



From France: Protests Banned – Europe's Path to Repression

This transcript may not be 100% accurate due to audio quality or other factors.

Dimitri Lascaris (DL): Good day, this is Dimitri Lascaris coming to you from Place Bellecour in the centre of Lyon, France's third largest city on October 24th, 2026. Above me in the background you can hear and see, it's a speck in the sky, a police helicopter and all around me in this area are hundreds of gendarmes and they have been brought here because today the city of Lyon enacted a total ban on all protests, peaceful or otherwise, to stay in effect until later tonight. This is something that has been a measure, a deeply repressive measure that has been adopted by other major cities in France, including the capital Paris, although I understand at the last minute the Parisian authorities created an exemption or authorised an exemption for protests on the outskirts of the city and a protest was scheduled to occur there earlier today. Now as far as I have been able to tell by walking around the centre of Lyon today and I arrived here from Switzerland in the early afternoon, there are very few attempts thus far to breach this deeply repressive ban on all protest, although I have seen a report on Euronews that at the Université de Lyon, the Lyon University, there was an attempt to break this repressive measure and it was met with volleys of tear gas by the police in the city. I might be able to get there a little bit later on, but I don't know if that protest is continuing. I suspect the protesters there have been dispersed.

Now, the background to all of this is that one week ago today on October 17th, the Gilets Jaunes, the Yellow Vests, that's what Gilets Jaunes means in English, were in the streets of French cities to join with students who had been protesting for days against the abominable conditions in the French educational system. And on that day, Saturday of last week, the protests, some of them, although they were mostly peaceful, turned modestly violent. And there were minor injuries that some police officers suffered. I'm not aware of any major injuries. I've seen no reports that any police officer was killed. And there was significant amounts of damage done to some businesses, mostly high-end boutiques in major cities in Lyon, there was some looting, a limited amount of looting and mostly what happened to the extent there was property damages, there were windows that were broken. And as I was walking here to this centrally situated square, Place Bellecour in Lyons, I saw quite a few high-end boutiques along one of the streets leading into the square, that had reboarded up

because windows had been broken and here's some of what I saw.

So, ostensibly, because they feared a repeat of what happened last Saturday and there are serious questions swirling about to what extent plainclothes police officers were provoking violence or initiating violence themselves while pretending to be protesters, they enacted this repressive ban and what's deeply troubling to me as a European citizen, a citizen of Greece, to be precise, is that I myself experienced for the very first time a protest ban in Athens, Greece, on October 7th, the three-year anniversary of the genocide in Gaza. As I previously reported on that day, Marco Rubio was visiting Athens. He had actually arrived in Athens on the prior day – there was no protest ban instituted on that day – but on the second day, which happened to be the three year anniversary of the Gaza genocide, the Athenian police, citing concerns about the security of Marco Rubio, decided to ban all protests and when I showed up, not knowing that that ban had been implemented, I'd never experienced such a ban in Greece or any other country for that matter, I showed up at a place where a pro-Palestine protest was going to take place and as I was standing there looking at the surrounding area not seeing any protest, wondering what was going on, I and a few others who, like me, were trying to figure out why the protest wasn't happening were surrounded by riot cops and carted off to the main police precinct where we were interrogated and held for several hours but never charged with any criminal offence. So I come here to France and the day I arrive, lo and behold, the major cities here in France have done exactly what Athens did on October 7th; they've instituted a complete or almost complete ban on all forms of protest including peaceful forms of protests.

Now I think this is a terrible way to approach, not quite apart from the fundamental violation of basic civil liberties in so-called democracies of the West, this is simply not going to work. Ultimately the French people will rise up, they're not going to put up with this indefinitely until their grievances, their fundamental grievances are addressed and they have many fundamental grievances. Let me summarise them for you, or at least some of them. First of all, there was a parliamentary election held in 2024, that's the last time there were legislative elections at a national level here in France. And in that election, a coalition of left-wing parties of whom Jean-Luc Mélenchon is one of the leaders won the most seats. They won 180 seats out of 577 seats in parliament. The second place party was the party of Emmanuel Macron with about 159 seats. Behind that party was the racist anti-immigrant party of Marine Le Pen, the Front National. And then there was another party behind her, well distant in fourth place, by the name of Les Républicains, the Republicans. And despite the fact that a coalition of left-leaning parties won that legislative election, they didn't win a majority, but they had the largest number of seats, Emmanuel Macron decided to appoint as Prime Minister someone from his own ideological orientation, rather than the candidate chosen by the winner of the election, and that person didn't last very long. And the current Prime Minister of France, Sébastien Lecornu is from Macron's party and he's a neoliberal and he is a warmonger and he shares almost nothing in common with the parties that actually won the election or at least with the coalition of left leaning parties.

