

# Mélenchon 2027: A presidential campaign that holds back workers' mobilization

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On May 3, Jean-Luc Mélenchon announced his candidacy for the 2027 presidential election on TF1's evening news broadcast. His interview with Anne-Claire Coudray laid out not a revolutionary perspective but the absence of one. Together with his party, La France Insoumise (LFI), he is acting not to mobilize workers against austerity and war but to smother them within a nationalist orientation toward French capitalist institutions.

Pressed to explain his decision to run after having proclaimed his retirement at the last presidential election in 2022, Mélenchon brushed the question aside: "I haven't changed my mind. ... the discussion wasn't about who is the best candidate from the standpoint of I don't know what, what kind of aesthetics. It was: who is best prepared to face the situation that is coming?" He cited the danger of a "generalized war."

Today, Mélenchon claims he is the man France needs to face the crisis, but his own successive capitulations have played a major role in the emergence of that crisis. On the subject of the presidential race, he has indeed changed his mind. In April 2022, on the evening of the first round of the presidential election, as the vote count continued and he could still hope to qualify for the second round, he rushed before the cameras to concede defeat, announce his political retirement and call on his voters to vote "against Le Pen"—that is, for Macron.

The *World Socialist Web Site* analyzed that reversal at the time. Far from being a sincere admission of defeat, Mélenchon's "retirement" was aimed at demobilizing the millions of workers and young people who had voted for him, stripping them of any perspective for an independent struggle against war and austerity. The withdrawal statement was not an act of modesty but a gesture of preemptive capitulation, designed to extinguish the social energy generated by his campaign.

This became clear during the 2023 strikes against the pension reform imposed by Macron without a parliamentary vote, despite the opposition of an overwhelming majority of the French public. Millions of workers went on strike repeatedly between January and May. LFI—far from seeking to channel that opposition into a general strike to bring down Macron and halt the war already underway in Ukraine—pushed it into a parliamentary dead end: It called on the National Assembly to vote a repeal bill, even though the parliamentary majority was firmly opposed.

Mélenchon had declared at the time: "We have an appointment at the National Assembly ... Nobody wants this conflict to drag on." These words summarize his politics today: not preparing the working class for a decisive struggle but pushing it into the dead end of a purely institutional resolution.

## Iran and Gaza: silence on French imperialism's complicity

Mélenchon analyzed the international situation as follows: "We are entering a very turbulent season in world history. We are threatened with a

generalized war. We are threatened by a spectacular change in the climate. And then we have an economic and social crisis that is bearing down on us." He went on to address the rise in fuel prices in France:

"None of this falls from the sky. It is not a mistake made by poor people who didn't go to work enough. All of this is a war started by two countries: Israel and the USA. And whoever started this situation therefore has a political cause."

Having criticized the obvious and undeniable responsibility of Trump and the Israeli regime for their military aggression against Iran, Mélenchon then responded to the journalist's question about what he would have done in Macron's place. Mélenchon replied that he would have built an alliance with the PSOE-Sumar government in Spain to defend international law and stop the war. He said:

"I would have made international law my banner... I would have created a front of refusal with the Spanish... We would start with one thing: cutting the European Union's commercial cooperation relationship with Israel. Israel cannot survive without the European Union. And with that, an arms embargo."

This reasoning has an appearance of coherence and proposes defensible measures, such as an embargo targeting Israel following the genocide in Gaza. But it is silent on several decisive questions. First, and we will return to this, it does not address the consequences for workers of an alliance with the capitalist PSOE-Sumar government.

But above all, Mélenchon does not say that Macron is a political criminal. He does not say that France, since the beginning of the war on February 28, has made its military bases at Istres and in the Persian Gulf available for the American-Israeli aggression against Iran. He does not say that France, under Macron, continued to deliver arms to Israel even as the genocide in Gaza was underway. He does not say that Macron, by publicly declaring his friendship with the Netanyahu regime, made himself complicit in crimes against humanity.

Mélenchon, who wants to confine workers within the framework of French institutions, says nothing about the politically criminal evolution of French imperialism or about the fact that Macron's ministers marched alongside the neo-fascist National Rally (RN) to defend the Israeli regime.

Where does this silence come from? It comes from his own record. During the 2024 legislative elections, even as the genocide in Gaza had been underway for months, Mélenchon was calling for votes for candidates from the Socialist Party (PS) and the Macronist bloc—formations that supported Israel's policies. Pointing today at Macron as a genocide accomplice would oblige Mélenchon to account for his own Nouveau Front Populaire (New Popular Front). This silence is not modesty; it is complicity.

As the WSWs has documented, when the United States and Israel launched their war against Iran, Mélenchon did not call on the millions of LFI voters to strike against the war. He confined himself to deploring violations of international law, while remaining silent on the struggles of Iranian workers and on Washington's maneuvers to prepare that war.

Moreover, he described a movement in which the CIA and Mossad were intervening as a “citizen revolution,” notably in his tweets of January 14 and afterward. In doing so he became a champion of all the forces intervening in that movement, since “citizen revolution” is the central concept of his own book, *The Era of the People*, and the perspective he continues to advance today. In this way he whitewashed the intervention of imperialism and Zionism in Iran and throughout the Middle East.

### **On the social crisis: freeze prices, but wait until 2027**

Mélenchon devoted a large part of the interview to fuel prices, calling for a price freeze. He continued, in terms that ring true for millions of workers:

“A mass of people are having part of their wages stolen to pay for gasoline, which notably they need to get to work. Yes, it is their wages going directly into the pockets of Total’s shareholders. If I use the old vocabulary [that is, Marxist language, which Mélenchon treats as outdated—Ed.], I would say: this is money passing from labor to capital.”

