FROM FRANCE: Macron Tightens Protest Restrictions – Civil Liberties Under Pressure

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Dimitri Lascaris (DL): Good day, this is Dimitri Lascaris coming to you on the evening of October 31st from Place Bellecour in the centre of Lyon in France, and today is Halloween, it is an occasion that is widely celebrated within France and especially the large cities in the customary fashion, the fashion in which Canadians and Americans typically celebrate Halloween. And today is the second Saturday on which I have been in the country. I arrived here on the morning of October 24th, just in time for protests that were scheduled to happen in the centre of Lyon. But as I was travelling to Lyon from the airport in Geneva, I learned that the French authorities in major cities, including this one, had imposed a ban on all forms of protest, all public gatherings. In the centre of the city and it was a ban that was repeated across the country in major cities and as a result, although I was anticipating when I arrived here last Saturday to see protests I saw none and I did a report from this very place about the heavy presence of riot police in the city, and the complete absence of any public gatherings. So they did the same thing again today, they cancelled or prohibited any protests in central Lyon. There were 14 of them, as far as I could make out based on the local media, that were planned all around the city. I myself went to three of the locations that were chosen by protest organisers as the venues for protest today. There were numerous other venues, and I found no protest there. I did, however, find riot police. There apparently was a protest that occurred today in a part of the city which I have not yet visited. That protest is over, apparently 10-15,000 people showed up. It was allowed to proceed, I believe, because it was organised by a union and the central fascist government of Emmanuel Macron has said in recent days that it will allow approved organisations which appears to mean essentially unions, major unions in France to hold protests but even those will have to be done in parts of French cities that have been designated by the French police and any marching will have to happen along routes that are approved by the french police and it appears that they're also restricting the times at which even those protests can take place. And based on the reports I've seen, the protest that did happen here in Lyon today started peacefully, but as a result of perhaps provocations from the police, they ended up resorting to the use of their typical repressive methods, including principally tear gas.

Protesters: Down with racism and xenophobia – workers unite! This is the final battle. Let's join hands. The international fights for humanity.

DL: Now, when I first parked my car in the centre of the city, about two kilometres from where I'm currently situated in Place Bellecour, I immediately saw a group of riot police frisking and searching two youngsters. And this was what I witnessed at that moment. And you'll see just at the end of this clip, the cops are looking at me as I'm filming them. And they began to get agitated. I stopped filming. And then they shouted at me. I shouted back that I was a journalist and a lawyer. And there was no law against my filming them, at which point I walked away. And they didn't pursue the matter further. This is what I saw. I then continued down a pedestrian street, a boulevard here that is off limits to vehicular traffic and I saw many stores that had boarded up their windows. They didn't necessarily have broken windows but this was I think a precautionary measure. And the ones that were most concerned about damage to their windows were apparently the large chains and the luxury boutiques. And here is some of that footage that I shot as I was walking over here along this pedestrian boulevard. Notice this large restaurant closed on a Saturday afternoon. I would imagine for security reasons. This is a branch of the Bank Crédit Mutuel completely boarded up for the weekend. Another business boarded up, Carrefour, if this is part of that supermarket chain that is complicit in the crimes of the Israeli entity doing extensive businesses in Israel, it's not surprising that they've boarded-up their windows on Halloween. Nike too has boarded up its windows, not surprising given its record of utter contempt for human rights violations.

This appears to be a government building. Boarded up. Place de la Bourse. Ah, yes, this is the Chamber of Commerce. Of course they would board up their windows. Few organisations are as complicit in the suffering of the French worker, the French middle class, and particularly the poor in this country than this heinous organisation. Look at the building they occupy, the Chamber Of Commerce. They've outfitted themselves with a palatial office.

Monoprix, another large profitable French retail outlet, is boarded up. Will the ghosts of Halloween visit the premises of Monoprix this evening? We shall see. Now, this is another large, profitable French retail chain, Printemps, which means spring. You can see that not only have they boarded up all of their windows for Halloween, but they're shut down completely on a Saturday afternoon when you'd expect them to be... Oh, no, they're actually open down there. Never want to squander an opportunity to suck money out of the French middle class. Now, after walking over here and seeing that there was no protest, I then went to another location before coming back to where I am now, where there was a protest scheduled to occur. I had to go across a bridge across the Rhône, the river, the major river that separates the central part of Lyon from the square where this protest was supposed to take place. The bridge across which I walked had been closed off on both sides by vans belonging to the riot police, closed off to vehicular traffic, however, people who wanted to walk from the centre of Lyon to the other side of the bridge across the river were allowed to do so. If you wanted to come back, as I found out, back into the centre of the city once I crossed over the bridge, I couldn't do that unless I was a resident of Lyons. And they directed me then to

walk down to another bridge about a kilometre further away from where I'm currently situated. And here's what I saw when I walked across that bridge.

So I'm standing at one end of the Pont Morand in central Lyon. I actually just came from the other side of this bridge you just saw this footage of that and once I got beyond this barrier of police and tried to return to the other sides they said that I couldn't after I informed them in response to a question that I am not a resident of the centre of Lyon and now they're telling me that I have to go all the way down there to some other bridge, even though my car is parked in the opposite direction, on the other side of that bridge, there has been a protest called for 4 o'clock, which is right about now, in Place Bellecour, which on the side of that bridge over that way. And there was also supposed to be a protest right here behind me at the Place du Maréchal, and there's no protest going on here. So it looks like the French authorities have yet again placed severe restrictions on the right to free assembly and the right to protest whether it be peaceful or otherwise which is what they did last Saturday as reported previously on Reason2Resist. So I'm now going to walk down there to the next footbridge to see if they'll let me across the other side to get back to my car.

