

Masses of youth march in France as union bureaucracies delay broader struggle

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On Thursday, over 100,000 youth and workers marched in France in a nationwide day of action called by high school student unions against President Emmanuel Macron's government. It was two days after nearly a half-million marched in a similar nationwide protest as protests spread across Europe—with mass housing protests in Spain, high school strikes in Belgium and protests against conscription in Germany.

The decisive question before youth and workers participating in these movements is independently mobilizing the working class in a broader struggle. The youth alone cannot defeat police repression, or impose the revolutionary social and economic change necessary to end austerity, militarism and war. The full social power of the working class must be mobilized, across Europe and internationally, independently of bureaucracies integrated into the existing order.

The case of France highlights the need for independent action: the *intersyndicale* (all-trade union alliance) has postponed all nationwide action until November 5. This call for a one-day action is an attempt to delay broader struggle, not to develop it. Even though protesters often refer to the May 1968 French general strike, which was triggered by police repression of student protests, neither the *intersyndicale* nor parties close to it, such as Jean-Luc Mélenchon's La France insoumise (LFI), have called for a general strike or to bring down Macron.

The *Parti de l'égalité socialiste* (PES) has called on youth and workers who are in struggle to build committees of action, independent of the union bureaucracies, to fight in the working class for a broader mobilization in struggle. This is a path to overcome the bureaucracies' delaying tactics and those of their allies, such as LFI. Youth and workers active in struggle must come together in committees and go into

workplaces and working class neighborhoods to explain the necessity of a broader mobilization of working class against police state repression, austerity, war, and capitalism.

PES members intervened in the Paris protest march yesterday to interview protesters for the WSWs. Yassine, a youth from the Paris suburbs who is in training to work in logistics, told the WSWs: "I'm here more or less for everything, to defend the causes of the working class, Palestine, and also above all the students' situation." Yassine added that he hoped the high school protests "would keep going, because if they don't, there will be no real change."

Yassine condemned police violence and mass arrests targeting the youth: "Cops in general are way too heavily armed, they are badly trained, and on any pretext they open fire on minors. ... We who live in the suburbs, generally, we always face such violence, either now or in police brutality we see the entire year. This means that again, I am not shocked, I am only surprised that even after violence is so widely reported, there are adults and even people of our age who defend the police, rather than us. You can't equate damage to a trash can and losing an eye."

Yassine stressed his opposition to war and to all the governments who are active in escalating it. "I see the case of Morocco, which currently is preferring to ally for some reason with Israel and the United States, to work with Trump. Each one is trying to profit from the war, I find it sad." He added, "It's true that we are worried about future wars. One or other night, it could be a nuclear war or a civil war that breaks out inside this country itself."

When the WSWs asked about Mélenchon, Yassine replied: "If you take any political party, I am not 100 percent with them. It is a matter of trust. But of course I

will always feel closer to the left, and so I constantly feel closer to Mélenchon. This is because he has values that are simply normal, that accept human principles and take human differences into account.”

When the WSWS raised building independent committees of action to prepare broader strike action against Macron and across Europe, Yassine said: “I was thinking of an idea, just of stopping everything for a few days. If the economy does not work for a few days, if we do not put money into it anymore, if we do not go to work, that could be a way of making things advance in our direction.”

Nono and Anaïs, two university students, told the WSWS they were protesting for “more funding for a decent education, that everyone get the same treatment, whether they live in better-off neighborhoods or not.”

They dismissed the government’s claim it was suspending high school classes to supposedly teach democracy to high school students: “You can’t do that by repressing students who are simply protesting in the streets. Saying that will help them know democracy, it is ridiculous. We are seeing totally disproportionate violence, especially since these are minors.”

When the WSWS asked about the role of Mélenchon, Anaïs replied: “Many people support Mélenchon but also because it is what is socially acceptable today. Already, one can see that ... if you look at people who support Mélenchon, there is a big part that are to the left of Mélenchon.” Anaïs called Mélenchon a “golden mean.”

Referring to next year’s French presidential elections, she added: “If the far right is elected, maybe we will be banned from protesting and opening our mouths. But we cannot rely only on [electing Mélenchon], because it’s not by electing someone and then resting on our laurels that we will get what we want.”

When the WSWS raised a broader struggle of the working class against Macron, independent of the bureaucracies, she said: “Really, I agree with that more than with putting all our hopes in electing a president. I think it’s by organizing collectively, from below that we can really bring everyone together.”

Enzo, a former LFI member and CGT union member in the public service, told the WSWS he was protesting “against police repression and to support the high school movement.” He added that he was also protesting against the “ideology of the government,”

explaining: “It refuses to take the money where it is, it will not tax profits, the large fortunes. And so we have to fight, fight until we get what we need.”

He called the bloody violence and mass arrests targeting youth protesters “shocking. I am shocked like everyone else. It’s partially why I’m here. But unfortunately, I’m also not surprised. That is a policy of repression that has been in place for the last decade. It is a symptom of a state power with its back to the wall, which is overtaken by events, and who sees no way out except repression.”

Enzo opposed the rise in military spending and the militarization of Europe based on claims that Russia could invade Europe: “I don’t believe at all this bourgeois, government propaganda that war is at our door. They may believe it, but it is clearly not the case.” However, Enzo agreed with WSWS when it warned that the European NATO powers could trigger a war with Russia: “That is the only thing on their minds. It is obvious that the only way out, as they see it, is war.”

A former LFI member, Enzo said that the election of Mélenchon “would already be a breath of fresh air. ... But yes, it will not be a night of revolution, and we will have to be ready to struggle.”



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