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France

# No to the state of emergency - Defy the curfew

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[IMG/jpg/burnt\_cars.jpg]

**Nearly two weeks into the wave of rioting by young people of mainly North and Black African origin in the poor neighbourhoods around France's towns and cities, the government has reacted by reviving a 1955 law instituting a State of Emergency and giving it sweeping repressive powers.**

We will be carrying articles analysing the riots and the governments's reaction. For the moment we are reproducing three documents issued on 8 November; a national leaflet of the LCR (French section of the Fourth International); a joint statement by left and democratic organisations; and a press statement by LCR spokesperson Olivier Besancenot. The joint statement is the result of discussions held over the last few days on the initiative of the LCR. Over the next few days joint initiatives against the State of Emergency are planned.

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## National LCR leaflet

# The state of emergency is a crime against democracy!

Angry young people and the local populations, in solidarity against the government!

Chirac and the government are sticking to the path they have chosen. Far from defusing the crisis, by responding to urgent social needs, the government has decided to increase the level of repression. Now it has reactivated the 1955 law on the state of emergency, a law which led to the worst attacks on civil liberties during the Algerian War. At the same time it is sending dozens of young people to face courts that are virtually emergency tribunals.

Revolted by the tragedy of Clichy, where two teenagers died, young people from dozens of housing estates all over the country have been confronting the police night after night, for several days now. Although the anger of these young people, who are unemployed and unqualified, (the Citroen car factory in Aulnay has just laid off 700 temporary workers), and who are victims of racism, is understandable, they have got the wrong target when they burn the cars of local people, schools, gymnasiums or nurseries. The enemy is the government's policies and it is all together, angry young people and the local population, that we have to fight Sarkozy and all the policies that have wrecked these neighbourhoods for more than twenty years.

The government is responsible for the situation that has been created

The policies of Villepin and Sarkozy lead to mass unemployment and job insecurity, aggravating the growing poverty. Around the big cities the development of real ghettos goes hand in hand with increasingly intolerable forms of discrimination. They are dismantling the state education system, which leads to steadily rising failure rates. As a result of the logic of deregulation policies, neighbourhood public services are in ruins. They are continually cutting credits for preventive action. Social housing is everywhere being sacrificed. There you have the daily lot of a large part of the population of this country. Meanwhile, in the National Assembly, the governing majority is cutting wealth tax and exonerating shareholders from paying tax on their dividends.

### **Sarkozy, the fire-raising firefighter, must go!**

The logical corollary of this class policy that is being so shamelessly conducted, is that police checks are becoming each day more odious and violent. The poison of racism is spreading, encouraged by the provocative declarations of Sarkozy. Carried away by his desire to criminalise a whole layer of young people, the Minister of the Interior went so far as to insult them by describing them as "rabble" and "gangrene".

Engaged in a permanent pre-electoral campaign, seeking to win favour with Le Pen's electorate, he has announced that he will go each week to a different suburban housing estate. The only effect of that will be to accentuate the police pressure on the areas concerned and make the situation even more explosive. This climate of violence is intolerable for the people who live there and will only make their daily lives even more difficult.

There's no doubt about it, Sarkozy, the fire-raiser of the suburbs, has got to go!

And this government, systematically disavowed by the voters, has no legitimacy to carry out these policies. Yesterday, it was sending the GIGN [elite police unit] against the seafarers of the SNCM. Today, it has the Marseilles tram workers' strike declared illegal, it is criminalising the suburbs and wants to impose curfews. As sole response to the despair of young people, it goes so far as to propose making them leave school at 14 and handing them over to be exploited by the bosses.

[<https://internationalviewpoint.org/IMG/jpg/toulouse.jpg>]

Anti-racist demonstration in Toulouse

### **A popular mobilisation is needed!**

### **All together against the government!**

It is not the uncontrolled intervention of the police that will settle the problems that exist, but the intervention of the local populations. It is the mobilisation of progressive forces that is decisive. We have to stop the police provocations and take action in favour of immediate measures to develop solidarity and cooperation in our neighbourhoods and our estates. Faced with the social disasters that are the result of years of liberalism, we have to demand that priority is given to the creation of stable jobs, to public services, to schools, housing and preventive action.

The action of this government is spreading poverty and producing despair. Nothing is more urgent than to stop it in its tracks. That is what the LCR is calling for.

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## **Joint declaration**

## **No to the state of emergency**

Confronted with a revolt born of the accumulation of inequalities and discriminations in the suburbs and the poor neighbourhoods, the government has just entered on a new stage, an extremely serious one, of its escalating law and order policy. Even in May 1968, where the situation was much more dramatic, no emergency law was used by the government. The proclamation of the state of emergency is a response, one based only on repression, to a revolt whose causes are profound and well-known.

## No to the state of emergency - Defy the curfew

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Over and above the disastrous symbolic message that will be sent out by the reference to the Algerian War, what is involved is not only a "curfew" - which is already entering into a logic of war. The law of April 3rd, 1955 authorises banning orders for "any person seeking to impede, in any way at all, the action of the organs of the state", the placing under house arrest of "any person whose activity appears dangerous for security and public order", the closing of "meeting places of any kind" and the banning of "meetings whose nature can provoke or perpetuate disorder". The government has even envisaged searching premises at night. It can, furthermore, have "adopted all necessary measures to ensure the control of the press and of every kind of publication", and authorise military jurisdictions alongside ordinary judges.

It is necessary to stop the violence and re-establish solidarity in the suburbs. Does that mean subjecting them to an emergency legislation inherited from the colonial period? We know where the well-known cycle of provocations and repression leads, and what results it can produce. The suburbs don't need a state of emergency; they are in desperate need of justice, respect and equality.

Signed by:

Citizens' Alternative, Association of Moroccan Workers in France (ATMF), CEDETIM, Homeless Committee, CRLDHT, FSU [main teachers' union], LCR (French section of the Fourth International), League for the Rights of Man (LDH), MRAP [anti-racist movement], French Communist Party (PCF), Union of Lawyers of France, Magistrates' Union, Union syndicale Solidaires [a trade union confederation, regrouping among others the SUD unions], the Greens.

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## Press statement by LCR spokesperson Olivier Besancenot

### Defy the curfew

**Statement by Olivier Besancenot:** The decisions announced by M.de Villepin, yesterday evening on TF1 [main television channel], are intolerable. Instead of responding to the social emergency, he has resuscitated a law dating from the colonial epoch, from the Algerian War, which gives prefects the power to decree a curfew on all or part of the territory of a borough and to suspend a certain number of civil liberties. Already, E.Raoult, mayor of Raincy - the town that spends 2,6% of its budget on house-building - in the vanguard of the repression, had jumped the gun by decreeing such a measure in his town. In this situation the LCR calls on people to defy the curfew by demonstrating in the towns or the neighbourhoods, if necessary at night, where a curfew is decreed by the prefect. The LCR calls on all left-wing and democratic organisations to organise these demonstrations together.