO wars, EU diktats and repression.

The deployment of half the Dutch police at the July NATO summit in The Hague was particularly revealing. Alongside F-35 jets, drones and roadblocks, the caretaker government staged the largest security operation in Dutch history—not to deter foreign threats but to intimidate the working class.

Dutch hospitals report they will face staff shortages of 60,000 by 2030; student debt has doubled in a decade; 390,000 households cannot afford rent; 60 percent struggle to pay bills; food bank usage has risen by over 30 percent since 2022. Yet, defense spending soars and corporate subsidies remain untouched. This is not merely a budgetary choice—It reflects a ruling class preparing for broader war and social confrontation.

For the Dutch working class, the chief danger in this month’s elections lies in being disarmed by the illusion of voting for a “lesser evil.” The media hypes the Red-Green bloc as the “only hope” against Wilders. History shows that such alliances do not defeat the far right but rather play a pivotal role in emboldening it. Germany’s SPD-Green coalition’s war drive fed the far-right AfD’s rise. A GroenLinks–PvdA led government in the Netherlands similarly will not halt Wilders but prepare his return on a stronger, more reactionary basis.

Wilders’ PVV is leading in the polls, though its support is lower than in the last elections. Its manifesto, “Dit is jouw land” (“This is your land”), spells out a fascistic program, galvanizing lumpen elements into its own version of stormtroopers. The recent neo-fascist riot against immigration in The Hague, parading Dutch colonial VOC flags and those of the notorious fascist NSB party, underscores this trajectory. Passages in the PVV manifesto fuse hardline anti-immigration rhetoric with claims to defend “Dutch identity,” while simultaneously demanding a massive expansion of the state apparatus and a surge in defense spending.

The alternative to the Dutch bourgeoisie’s class war agenda cannot be found in electoral coalitions within the framework of capitalism but only in the independent mobilization of the working class. The strikes on the railways, occupations at Dutch universities and the “Red Line” marches show the potential for a unified movement linking anti-war, anti-austerity and anti-racist struggles. But this requires breaking decisively with GroenLinks–PvdA and the entire apparatus of reformism, its pseudo-left satellites and union bureaucracies. It requires building rank-and-file committees in workplaces, schools and neighborhoods, coordinated nationally and internationally.

The socialist, internationalist perspective is clear: Redirect billions from war to social needs; expropriate banks and corporations under workers’ control; dismantle NATO; unite workers across Europe to build a United Socialist States of Europe. Only this perspective can enable the working class to confront austerity, resist authoritarianism and end imperialist war and genocide. The GroenLinks–PvdA ploy is part of the problem, not the solution. Dutch workers must see through false promises of the media-baptized nominal left, draw crucial historical lessons and build a politically independent revolutionary vanguard.

The choice is crystal clear: Either the working class advances its interests to seize power, or the ruling elite—through Wilders, or Timmermans and the like—will drag society deeper into the quagmire of

war, repression and social misery.



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