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Massive police mobilization in Biarritz, France as G7 summit opens

In the lead-up to this weekend's G7 summit in Biarritz, a seaside resort in southwestern France, the Macron administration has organized a massive mobilization of police, gendarmes and soldiers. The heavily armed forces are tasked with violently repressing any signs of popular opposition to the policies of the assembled G7 governments, utilizing the anti-democratic powers created under the state of emergency from 2015-2017 and mobilized against the "yellow vests."

Parliament voted for a budget of 36.4 million euros for the summit's security measures. In total, 13,200 police and gendarmes are being mobilized to patrol the streets. Interior Minister Christophe Castaner announced that they would be supported by "military forces, which will carry out counter-terrorism missions and protect our air and sea approaches."

The Macron government has turned the city into a fortress. According to *Le Monde*, "The army was deployed discreetly in the interior of the Basque Country, particularly on the heights on the lookout for possible drones, and a navy frigate is in position offshore. More than 400 firefighters and 13 mobile emergency and resuscitation teams are also planned in the system."

Two security perimeters have been put in place with a so-called "enhanced security" zone located in the heart of the city, closed to vehicles and non-accredited pedestrians. In a so-called "protection" zone, which is a little wider, only cars with a specific sign and pedestrians with a badge are allowed to enter.

The authoritarian character of Macron's police mobilization was underscored yesterday with the publication of a video by *Radio France* and *France Info*, who joined a police patrol with two officers in Biarritz. The police stop a van that has two pieces of paper stuck to its side door, which read: "The French state put us in concentration camps. Where are the grandeur and honour of France, Mr. Macron?"

After stopping the vehicle, one of the police officers pulls out his gun and points it at the driver, demanding that he get out of the vehicle. The two occupants of the van are arrested and taken to the police station, where police tell them that references to "concentration camps" are "shocking," and that "now is not the time to be using such strong terms." The two were later released without any charges.

During his trip to Biarritz, Castaner announced, "We will not tolerate any disorder. If they occur, we will respond." He said that the G7 faces potentially "major threats," referring to "violent individuals whom I do not confuse with peaceful demonstrators". He also referred to the "terrorist threat" for which "an international summit can be a target," and then admitted that there was currently "no specific threat reported."

In the context of demonstrations in Hong Kong, Puerto Rico, Algeria, Sudan and the "yellow vests", Macron declared in a press conference on Tuesday that the summit would be a means to combat inequality, an official theme of the summit itself. This is as absurd as saying that the bloody Egyptian dictator Abdel Fattah el Sisi, who has been invited to Biarritz, is fighting for democracy. All the leaders at the summit are pursuing a policy of austerity, and tax cuts for the rich, and implementing a massive build-up of police powers to repress opposition in the working class.

The tax gifts made by former banker Macron helped Bernard Arnault to become the second largest billionaire on the planet with a wealth of \$104 billion (US), roughly four percent of the French annual economic output.

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The G7 summit is taking place under conditions of the bankruptcy of capitalism: the global economic slowdown, the Sino-American trade war, Washington's accelerating drive for war against Iran and political instability linked to Brexit. Already in 2018, the seven deeply divided American, Japanese, German, British, French, Italian and Canadian leaders of the G7 were unable to agree on a joint declaration. In fact, they agree above all on the need for austerity and escalating police repression.

Castaner absurdly declared that “there is no question of preventing the free and non-violent expression of opinions,” a statement that was immediately disproven by the video of protesters being rounded up for displaying a flyer on a van.

For months, the Macron government has been brutally repressing the “yellow vests”, trampling on free expression by attacking overwhelmingly peaceful protests.

Several demonstrations against the G7 have been planned. More than 12,000 people are expected to attend a counter-summit near the French-Spanish border, scheduled from Monday, August 19 to Sunday, August 25 in Urrugne, Hendaye and Irun (Spain). It is bringing together more than 80 organizations, including anti-globalization activists, associations, trade unions, yellow vests and political parties.

A call for “yellow vests” on social media calls for a demonstration against “the great and powerful of this world who defend an ultraliberal economy and give us nothing.”

This week, authorities have arrested at least five people. Media reports claim that some of them “belong to the Black Bloc movement” and are reportedly known to the intelligence services. They were allegedly arrested following calls on social networks to attack a “residence” for gendarmes at the G7 summit in Biarritz. Four of them have been released; one is still in police custody for “provocation involving the commission of a crime by electronic means.”

The Macron administration also expelled a German *Dreyeckland* Radiojournalist and banned him from staying in France until the day after the G7 summit in Biarritz. The journalist, Luc, was arrested a week ago in the Côte-d’Or, in eastern France and deported to Germany.

In an interview with *Dreyeckland*, Luc explained: “After a roadside check, I was arrested and spent almost 24 hours in a cell prior to expulsion because I was designated as a ‘leftist activist’, although initially I was not told the reason for my arrest. They just mentioned something about the right of residence.”

He added that the French police “told me that I was identified a year and a half ago in Bure, near the nuclear waste site where, for the first time, the police had identified me. But they also said that they suspected me of having committed crimes at the G20 in Hamburg (in the summer of 2017), but without proof. Investigations continue.”

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