

Notre-Dame-des-Landes (France): In Defence of the ZAD - against Emmanuel Macron and the world that he represents

Tuesday 10 April 2018, by [Collective / Multiple signers](#) (Date first published: 8 April 2018).

It is imperative that we succeed in defending the ZAD just as it is imperative that we succeed in defending the SNCF, the universities, and all the public services, against Emmanuel Macron and the world that he represents



Sign from the re-occupation demonstration, November 2012. via Justice Spatiale.

The police and military operation to evacuate part of the inhabitants of the ZAD [Zone à Défendre: Area to be Defended, the occupied site for a now-abandoned airport project] in Notre-Dame-des-Landes began on the morning of 9 April [1]. This statement was first published in Mediapart [2].

On 17 January the government was forced to abandon plans for the airport at Notre-Dame-des-Landes. This was a first, historic victory for the fight against the airport, and it opened up a new phase in the struggle over the ZAD's future. Since then, Emmanuel Macron, [prime minister] Édouard Philippe, and [interior minister] Gérard Collomb seem determined to put an end to this story of a territory in struggle. In pursuit of that objective, the government began by playing on division (as it continues to do still today), trying to push the idea that some of the occupiers have no legitimate reason to stay on this territory, even though they directly contributed to protecting it from the concrete mixers and the planes.

Since 2013, the movement as a whole has asserted its will to collectively manage the lands of the ZAD. The government today denies it this, and now threatens to expel the movement, with unjustified haste. Faced with this threat of expulsions, we reaffirm our unyielding solidarity with all the inhabitants of the ZAD — whatever their status, whatever their residency, whether they have a property deed or not, etc.

The government's decision to mount the evacuation at the very moment that a social mobilisation is mounting — in the SNCF, in the civil service and in the universities (not to mention the many other mobilisations now underway) is no surprise. An evacuation operation will of course strengthen the ever more powerful and widespread rejection of Emmanuel Macron's policies. But the government is doubtless betting that it will be able to divide the mobilisations now underway by opening up several fronts at once.

So we, for our part, need to build ever stronger alliances and oppose this absurd military operation, which is mobilising at least 2,500 soldiers and 1,500 police to violently evacuate an area where people are constructing resilient and sustainable ways of life.

We are convinced that these struggles — to defend the ZAD, the SNCF, universities that are really open, and genuinely humane policies for offering refuge and shelter for migrants — are in fact linked, and that they together contribute to one same movement. Of all the many things that we could learn from the fight against the Notre-Dame-des-Landes airport — and the world it represents — we think that the diversity of strategies, approaches and alliances deployed on the ground, which allowed the occupation to last over time, was particularly decisive. Moreover, recent examples of concrete solidarity between the ZAD's inhabitants and those participating in struggles in the area around Nantes provide a strong, concrete example of struggles converging.

What is at stake in Emmanuel Macron's Thatcherite move is largely the same, whether you are an inhabitant of the ZAD, an SNCF railworker, a civil servant threatened by job cuts, a student worn down by the neglect of the universities, a high-schooler abandoned to the absurd brutality of the Parcoursup [ill-managed platform for applications for higher education], or someone resisting the murderous inhumanity of French and EU migration policies. What these struggles have in common extends far beyond their shared tactical innovations (illustrated by the university presidents' openly expressed fear that ZADs will be created in the universities). Emmanuel Macron and his government have embarked upon the final phase of the mechanical, systematic destruction of public services (and those who work for them). The brutal series of "reforms" designed to liberalise these services, a process which has only just begun, is obviously bound to open the way to their privatisation. In order to be able to bring this project to completion, the government is particularly targeting those sectors which are most able to constitute lasting pockets of resistance.

Thanks to the work of its inhabitants and the local residents, we have been able to mount a near-five-decade struggle around the ZAD, against the airport and the world that it represents. The inhabitants of the ZAD made this slogan concrete through their capacity to build links with other resistance movements against other infrastructure projects, and by transforming these few hectares of wooded countryside into a space of welcome, of experimentation and of resilience. Today it is imperative that we succeed in defending the ZAD just as it is imperative that we succeed in defending the SNCF, the universities, and all the public services, against Emmanuel Macron and the world that he represents — a world of liberalisation, marketization, privatisation, and concreting over the land.

We will do this, concretely, by responding to the appeals for support issued by the ZAD inhabitants, including the appeals to come there or to join local rallies if they are expelled. And we will do so by making sure that our other mobilisations are also built around the defence of this emblematic territory, which our leaders find so intolerable.

First 100 signatories:

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Nicole Benyounes, Fondation Copernic

Éric Beynel, spokesman for the Union syndicale Solidaires

Martine Billard, Parti de gauche, national secretary for the environment

Christophe Bonneuil, historian, organiser of the 'Anthropocène' collection

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Le Comité Vérité et Justice pour Adama

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Caroline Zekri, citizen, lecturer (Université Paris-Est Créteil)

P.S.

* Verso Books. 09 April 2018:

<https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/3731-in-defence-of-the-zad>

* Translated by David Broder.

Footnotes

[1] <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/apr/09/france-notre-dame-des-landes-police-anti-airport-activists-teargas>

[2] <https://blogs.mediapart.fr/les-invites-de-mediapart/blog/080418/en-defense-de-la-zad-resister-emanuel-macron-et-son-monde>

Available on ESSF (article), ->art43979].