

”We are beginning to see the same thing in France”

Refugee who fled Chile’s dictatorship denounces police raids against Unsubmissive France

By Alex Lantier
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World Socialist Web Site reporters attended a demonstration by supporters of Unsubmissive France (LFI) outside the party’s headquarters on Tuesday, called to oppose police raids against the organization that morning. Police seized all the data on computers in the offices of LFI and the Left Party, an allied political party founded by LFI leader Jean-Luc Melenchon in 2009, and searched Melenchon’s apartment.

We spoke with Myriam, a Chilean refugee in France who had fled the dictatorship of Augustus Pinochet, and her daughter, Esperanza. Myriam came to sound the alarm, and warned that the raids against LFI recalled the methods used by the Chilean right-wing to terrorize workers prior to Pinochet’s bloody CIA-backed *coup d’etat* in 1973. “The methods of the right wing are always the same: overturn the law and take advantage of their powers for actions like this.”

“I arrived in 1985 with my two children to escape the dictatorship there,” she said. “We were targeted. I wanted to protect my children, economically as well. We arrived here and my children have grown up, but now we are starting to see the same thing. I’m very afraid.”

Myriam noted the deep anger growing among workers in France against the authoritarian and militarist policies of the government of Emmanuel Macron, which is seeking to tear up workers’ social rights and public services. “You see that all the resources for supporting the poor are being taken away. ... They don’t want workers, they want slaves.”

She also said that the class interests supporting the policies of Macron and that which backed Pinochet’s

coup were the same. “Pinochet’s supported by the free-market conservatives,” she said. “Chile was the laboratory for their free-market policies. They profited, and the people starved to death.” In France, Myriam said that under former Socialist Party (PS) president Francois Hollande, “they have begun to put an end to the labor code. In Chile there is no longer a labor code.”

Myriam made clear her hostility to Macron, a banker and former advisor to the PS government who could only become president because he wants to place the whole of society at the disposal of the financial elite. “Macron was a zero, the worst of all the candidates, and now look where he is,” she said. “And whom does he serve? He serves the rich, the ultra-rich, and that’s it.”

Myriam warned of the growing neo-fascist danger in the Brazilian presidential elections, where the extreme-right candidate Jair Bolsonaro is on the verge of taking power. She noted that “the methods of Chile in 1973 and those of Brazil today, which we are seeing with the attacks against Lula, are the same,” a reference to the judicial maneuvers that led to the imprisonment of former president Lula de Silva of the Brazilian Workers Party on corruption charges.

Myriam added that with Macron in France, “I see the same processes, slowly at first, because it is France after all. It is not an impoverished South American nation. So, they proceed with more care. But it is the same.”

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