Build committees of action! After the November 5 French strike, prepare a European general strike against war and dictatorship!

Parti de l'égalité socialiste (France)
5 November 2026

Today's one-day French national strike marks an initial intervention of the working class in the historic eruption of mass protests across Europe. After the high school revolt that began in France in September came mass housing protests in Spain, public sector strikes in Portugal and Ireland, youth protests in Belgium, Greece, Italy and Germany, and an international dockworkers' strike against war. In France, hundreds of thousands now regularly march in joint youth-yellow vest protests, even as police have imposed curfews, banned protests and arrested over 10,000 people.

The Parti de l'égalité socialiste (PES) calls on workers and youth today to gather in assemblies in their workplaces, schools and neighborhoods and elect committees of action. These must formulate key demands, continue meeting after today, and take control of the strike from the union bureaucracies. For six weeks, the bureaucracies have left students and "yellow vests" to face the police alone. Now, the working class must have its say.

Committees of action answerable to the rank-and-file can unify struggles internationally and prepare a genuine, European general strike. One-day nationwide strikes are called in Spain (November 11), Italy (November 20), Belgium (November 23) and Greece (November 25). But the world issues driving the movement—austerity and the diktat of the banks, dictatorship and neo-fascism, and imperialist war—cannot be resolved by one-day strikes in any single country.

Across Europe, what must be prepared is a struggle like the 1936 or 1968 French general strikes: a mobilization of the social power of the entire working class to block the economy and pose the question, "Which class will rule?" This cannot be done unless, in the course of the struggle, the working class breaks free of the grip of union bureaucracies and pro-capitalist politicians.

On October 21, union leaders met with Prime Minister Sébastien Lecornu and Interior Minister Laurent Nuñez, though Lecornu's letter of invitation made clear they would discuss not wages or schools, but policing protest marches. Afterwards, CGT General Secretary Sophie Binet feigned surprise that no concessions had been offered. She called vaguely on workers to "generalize" the November 5 strike, but not for a general strike. Instead, CGT officials are promoting the presidential campaign of La France insoumise (LFI) leader Jean-Luc Mélenchon.

It must be bluntly stated: this is the road to sell-out and defeat. Workers know the script. In 2023, these same bureaucracies called strikes against Macron's pension cuts that were joined by millions, then wore down and sold out the movement once the law was imposed without even a parliamentary vote. LFI members did not oppose the union sell-out of the struggle, but instead joined in a Stalinist proposal to draft an impotent letter asking Macron to withdraw his cuts.

Groups like Révolution permanente, which now declares the situation is "pre-revolutionary," still tell workers to pressure the CGT leadership to give them a "battle plan" to make the government "back down." But today's capitalist governments will not back down. There will be no negotiated settlement of the issues driving workers and youth into struggle.

What is emerging is irreconcilable class conflict. Driven by a global crisis, capitalist governments are committed to war and enriching the financial oligarchy. French

© World Socialist Web Site

billionaires have doubled their wealth to €440 billion during Macron's decade in office, and European billionaires' wealth is now over €2 trillion. This oligarchy has massively enriched itself by grabbing and speculating on sovereign debt across Europe.

France's debt has reached €3.5 trillion, and interest payments alone will reach €65 billion this year, more than the state spends on education. In France as across Europe, each new round of borrowing for arms drives interest rates higher, and the markets then demand social cuts to balance the budget. Lecornu's €54 billion austerity plan is the result.

The European powers respond to deepening global war and international tensions with Washington with warmongering and rearmament. They are escalating NATO's war against Russia, even after Moscow warned it could use nuclear weapons if NATO tried to isolate Kaliningrad. They are preparing €800 billion in new military spending under the "ReArm Europe" plan.

A government that can neither abandon these war aims nor touch the wealth of the oligarchy has nothing to offer workers and youth. It can impose its policies only by force.

That is why the Macron government has answered weeks of protest not with concessions, but with repression, threats to declare a state of emergency and ever closer coordination with the presidential campaign of neo-fascist Marine Le Pen. Indeed, Lecornu invites the neo-fascist National Rally (RN) into government crisis meetings, and parliament is advancing a far-right bill granting police a "presumption of self-defense" when they shoot.

It is also why the perspective of a Mélenchon presidency offers no real alternative to the workers. Mélenchon, calling for a "citizens revolution," rejects the struggle for workers power and socialism. LFI, Mélenchon writes, must "accompany" the mobilization by opening a perspective "toward 2027." He calls for a "good ending" to the movement, with small wage and social spending increases—urging Lecornu to emulate the Grenelle Accords the Stalinist CGT bureaucracy used to sell out the 1968 general strike and keep the capitalist De Gaulle government in power.

Before the 1936 general strike and World War II, Trotsky mercilessly attacked those who called "to hold the masses immobilized up to the moment when they will be blessed from above by the government of the People's Front. Strikes, protests, street clashes, direct uprisings are absolutely inevitable. … The task of the proletarian party consists not in checking and paralysing these movements, but in unifying them and investing them with the greatest possible force."

In 2026, as a new global war is erupting, there will be no Popular Front reforms or Grenelle Accords. Already decades ago, Mélenchon was a member of the Socialist Party (PS) when the Mitterrand government, elected in 1981 on a reform program backed by the Stalinist PCF, reversed course under pressure from the banks and embraced austerity. Today, his government, refusing to expropriate the capitalist oligarchy, cannot resolve the problems of inequality, fascism and war.

The alternative is the independent organization and mobilization of the working class, and building a political movement for workers power and socialism. Committees of action are the essential forums in which such a struggle can take place. These committees can fight for all the essential demands of working people in France and across Europe, such as:

• Dropping charges against arrested protesters, ending curfews and protest bans, disarming the riot police, and eliminating emergency police powers.

• Withdrawing France's €54 billion austerity budget and other social attacks.

• The repudiation of sovereign debt owed to the capitalist oligarchy and its expropriation.

• An end to wars against Russia, Iran, Gaza and the Sahel, to rearmament, and to conscription.

The committees must link workers entering into struggle in France with their class brothers and sisters across Europe, through the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC). This can prepare a European general strike against war, austerity and dictatorship.

The objective situation is moving towards such a strike. As Trotsky warned in *Whither France*, the alternative in a general strike is "either complete capitulation or revolutionary struggle for power." The Parti de l'égalité socialiste fights to imbue the working class with this understanding, and appeals to its supporters and readers of the *World Socialist Web Site* to contact it and support its struggle. The alternative to the European Union is the United Socialist States of Europe.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

© World Socialist Web Site