This diagnosis, apart from the assertion that minimizes the significance of the capital-labor distinction, is broadly correct. The fuel price crisis is the direct product of Trump’s blockade of the Strait of Hormuz and the speculation of energy markets fueling cascading crises across the global economy. It is indeed organized theft. But Mélenchon does not pose the question: How do we achieve a price freeze?

The implicit answer he gives in the interview is: Wait a year, then elect me president. In the current situation, this is a form of passivity that takes on a politically criminal character.

The crisis triggered by the Hormuz blockade is striking now—in transportation, in food, in housing. It will not wait for the end of the 2027 presidential second round. By then, a global recession could be entrenched, and millions of workers could have lost their jobs. An international social mobilization is needed to impose a price freeze, expropriate the war profits of oil companies and, above all, to stop the war and the energetic strangling of the global economy.

Yet Mélenchon does the opposite: He asks his voters to wait for the electoral deadline, to be patient within the framework of bourgeois institutions, to delegate their social power to a tribune who promises to negotiate with Total rather than expropriate it. In this way he blocks the working class from developing an awareness of its own collective strength and defuses any perspective for an international mobilization. This is not a revolutionary program of struggle; it is a program of demobilization.

### **The “New France”: people versus class**

Mélenchon announced that his campaign would put forward what he called the “New France,” to which he attempted to give a popular content by invoking racial and gender identity. To flesh out the slogan, he continued:

“One in three French people has a foreign ancestor. One family in two has left its region of origin. Don’t you see that women have a completely different status from what they had in 1958? Young people, elderly people who are more numerous than ever. All of that is the New France. The New France is not one part of France against another; it is all of France.”

By foregrounding women and racial or national minorities, Mélenchon sets aside the class divide within this France, which is the same as in the “old” one. Lumping together the bourgeois, the small property owners

and the workers under these identity categories, he leaves aside precisely what is essential from a Marxist standpoint: The overwhelming majority of both the “new” and the “old” France consists of workers exploited by the capitalist oligarchy.

Against war, fascism and austerity, workers must be united across national borders, including the racial and gender borders erected in each country. The “New France” politics runs counter to such a development. By focusing on electoral campaigns in the suburbs of major cities, Mélenchon abandons to the RN other traditional centers of the workers’ movement, such as the mining and steel basins of Northern and Eastern France. In the 2024 elections, he even rejected calls within LFI to campaign there.

The substitution of “the people” and racial or gender categories for a class perspective is not a mere rhetorical adjustment: It is a political decision. By diverting workers from the necessary struggle for working-class unity, it favors the normalization of a populist political climate in which the capitalist oligarchy can normalize neo-fascist populism.

The alternative: building international unity, the political independence of the working class

Mélenchon’s interview on TF1 demonstrates that none of the burning questions facing workers will be resolved through the presidential elections. The interview sends a clear signal to the ruling class: Mélenchon is trying to create a political framework for the electoral campaign that will exclude the questions of world war, genocide and the necessary mobilization of workers against austerity and fascism.

This illustrates what the Parti de l’égalité socialiste (PES), the French section of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), has always maintained: LFI is a petty-bourgeois pseudo-left formation that channels working-class opposition toward the ballot box and the framework of the capitalist state.

Faced with the war against Iran, Mélenchon does not mobilize—He watches. Faced with the genocide in Gaza, he conceals Macron’s complicity, because he himself called for votes for Macron’s accomplices in the 2024 elections. Faced with the social crisis triggered by the Hormuz blockade, he proposes not mobilization but electoral waiting. Lastly, faced with the explosion of class tensions, he substitutes “the people” for the working class in order to preserve the unity of a cross-class bloc.

His call for an alliance with the PSOE-Sumar government—formerly PSOE-Podemos—must also serve as a warning about what a Mélenchon government would look like. The Spanish government is not favorable to workers. It has pursued a policy of massive military spending increases, social austerity, repression of protests against the suppression of Catalan nationalists and, above all, systematic repression of strikes in Spain.

When workers entered into struggle—during the metalworkers’ strikes in Cadiz in November 2021 or the national truckers’ strike of March–April 2022—the PSOE-Podemos government sent in security forces to repress them. These experiences, on which Mélenchon is silent, must serve as a warning to workers. If Mélenchon came to power, he would be perfectly capable of repressing workers’ mobilizations, just as the PS in France did in the 1980s and 1990s, when Mélenchon was still a PS member.

Indeed, the American-Israeli war against Iran and its global economic consequences demonstrate that we have entered a phase of acute capitalist crisis. It demands an international political response commensurate with the situation. Workers in France, Iran, the United States and around the world face the same enemies—the capitalist oligarchies that wage war to defend their profits, at the cost of tens of thousands of lives. The response to this situation cannot be national, institutional and deferred by a year.

Workers who genuinely wish to fight war, austerity and organized plunder will not find their instrument in Mélenchon’s candidacy. They must build rank-and-file committees independent of the trade union bureaucracies, unite with their class brothers and sisters internationally and mobilize independently of the political and union apparatuses tied to

the Nouveau Front Populaire that Mélenchon leads.

To wage such a struggle, those who support this perspective and political strategy must first unite and organize. This means building the Parti de l'égalité socialiste—the only organization in France that defends the perspective of the international and independent organization of the working class on the basis of Permanent Revolution.

To give an indication of the content of this perspective in the context of the French presidential elections, the PES advances the following demands:

- Stop the war against Iran and the genocide in Gaza!
- French troops out of the Middle East and Africa!
- Not a euro, not a soldier for the wars of imperialism!
  - Price freeze and expropriation of war profits through workers' mobilization!
- For an international working-class movement against war, for the expropriation of the capitalist oligarchy and for socialism!



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