

# French media slanders “yellow vests” and Muslims as anti-Semites

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After a verbal confrontation Saturday in Paris between “yellow vest” protesters and commentator Alain Finkielkraut, a reactionary media campaign is underway to slander Muslims and “yellow vest” protests against social inequality as anti-Semitic.

The incident, while still murky, reeks of a political provocation. Finkielkraut, who is Jewish and a well-known Zionist right-winger, had attacked the “yellow vests” for their alleged “violence” and “arrogance” to the right-wing daily *Le Figaro* last week. Yet he nonetheless went to the rally and ran into a group of “yellow vests” that included a bearded man under state surveillance for his Islamist ties. This man denounced Finkielkraut as a Zionist in a foul-mouthed tirade. Police then surrounded Finkielkraut and escorted him away.

Initially, government spokesman Benjamin Griveaux insisted that the “yellow vests” had shouted fascist slogans like “dirty Jew” at Finkielkraut. However, journalists who reviewed the cell phone videos of the event said they could not hear that phrase. Finkielkraut denied it, thanking Griveaux: “I am touched by the solidarity he showed for me, but no one called me a dirty Jew.” He will not press charges against the bearded man.

Nonetheless, the media, the state and the right revived overnight the lies peddled last year by the petty-bourgeois New Anticapitalist Party (NPA) and the Stalinist General Confederation of Labor (CGT) union, that the “yellow vests” are a fascistic movement. The media are piling on accusations that French Muslims have become anti-Semitic due to anger at NATO and Israeli wars and jealousy over Jewish wealth. This aims to counter the popularity of the “yellow vests” by tarring left-wing opposition to social inequality and war with the brush of anti-Semitism.

The WSWs has explained from the beginning of the “yellow vest” movement that it was socially and politically heterogeneous—mobilizing workers, the self-

employed, farmers and small businessmen. Advancing populist and democratic, as opposed to class and internationalist, demands, it welcomed anyone willing to wear a “yellow vest” to protest against President Emmanuel Macron. This allows right-wing forces to briefly join in the movement, apparently including Islamists who until now have played no visible role.

The “yellow vests” are largely drawn from the working class, however, and opposed to social inequality, racism and militarism. Central responsibility for the rise of anti-Semitism and similar hatreds lies not with the “yellow vests,” but with those now denouncing them.

The hypocrisy of the bourgeois politicians and journalists denouncing alleged anti-Semitism in the working class is obscene. In a tweet Saturday evening about Finkielkraut, Macron declared that “the anti-Semitic insults that he was subjected to are the negation of what we are and what makes us a great nation. We will not tolerate it.”

Yet it was Macron who, last November, praised Philippe Pétain, the leader of the fascist Vichy regime that collaborated with the Nazis and oversaw the mass murder of Jews in France. Pétain had over 76,000 deported to Nazi concentration camps, including 11,000 children, where all but 2,000 were murdered. Macron’s claim that everyone must acknowledge that Pétain was a “great soldier” in World War I was an appeal to neo-fascistic forces on an anti-Semitic basis.

Neo-fascist leader Marine Le Pen, whose father Jean-Marie infamously dismissed the Holocaust as a “detail of history,” was outraged at the treatment of Finkielkraut. She tweeted, “The assault against Alain Finkielkraut is a detestable and shocking act, which illustrates the anti-Semitic far left’s attempts to infiltrate the Yellow Vest movement.”

While BFM-TV endlessly insisted that criticism of Finkielkraut as a Zionist is anti-Semitic, pundits and

professors spoke on TV shows to denounce working class opposition to capitalism. Corporate head-hunter and self-styled philosopher Julia de Funès declared: “The true face of anti-Semitism today is obviously no longer the Catholic far right, or the Nazism of Europe of the 1930s. It is fundamentalist Islam.”

She provocatively added that “yellow vest” opposition to Macron’s elimination of taxes on wealth (ISF) shows they are allying with genocidal anti-Semites: “Very simply, the logic of the yellow vests has degenerated into a logic of passion, jealousy and hatred for the rich. The question of the ISF proves it. ... We are facing a logic of passion, that is where the two come together in a logic of hatred: race hatred for one, class hatred for the other.”

A class gulf separates the socialistic aspirations of working people for an expropriation of the obscene fortunes of the multi-billionaires and a rational use of social wealth, from the retrograde appeals to ethnic hatreds and murder that are the legacy of fascism. The attempt by Funès to conflate the two is a foul political falsification. It is the capitalist class, not the workers, that is cultivating the descendants of 20th century fascism to build far-right parties across Europe.

In Germany, multibillionaire August von Finck—whose father financed Hitler—is now financing the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD). This party is gaining strength as right-wing extremist professors promote the legacy of Hitler, with the tacit backing of the entire German political establishment, to justify an unpopular policy of remilitarization.

In France, Le Pen’s party maintains ties to numerous aggressively anti-Semitic groups. The media maintain a deafening silence on these ties, allowing them to publicly pose as opponents of anti-Semitism while integrating the neo-fascists into official politics. Yet Marion Maréchal Le Pen visits the Action française—the descendant of the anti-Semitic group of the same name led by Charles Maurras in the 20th century that helped staff the Vichy regime. In 2013, AF member Serge Ayoub played a key role in coordinating the murder of left-wing student Clément Méric.

Neo-fascist bagman Philippe Péninque not only organized illicit transactions of Socialist Party (PS) minister Jérôme Cahuzac, he also founded the Equality and Reconciliation (E&R) group, which spreads anti-Semitic propaganda. The current handwringing in the media over E&R’s role in promoting anti-Semitism among Muslims maintains a complicit silence on E&R’s links with the PS and the Le Pen dynasty.

Finkelkraut, for his part, has served as an apologist for the crimes of Israel against the Palestinian people. In a 2014 interview with *Le Figaro*, Finkelkraut defended the Israeli war on defenseless Palestinians in Gaza, which led to more than 1,000 civilian deaths, declaring that, “The Israelis warned the inhabitants of Gaza by every possible means of the coming bombings.” He added, “When I’m told these inhabitants have no where to go, I respond that the underground tunnels of Gaza should have been made for them.”

The French political establishment claims that such support for the Israeli state’s repugnant killings of defenseless civilians cannot be criticized, and that all opposition to it is anti-Semitic. This serves to conflate widely-felt opposition to the repression of the Palestinians with anti-Semitism, thereby legitimizing the latter.

Faced with the “yellow vests,” the ruling class now is using all the tools it has to divide the workers by nationality and block opposition to war abroad and austerity at home. It uses the bloodshed from its wars in the Middle East and Africa, and for Israel’s wars against Palestinians, to try to set Jewish, Muslim and other workers against each other—an operation then covered up with the lie that it is the ruling elite that is fighting anti-Semitism.

Such efforts to divide the working class must be rejected. There is deep opposition to imperialism and Zionism among workers of all nationalities. This opposition can only be mobilized based on a turn to the working class, and a fight to unify it through an international struggle against capitalism and war, and for socialism.



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