And he has introduced a budget, an austerity budget for 2027 which is going to make life

already or even more difficult for the already struggling French people. The budget will reportedly increase the VAT, the sales tax, which will fall disproportionately on the shoulders of ordinary French citizens. They plan to freeze the salaries of public sector workers, although the cost of living is soaring, primarily due to wars that the Macron regime supports, namely the proxy war in Ukraine and the criminal war of aggression on Iran. And they also plan to freeze all but the very lowest pensions, again at a time when the cost of living is soaring. They will continue to spend obscene gobs of money on the military and also will continue to fund, or at least the plan is, they'll continue to fund the Ukraine war. And of course, there are the severe restrictions on the civil liberties of the French people, which we are witnessing here today in real time. So, the people of France have plenty to be upset about. This is not a protest movement that is led by Muslims or Black Africans or Arabs, this is a nationwide protest in which people from all ethnic and religious backgrounds have joined and they have one thing in common and that is the increasingly unjust character of French society.

And I should have also mentioned that in this budget that the Macron regime plans to institute in 2027, if it survives that long, they anticipate that they're going to make less money from corporate taxes. So they're actually going to be apparently reducing taxes on corporations as they freeze public sector worker salaries and most pensions and increase the VAT, the sales tax. That is the fanaticism with which this regime embraces austerity and it has no democratic legitimacy, frankly. Macron's approval rating is now in the teens, I don't know, somewhere in the range of 13 or 14 percent, he is widely despised and all he can come up with to deal with the completely legitimate grievances of the vast majority of the French people is empty platitudes and more and more repression. What we saw in Athens on October 7th, what we're seeing in France here today is a harbinger of things to come. They are gradually normalising more and more suppression of our basic civil liberties. And unless we rise up and put a stop to this now, we will wake up one day and we won't have any freedom of speech, we won't have any freedom with assembly, we won't have the ability even to think for ourselves. That's where this is heading in the increasingly corrupt and anti-democratic European Union.

Now something that is particularly troubling on top of all of this is that yesterday there was a racist, a deadly racist attack in a suburb of Paris known as Trappes and what happened was an accused, allegedly, whose name has been disclosed by the media as being Kevin T. – they haven't published his last name entirely – he had apparently an automatic or semi-automatic weapon and started shooting at civilians in or near the centre of this suburb of Paris and he killed a 26-year-old man, apparently of African origin, and also injured five other civilians, one of whom was a 12-year girl who had multiple bullets, eight bullets I understand, strike her, and she is in grave condition. And there was a mosque nearby and you may be interested to know that the community of Trappes is regarded by the far right in this country as being a hotbed of violent Islamist extremism. This is of course complete bollocks. It just happens to have a disproportionately high population of Muslims, people of Arabic and Black backgrounds and the President, Macron, has referred to this attack as a terrorist racist attack, this is a line that has been repeated throughout the French corporate media, while it does appear very much that the person, the accused, was motivated by hatred of Muslims, Africans, and Arabs. The fact is that any time a corrupt and autocratic leader like Macron

utters the word terrorism, you should be very concerned because of the way in which this concept is manipulated to justify further impingements upon civil liberties.

And so I would not at all be surprised if having called this atrocity a terrorist event, Macron and his government will do what they can to exploit this crime, to impose even greater restrictions on the civil liberties of ordinary French citizens, and particularly people from the Global South who live here now and are citizens of the country, and he will do this while at the same time claiming that he is imposing further restrictions on civil liberties for their protection; that's the way the game works. So, I do not embrace the use of the word terrorism by any Western leader because of their double dealing, the way they exploit the concept of terrorism in order to pursue imperialist policies not only in the Global South but even in their own countries against people from the Global South. So I am now going to be heading out to other parts of Lyon to see if I might be able to find some brave souls who have decided to challenge this anti-democratic ban on peaceful protest. And if I do manage to find them, I will certainly report back to you. I plan to remain in the country for at least another week. And my current expectation is that this ban will not be respected for much longer, assuming that people are going to put up with it even for the rest of today. I'm signing off today from Lyon, France on October 24th, 2026.

END

Thank you for reading this transcript. Please don't forget to donate to support our independent and non-profit journalism:

BANKKONTO:

Kontoinhaber: acTVism München e.V.
Bank: GLS Bank
IBAN: DE89430609678224073600
BIC: GENODEM1GLS

PAYPAL:

E-Mail:
PayPal@acTVism.org

PATREON:

<https://www.patreon.com/acTVism>

BETTERPLACE:

Link: [Click here](#)