The French police have banned not only protests in the centre of Lyon today from 10 o'clock to 11 o'clock, but they also have a curfew in place after 11 p.m. for unaccompanied minors. They issued a notice to the public reminding them that there is a law, apparently, which prohibits people from covering their faces during the protest. And they're very concerned about the people who are opposed to the government, who are upset about the restrictions on their right to protest and to assemble. Will use the occasion of Halloween to cover their faces and to carry out acts of prohibited dissent and assembly this evening. So they've cobbled together a group of about a thousand police officers and gendarmes with full riot gear who will be patrolling the streets this evening looking for people who are using the occasion of Halloween in order to cover their faces and engage in acts of resistance. So I may not, I'll have to see, I might be able to stay here until later this evening and try to capture footage of what, if anything, happens. But for the time being, it doesn't appear that I'm going to be able to film any protests here in the centre of Lyon today. And I must tell you that I am very concerned about this. That is two Saturdays in a row. I came to France thinking that protests were happening on an almost daily basis. What I learned was that that's not the case. There may be smaller protests happening around the country. But the day that the opponents of the central fascist Macron regime have selected to conduct the major protests is Saturday. And typically they started around two o'clock. So this is two Saturdays in a row that I've been here where there have been some protests but they've all been approved by the government. And even those were subjected to considerable constraints. And I haven't seen anybody, I'm not saying there hasn't been anybody in the country, but myself roaming around the centre of Lyon, I haven't seen anybody who has been willing to challenge these severe constraints that have been imposed upon the right to protest by this regime. And this concerns me because I'm convinced at this stage that if we only protest, within the strict and shrinking confines imposed upon us by the government, our protests are going to be completely ineffectual. If you want to have an impact on the government, you have to challenge the restrictions on the right to protest and the right to dissent and the right to assemble. And you have to engage in

protests that are disruptive and particularly that impose a cost on the political elite and the economic elite. If you don't do that, they just don't care. And you can protest until the cows come home. We will have absolutely no impact on public policy and they will infer from your lack of willingness to challenge the restrictions on your civil liberties that they can get away with even more and the space with in which we'll be able protest and express our dissent will be shrinking all the while and we will become like the proverbial frog being boiled, and by the time we are in the cusp of realising that our civil liberties are being destroyed, it'll be too late.

So my counsel to citizens of conscience everywhere, whether in France, or Canada, or Greece, or anywhere in the world, particularly in the West where the civil liberties are being constantly degraded is, if you're not going to challenge the restrictions they're placing upon our civil liberties then your resistance is completely ineffectual. There is no risk-free way to resist. And I've tried to lead by example in that regard, and I've myself now been detained by police just within the last year alone and taken down to a precinct on three occasions against my will and I have had numerous altercations with the police. I've been threatened by them repeatedly. And I don't want, you know, the law enforcement authorities to come down on anybody's head, any citizen of conscience. But this is the unfortunate reality confronting us, folks. If you play by their rules, then soon we won't have any civil liberties to exercise. And I've seen this in a really quite disturbing way happen to the Greek people. You know, the Greek used to be extremely militant, amongst the most militant people in Europe. And then they protested vigorously against this brutal austerity regime that was imposed upon them beginning around 2010. Not for the purposes of reining in the profligacy of the Greek government, that's what we were told, but for the purpose of saving French and German banks that were tottering on the brink of collapse, in part because they had lent money irresponsibly to banks in Greece, huge amounts of money that were managed in a corrupt and irresponsible manner. And they should have paid the price. That's what capitalism is after all, isn't it? That businesses that are running competently go out of business. And so rather than allow the French and German banks to pay the price of their own profligacy, the burdens, the debts of the Greek banks, the corrupt Greek banks were foisted onto the state and by extension the Greek people. And so they protested, they rose up against this, there were a lot of clashes with the police. And all of this culminated with a self-professed, radically left-wing party, Syriza, led by former Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras coming to power in 2015. And then there were six or seven months of arduous, painful negotiations between Greece's Troika creditors and this newly elected government. And that culminated in a referendum that was held in Greece in the summer of 2015. The Greek people were given the choice by Tsipras to reject or accept the brutal conditions of austerity that the newer, more recent conditions of austerity that the Troika creditors and particularly the ECB and the European Commission wanted to inflict upon the Greek people. And even though the Eurocrats were threatening to destroy the Greek economy, the Greek banking system, and expel Greece from the Eurozone, the Greek people bravely said No. Somewhere in excess of 60 % of the voters in a relatively high turnout referendum said No to the austerity package. What did Tsipras do? Within 24 hours, he not only disregarded their vote, but he accepted austerity conditions that were even more severe than those had been rejected by the Greek people. And ever since

then, I say this with great sadness that, you know, the militancy has gone largely out of my comrades in Greece. There still are some brave souls who are fighting the good fight, but it just isn't the same anymore. And I think that having succeeded in effectively crushing the resistance of the Greek people, they're now putting to use the same tactics that they employed in Greece to crush the resistance of the French people. I was not expecting to see this level of subservience to the dictates of the Centro-Fascist regime in Paris. And it's alarming, frankly. So I have decided to extend my stay here in France. I was going to depart, return to Montreal early this week, but there is a general strike called for November 5th. That's this coming Thursday. I'm going to the capital, to the den of the beast, the Centro-Fascist regime and I'll be there in the streets of Paris on that day, and hopefully we will see some of the old-style resistance of French, you know, citizens of conscience that we've come to know and admire over the years. But we shall see. So far, I have to put you, I am not encouraged by the level of compliance that I am seeing from French militants thus far. That is my report from the centre of Lyon, Place Bellecour, on Halloween, October 31st, 2026, for a reason to resist. If you found this report to be informative, please like and share it. If you're not already a subscriber, please do become one and help us to expand the reach of our unapologetic resistance journalism. Please stay safe out there, my friends.

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