

May Day 2026

French imperialism, the war on Iran and the EU assault on migrants

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This speech was delivered by Alex Lantier, Parti de l'égalité socialiste (PES) national secretary, at the 2026 May Day Online Rally, organized by the WSWS and the International Committee of the Fourth International.

Dear comrades, dear friends, the Socialist Equality Party of France extends its fraternal greetings on May 1st, International Labour Day. The need for international struggle has never been clearer than in 2026, as the world burns and European governments feed the flames.

In February, the USA and Israel launched a war against Iran. Thousands of targets were bombed, towns devastated and an entire region plunged into chaos. An American blockade prevents gas and fertilizers from reaching the world economy, and Trump threatens to exterminate Iran.

Officially, France did not choose this war, but what are its soldiers doing in the Gulf? Its air bases are used to refuel the planes that bomb Iran. The government defends its choices by declaring itself ready to contribute to free navigation in the Strait of Hormuz. In other words: it is ready to send ships to threaten Iran, protect oil interests and diplomatically cover the American-Israeli offensive.

Macron is complicit in the aggression against Iran and Trump's threats to exterminate Iranian civilization. The debacle of the American aggression against Iran is also the debacle of French imperialism. While the bombs fall on the Middle East, another war is being waged on the blue waters of the Mediterranean. Seventy people died together on April 4, when a boat barely 15 meters long left the coast of Libya in an attempt to reach the Italian port of Lampedusa. Of the

100 or so people on board, only 32 were rescued, many hours after the wreck. Why is this?

Europe is turning away refugees and cutting back on rescue operations in order to increase the number of drownings at sea. The victims are men, women and children fleeing misery and imperialist wars. Since 2014, more than 35,000 people have died en route to Europe, drowned, died of hunger or thirst or executed by law enforcement.

In Libya, coast guards funded by European taxes forcibly return refugees from the sea to camps where they are tortured, raped or sold into slavery.

At the same time, Europe is drawing up a Return Regulation that will generalize expulsions and the repression of immigrants.

What we are experiencing is not a series of separate crises. It is a worldwide counter-revolutionary offensive by the ruling class. US Secretary of State Marco Rubio admitted as much at the Munich Security Conference. He declared that the Western world had been in decline since the "atheist communist" or anti-colonial struggles that followed the Second World War.

It's not just Iran that imperialism is targeting in 2026. It is all the achievements of the revolutionary struggles of the 20th century. In France, it is what is left of the social program of the Liberation: Social Security, nationalizations, rights wrested by the working class from the rubble of Nazism. It's also the legacy of African anti-colonial struggles. It is every advance that workers have fought so hard to achieve.

In France, since the mass strikes against pension reform in 2023, a succession of minority governments tried to impose the diktat of the capitalist oligarchy on the people. Bolstered by the fact that Mélenchon and

the union leaderships have sold out this struggle, the bourgeoisie is constantly proposing social attacks. It aims to transfer tens or hundreds of billions of euros from social spending to war and the banks.

Exploiting the bankruptcy of Mélenchon's New Popular Front, it is trying to legitimize far-right forces and xenophobia against refugees in order to create the conditions for continuing this dictatorial project.

The response of workers to this situation cannot be national. Washington's debacle against Iran signifies the beginning of a new era in the international class struggle. It's about mobilizing ever larger masses of workers, at a grassroots level, to stop the escalation of the Third World War, the persecution of migrants, take power away from war-mongering oligarchies and build a socialist society.

It is on this program that we call on workers and young people to join the Socialist Equality Party in France and the sections of our movement internationally.



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