

Striking workers and students in France denounce war, Gaza massacre

By Alex Lantier
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On Monday, *World Socialist Web Site* reporters attended a rail workers' protest in Paris against the planned privatization of the National Railway (SNCF). The WSWS spoke to striking workers as well as students protesting plans for selective admissions at universities about the US-French-British missile strikes in Syria and the Israeli army's massacre of unarmed Palestinians in Gaza.

Julian, a student, denounced the missile strikes in Syria and the war threats against Iran. "It's a bad thing. I think everyone is in agreement on this. We were not consulted about it at all. It was done very quickly and in a totally arbitrary way.

"They should mind their own business and I don't think Syria is something they should be involved in. I don't know what they are looking for. Apparently, it's war, and it looks like they will get one fairly soon. What's happening with Iran is crazy. It's absurd and we are not given any say at all."

He stressed his horror and anguish over the bloody repression of unarmed Palestinian protesters in Gaza: "I am completely against this," he said. "The Israelis were the victims of genocide, so they know what this means. I do not know why they do this to the Palestinians, it is horrible." Trump's decision to move the US embassy to Jerusalem, he added, "was a provocation, pure and simple."

Julian stressed that he had come to the protest to "unify our struggle with the rail workers." He denounced Macron's attempt to end the rail statute in order to cut wage levels and attack the right to strike, which is constitutionally protected in France: "I have a friend who works at a Carrefour supermarket," he said. "And today she cannot strike because she is in the private sector. Basically, if tomorrow she goes on strike, her boss will fire her, and they want this at the

SNCF too, so that if rail workers strike they would be fired as well."

He added that, like thousands of other students across France, he was protesting Macron's Parcoursup program, which would impose selective admissions at universities. He warned against the privatization of universities. "It's not happened yet, but we are moving towards it. I am against giving favored treatment based on social class."

He added that he had been admitted to the University of Paris, but "next year this may not be possible for people who went to the same high school that I went to."

Julian continued: "People from the working class like me, or my father, we won't have the same CVs. For Parcoursup, we would have to put together CVs now. People from higher social classes, they can have internships or activities with friends of their parents. That gives them CVs longer than my arms, but we don't know anyone, and the only way we have to fill up our CVs is potentially to apply for jobs where we don't know whether we will be hired or not. We do not have the same advantages."

The WSWS also spoke to Hugo, a railway worker mobilized against President Macron's SNCF "reform." He said: "We are here to defend the public service, to defend the rail workers statute, we have demands on these issues. We do not want them to break up this service because it would just be the first. Then they would attack the hospitals, and so on. We don't want this and I am here to show my indignation."

Hugo said that a Macron victory against the rail workers and the public services would be a final step in the creation of a ruling aristocracy imposing its will arbitrarily on the masses. "Our forefathers fought for these rights," he said. "If Macron imposes his law by

force, he will destroy their struggles. It paves the way for building a ruling caste and we are totally against this.”

He added, “These statutes protect the workers, because at the SNCF we are talking about the working class, we are struggling for all the workers.”

Hugo denounced war and warned that Macron would increase military spending at the expense of the workers “inevitably by smashing the public services and grabbing all that money.” He added, “International issues play a major role in our struggle. Fighting on international issues is a critical question.”

He welcomed the rise of the class struggle internationally, including the strikes and protests by US and Tunisian teachers, German metalworkers and British rail workers: “I am in solidarity, of course. It is only by being united at the international level that we can defeat the capitalists and what we are enduring today. That is what we are struggling for in France right now. I am for them and I defend them.”

Emilie, a student protesting against Parcoursup, also opposed the attack on the rail workers. “They must have certain rights,” she said. “Their job is not easy. They work on holidays, at Christmas, at night and so on. So it’s normal that they have certain advantages.”

She also spoke out against the militarist project of Macron and Jean-Luc Mélenchon’s Unsubmissive France (LFI) party to reestablish the draft, which could force students to fight wars in Africa and the Middle East.

She said, “I don’t want to go kill people, or bomb villages and civilians who have done nothing at all. I do not have the feeling I would be going to fight for my own interests. I feel I would be fighting for a government that does not give a damn about the population.

“Already, they are not even financing the universities. There are budget shortfalls not only in the universities, but in the hospitals, the SNCF, etc. I see no good reason to go make people’s lives and work harder just to finance these military interventions.”

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