

# European imperialism joins in the illegal US-Israeli war on Iran

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The US-Israeli war against Iran is rapidly broadening into a multi-front regional—and increasingly global—conflagration. The war is expanding across the Middle East and is pulling the European imperialist powers ever more directly into military operations.

In the Middle East, Israel has expanded its operations beyond Iran into Lebanon, carrying out relentless strikes across the country, including attacks in central Beirut on densely populated residential areas. Over 800,000 people have been forced to flee, while more than 600 people have been killed and 1,444 injured.

The conflict is already shaking world markets, fueling price spikes, and the Strait of Hormuz, through which a major portion of the world's oil transits, has become a flashpoint for direct confrontation.

At the same time, the European imperialist powers are being drawn in—politically and militarily—under the fraudulent banner of “protecting shipping routes” and “defending bases.”

On Tuesday, French President Emmanuel Macron landed on the nuclear-armed aircraft carrier Charles de Gaulle to announce that France would lead a European naval group in the Middle East. Barely a week after he admitted the US-Israeli war on Iran is “waged outside the framework of international law,” he committed France and its European allies to joining this illegal war.

As Macron had declared the war to be illegal, one might imagine statements he could have made. But did he announce that France would oppose it? Did he criticize crimes committed by US and Israeli forces against the Iranian people, including the massacre of 160 school girls bombed in Minab, the bombing of hospitals, the poisoning of Iran's skies by bombing Iranian fuel depots? Did he announce that French air bases would be closed to US warplanes? No, not at all.

Instead, he said that, alongside Spanish, Dutch, Italian and Greek warships, the French aircraft carrier and its escorts would “coordinate a larger operation ... totally peaceful and defensive, but which is our responsibility, which in this very

disorganized context to preserve freedom of navigation and participation in maritime security.” While this would involve the Mediterranean and the Red Sea first, he added, it would ultimately grow to “restoring, when the conditions are correct, passage through and the calibrated opening of the Strait of Hormuz.”

This is, in all but name, a declaration of war by France and its European allies against Iran. While European warships' initial deployment would shield Israel and NATO bases in the Middle East from Iranian retaliatory strikes against US-Israeli bombings, this is—from the outset—intended to prepare an intervention into Iranian waters in the Strait of Hormuz.

In response to US-Israeli aggression and the deployment of US warships to the Indian Ocean to blockade Iran's oil shipments, Iran has blockaded the Strait of Hormuz. While Iran bombs US bases in the Persian Gulf region, it is cutting off this vital sea artery through which 20 percent of the world's oil and gas, and a third of its fertilizers, flow to world markets. Iranian forces have struck at least a dozen ships trying to run this blockade, firing anti-ship missiles from protected bases along Iran's coast.

In his perfunctory, seven-minute speech to sailors on the Charles de Gaulle, Macron did not answer any of the questions raised by his remarks. He did not attempt to explain why, only a few months after the Trump administration slapped trade war tariffs on Europe and threatened to invade and seize the Danish territory of Greenland, European powers are siding with Trump's illegal war.

Nor did Macron specify under what conditions he would send the Charles de Gaulle to force its way through the Strait of Hormuz. In part, this was because his remarks were intended to calm the panic in financial markets over the closure of the Strait—which saw oil prices briefly spike to well over \$100 per barrel—by making it seem that the Strait will soon be reopened.

More fundamentally, however, spelling out Macron's calculations on breaking the Hormuz blockade would reveal the criminal character of his policy. Currently, US warships,

like their European counterparts, are staying hundreds of kilometers away from the Strait to keep out of range of Iranian missiles. They could only steam into the Strait, a few kilometers off Iran's coast, if US-Israeli carpet bombing of Iran had so totally crushed Iranian resistance that these warships did not fear missile or artillery attack.

Macron's claim that this policy is "peaceful and defensive" is an insult to the intelligence of the people of France and the world. As Iran continues to fire volley after volley of ballistic missiles at US and Israeli targets across the region, it is clear that crushing Iran would require barbaric levels of violence.

In the war against Iran, the NATO imperialist powers are applying the methods of the Gaza genocide to a regional and ultimately global war. Israel's relentless bombardment of Lebanon is being carried out under an umbrella of anti-air protection provided by US and European warships. Macron's pledge to send the Charles de Gaulle to the Red Sea referred to plans to resume bombing Yemen, where Houthi militias have responded to the war on Iran by launching strikes on Israel.

US imperialism is setting into motion a third imperialist world war to preserve its global hegemony, aimed in the first instance at China and Russia. A few months after Washington kidnapped Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro and demanded Venezuela hand over its oil, it is again at war with a country friendly to Russia and China and that is a critical supplier of energy to China.

This war is inseparable from a class war waged by imperialism on the international working class. By setting into motion a blockade of Middle East shipping lanes cutting off supplies of petrochemicals and fertilizers, they are threatening to trigger a collapse of energy-intensive industrial activity, a collapse of food production and an economic depression. The main victims of such a collapse would be the working and oppressed people of the world.

The example of France highlights one essential reality: It is impossible to halt capitalism's plunge into catastrophe with policies pursued on the national stage. The European governments and ruling classes are, of course, well aware of their bitter economic and strategic conflicts with Washington. Yet from Gaza to Venezuela and Iran, they have repeatedly sided with Washington as it seeks to violently assert its fading global hegemony.

The underlying material interests driving this policy were explained in the emergency webinar held this weekend by the *World Socialist Web Site*. The war's underlying aim, as WSWS International Editorial Board Chairman David North explained in the webinar, is "to abolish the 20th century—to wipe out all the consequences of the national democratic and socialist struggles of the 20th century, to act as if it was all

somehow a big mistake, that colonial domination can be restored and imperialism can rule." Through it, imperialism is declaring to the workers of the world: "Slaves you were and slaves you will be."

For over a decade, and especially since the outbreak of the NATO-Russia war in Ukraine in 2022, the European powers have relentlessly attacked the workers to fund rearmament. Macron is scrapping social concessions French workers won after the fall of Nazi rule over Europe in World War II, to divert hundreds of billions of euros from social spending to the war machine. In 2023, he slashed pensions despite overwhelming opposition and mass strikes, relying on the union bureaucracies and parties of the New Popular Front to shut down and sell out the struggle.

Insofar as they are still militarily too weak to confront Washington, the European powers respond to US wars with cowardly complicity, seeking to assert their own imperialist interests under the US umbrella and continue their class war on the workers. Fearing the explosive discontent in their own populations, they are deeply alarmed at the widespread opposition to the Iran war in the American and international working class.

The alternative, as the WSWS webinar explained, is the construction of an international and socialist anti-war movement in the working class:

[The] working class is not powerless, and it will move in response, in opposition to the war, the economic crisis and the attacks on its living standards, as well as against the development of fascism and authoritarianism in the United States, Europe and elsewhere. But this movement, which will develop and is developing on a global scale, requires political leadership, which must be international, must be grounded in the lessons of revolutionary struggles throughout history.



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