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France

European elections: a radical, unitary and democratic left for a real alternative

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“The European elections should be an opportunity to strengthen a radical left anchored in social, feminist, anti-racist and ecological struggles, in popular neighbourhoods, capable of stopping the rise of the far right.” For a number of political and intellectual figures, struggles must not only be a defensive reaction, but also build “a new political force, stronger and more popular than what organizations and struggles represent today.”

An appeal by left-committed personalities

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The European elections will take place in a new context on a continental scale, marked by the war in Ukraine and its multiple consequences and the prospect of several enlargements in the eastern part of Europe. These elections must be an opportunity to affirm and strengthen, in France and in Europe, a radical left anchored in social, feminist, anti-racist and ecological struggles, the popular neighbourhoods, capable of stopping the rise of the extreme right and promoting to the greatest number the perspective of a global alternative to the capitalist, ecocidal, patriarchal, racist, imperialist and ableist system.

Social movements lead the way

Today, in demonstrations and committees in support of the Palestinian people against the genocidal war waged by the state of Israel, tens of thousands of people, including a large number of young people from popular neighbourhoods, are mobilizing for concrete and political solidarity, becoming politicized by denouncing the responsibilities and complicities of the French government.

Similarly, the mobilizations in support of the resistance of the Ukrainian people against the imperialist war waged by the Russian state, solidarity with the peoples of the Sahel who denounce *Françafrique* and the military interference of the French state, but also with the peoples of the confetti of empire confronted with French colonial domination, in Kanaky or the Antilles, in particular, are rebuilding a concrete internationalism, in support of popular resistance against all imperialisms. The feminist strike of 8 March 8 was once again this year an opportunity to build a radical, inclusive and decolonial feminism, which tackles patriarchy head-on and promotes all emancipations, inscribed in a feminist and LGBTQI+ movement that today constitutes the broadest and most dynamic of international struggles.

Similarly, the mobilization against the Darmanin law – revealing the structural racism of the French state – conducted by a unitary movement led by those most concerned, and in particular undocumented migrants and other migrants, has allowed the affirmation of a political anti-racism that promotes all forms of equality and is today the first bulwark against the fascist threat. The farmers' movement has brought to the fore the need for a break with the Common Agricultural Policy and free trade agreements and the confrontation of ideas between its capitalist, reactionary components, sometimes close to the far right (FNSA, Coordination Rurale and so on) and our anti-capitalist and ecological farming comrades of the Confédération Paysanne. One year after the major mobilizations of spring 2023 in the face of the neoliberal counter-reform of pensions and against the mega-basins in Sainte-Soline, we have not forgotten the encounters, experiences, and solidarity made possible by these struggles, both radical and unitary, which give us all a political direction.

All these struggles in which we participate in France, these social movements and citizen mobilizations, are not only a defensive reaction to the global crisis of the system that feeds the rise of the far right, but they are also where, on the offensive, new activist practices are invented, and a political alternative is emerging.

On a European scale, these struggles and solidarities are not isolated: in other countries there are social, feminist, ecological and anti-racist mobilizations and solidarity with Ukraine and Palestine.

The political left is not up to the task

However, the dynamism, radicalism and diversity of all these movements is not reflected in the electoral process. In the run-up to the European elections, the political left is once again divided and the issues at stake are not clear. Within the ex-NUPES forces, some are trying to detach themselves from the combative dynamic represented by this alliance in 2022, to shift the political cursor to the right to preserve the old institutional left. The others do not want to take on the unavoidable objective of building an ecological, feminist and social alternative, radical and unitary, without concession to the system, and remain closed to an alliance with anti-capitalist forces.

As for democratic, feminist and egalitarian demands, especially supported by the youngest activists, they continue to be neglected, sometimes despised, further widening the gap with the political culture of self-organization of recent social movements and the aspirations of activists. For things to change, we can only rely on the ability to organize in order to influence the balance of power, to shake up hierarchies and habits, to impose a radical, unitary and popular agenda in the political field.

What can we do? Putting forward clear policy proposals...

The campaign for the European elections must be a moment of political clarification on the left, to put an end to the mistakes and renunciations that have weakened our social camp in recent years.

Our left opposes all imperialisms and colonialisms, without ambiguity or double standards. Support for the resistance of all peoples, for their right to self-determination and for a just and lasting (and therefore decolonial) peace is therefore not an abstract pacifism: we support the right to self-determination everywhere in Europe and in the world, in Palestine, Ukraine, the Sahel and elsewhere, as well as aid to peoples in resistance at the same time as opposition to states which are terrorist (bombing civilian populations) and militarist.

This requires a denunciation of the agreement between the EU and Israel, an uncompromising denunciation of the French state, which politically and through arms sales supports Israel's genocidal war and is the third largest arms exporter in the world, notably to Saudi Arabia (which it also supports militarily in its war against Yemen). The right of peoples to self-determination is also inseparable from the defence of migrants' rights and the dignified and unconditional welcome of all migrants and refugees, without distinction, against the policies of Fortress Europe, for the freedom of movement and settlement of all.

