

France: demonstrations against state of emergency, discriminations, criminalization of sociale movements, for the freedom of expression

"It's possible, but we're not there yet!"

Tuesday 9 February 2016, by [GODARD Denis](#) (Date first published: 3 February 2016).

It's possible, but we're not there yet. That's the conclusion one should draw protests against state of emergency Saturday, January 30 throughout France.

On 30 January demonstrations took place throughout France around these demands:

- Immediate lifting of state of emergency and the permanent state of exception;
- Abandonment of the introduction of the state of emergency and the possibility of removing French nationality status into the constitution;
- Stop the repression and stigmatization of the demonstrators and activists social movements, migrants, Muslims or those assumed to be, the popular districts;
- Respect for the freedom to demonstrate, assemble and of expression.

It's possible, but we're not there yet. That's the conclusion one should draw protests against state of emergency Saturday, January 30 throughout France.

In Paris, one hour exactly before the demonstration, the rain turned into a downpour. Just at the time time when the hesitating were making up their minds. Almost everywhere in France, the weather was in tune with the law and order climate propagated by all dominant institutions: do not demonstrate, stay home! Despite this, between 10,000 and 20,000 demonstrators took to the streets of Paris.

From Bayonne to Boulogne-sur-Mer to Metz in Lannion, from Perpignan to Dole, and including Arles, Besançon, Tulle or Le Puy-en-Velay, there were at least 45,000 protesters. Outside Paris, each protest gathered around between one hundred and two thousand participants.

This was the first *general* response to the emergency, the first [*nation scale*] public break with the prevailing consensus that says that the name of security, everyone would be in favour [of the state of emergency].

It obviously needs much more than that. Outside Paris and a few cities like Grenoble, Bordeaux, Chambéry or Poitiers, the mobilization has not exceeded a militant nucleus. Even in these cities, the

working-class and immigrant neighbourhoods were very poorly represented.

But deadlines are close, between a bill to cabinet on Wednesday 3 February and the debates in the Assembly and the Senate between 5 and 16 February.

And beyond these deadlines, the whole logic of the state of exception is going forward, giving confidence to the police and racist. So it is vital to convince and mobilize deeply throughout society.

Bring together all currents, all forms of struggle

It is obvious that the existence of several united-front committees, including one led by LDH “We will not yield” [1] and another more connected to the activist movements “Stop state of emergency” [2], does not make things easier. Thus, in some cities like Marseille, there was not even able to be a united demonstration or rally.

In Paris, the two committees have managed to agree on a common Demonstration. In the first part of the march, the undocumented, the homeless, the BDS activists, trade unions or the Zadistes (radical ecology activists). To reach the entire society, all the different sensibilities and forms of struggle will be essential. All. No one can deny the role of racism and Islamophobia in the logic implemented in the state of emergency, Muslims thus are the main target of police searches. And if the anti-racist and Islamophobic element of the mobilization, and the fight against police violence, are not taken into account, the movement will have great difficulty in mobilizing in popular districts.

From local to global

The mobilization must now develop in every neighborhood, in every workplace and on different fronts endangered by the government’s offensive. In Montreuil [a major city in the Paris region], a local assembly is held on Thursday 4 February. In Grenoble, “Six hours for our freedoms” will take place this Sunday, 7 February in collaboration with Mediapart, bringing together local and national activists, trade unionists and representatives of neighborhood struggles. Such initiatives are multiplying.

This must be combined with the defence of the victims of repression. An appeal has been launched to mobilize support for one participant in the migrants solidarity demonstration of 22 November, on Thursday 3 February. And the next day, Thursday 4 February is the day of action in support of Goodyear trade unionists [condemned to jail].

Keep up street protests

The struggle against the state of emergency and deprivation of nationality status be present in all events, as was the case in Calais on 23 January where many demonstrators wore the sticker “Stop Etat d’urgence”. This should be the case in the antifascist mobilizations of 6 February, the 8 March initiatives for women’s rights and against racism on 19 March. It should be the case of all trade union struggles. Because the logic of the state of emergency is to atomize us and ban collective protest in public space.

On Friday 5 February there will be a new rally in front of the National Assembly. In the next few days the two committees should decide on a new national date as a goal to stimulate the work of local mobilization that has to go forward. Urgently.

Denis Godard

P.S.

* From l'Anticapitaliste n° 322 4 February 2016. Translated by IVP.

<http://www.internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article4375>

Footnotes

[1] “Nous ne céderons pas”, initiated by the League for Human Rights (Ligue des Droits de l'Homme LDH). This appeal was not open to signatures from political parties.

[2] “Stop Etat d'urgence.