Our left aspires to be anti-racist and anti-fascist in deeds, not just in words. To fight the far right, it is not effective either to proclaim abstract values or to act as if the neo-fascist vote were a mere expression of anger. We must tackle the problem head-on and, on the ground as well as in the institutions, show that solidarity, respect for diversity and all equality, can and must prevail in the face of hatred and identity-based withdrawal. It is also necessary that the

inhabitants of popular neighbourhoods, migrants, and all those who are the first to be affected by racism, stigmatization and exploitation, have equal rights in the areas of life (work, housing, culture, movement and settlement, and so on), and their full place in political institutions, from the municipal councils to the European Parliament.

Our left criticises the capitalist logic of the European and free trade treaties that destroy social rights and organise competition between peoples. At EU level, it opposes the rejection of social and fiscal dumping, the social demands of the working world: higher wages, the extension of social protection and public services, the massive reduction of working hours against unemployment and precariousness, the intransigent defence of pensions and the return in France of retirement at 60. It promotes self-management in the workplace, economic democracy and democratic planning of the ecological bifurcation. To this end, among the necessary means, we put forward in particular the socialization of the big energy companies, arms production and banks, the creation of new political rights for workers to defend their health and that of users, to put an end to extractivism and productivism, to decide on the ends and means of their activities, a massive increase in taxes on large companies and large fortunes, the end of exemptions from social security contributions for companies - which impoverish solidarity funds (retirement, sickness, unemployment and so on) - as well as the cancellation of illegitimate debts.

Our left resolutely campaigns for real equality between women and men at work and in society, for a guaranteed right to contraception and abortion everywhere in Europe, against discrimination against women and LGBT+.

Our left is working for the ecological and self-managing conversion of the European economy: access to healthy food accessible to all, free and developed public transport, the creation of adequate and affordable housing for as many people as possible, the resolute fight against pollution and pesticides, the protection of common goods such as water.

To convince broadly, we have to be consistent: we have to radically criticise the human, social and ecological damage of the CAP policy, the Dublin II regulation and the violence of Frontex (the agency for the repression of migrants at the EU's borders), the neoliberal budgetary rules of the euro zone, the anti-democratic nature of the European treaties and so on. But this cannot be done in the name of defending the interests of French capitalism as well as the capitalism of any other EU member state: in each country, the capitalists and the political parties at their service have an interest in social breakdown, economic protectionism and productivism.

In the context of these European elections, in the face of Ukraine and Moldova's applications for membership – to protect themselves from Russia – in addition to those of the Western Balkans, we are expressing an internationalism from below that advocates democratic choices among each of the peoples concerned while expressing our criticism of the EU.

And whatever these choices are, we are building transnational links with progressive forces – political, trade union, anti-racist, feminist, LGBTQ+, environmentalist – in each country to fight together for the protection and extension of equal rights and public services that must be the basis of a European construction other than that of the neoliberal European Union. Therefore, under no circumstances are we defending a “Fortress Europe” against Ukraine's application for membership devastated by an imperialist war; nor should a “Europe of the rich” be defended against the accession of countries impoverished by the neoliberal destruction that has been at work for decades in the EU's periphery. On the contrary, together with the progressive forces of Ukraine, we must seize the opportunity of that country's application for membership to defend egalitarian social rights and relations of solidarity between peoples in Europe and with the peoples of the rest of the world.

Finally, our left promotes democracy in all areas of social life, supports concrete and systemic alternatives to the capitalism defended by the European institutions. These are international solidarities of struggles that are tracing the

way to another Europe: that of convergences between environmental movements against climate-killing projects, between post-#MeToo feminist movements that are organizing around the feminist strike of 8 March, between class-conscious trade unions that are fighting against the same neoliberal counter-reforms. It is a different Europe, for example, exemplified by the former GKN workers in Italy who, following their dismissal, have occupied their factory and are carrying out an ecological conversion project involving in particular the construction of cargo bikes for delivery to workers' cooperatives in other European countries. What needs to be brought to the European Parliament is the Europe of struggles and alternatives, not bureaucrats and lobbies, that of environmental activist Greta Thunberg and not of defenders of neoliberal policies like the current President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen.

... and building an ecological and social, radical and unitary alternative

The social and environmental disasters caused by neoliberal policies in Europe and the threat of cataclysms represented by the far right in France and Europe require us to be both radical and unitary. We must aim at all scales and on all occasions for the alliance of the various forces of the anti-neoliberal left to stand up to the fascists and respond to social and ecological issues, in order to make credible an alternative political path to that pursued by the current European institutions. We must build a new political force, stronger and more popular than what our organizations and struggles represent today, capable of constituting within such an alliance an alternative, revolutionary and radically democratic pole. This is what will guide our choices and actions in the coming period, during the European elections and beyond. We can't do otherwise, we have to build the alternative!

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*Translated by **International Viewpoint** from [Mediapart](#).*

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