

Macron government fabrication of “yellow vest” hospital attack in Paris collapses

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It took less than 24 hours for the Macron government’s fabricated story about “yellow vest” protesters attacking the Pitié-Salpêtrière hospital on May Day in Paris to collapse like a house of cards. It has been exposed as yet another lie to cast the protests against social inequality as criminal riots and promote Macron’s build-up of a French police state against the working class.

The events in question occurred slightly after 4:00 p.m. on Wednesday, on the Boulevard de l’Hôpital in Paris’ 13th arrondissement. The street was filled with thousands of protesters, a portion of the more than 40,000 people demonstrating in the city that day, when riot police fired tear gas into the densely-packed crowd and triggered a wave of panic.

A reporter for the right-wing daily *Le Figaro*, Wladimir Garcin-Berson, who was present at the scene, tweeted that there was a “wave of tear gas, the air became unbreathable.” Videos posted subsequently on social media show that protesters who were fleeing the choking gas forced open the metal gate of the hospital compound. Several dozen people attempted to take refuge inside one of the hospital buildings, but were turned away by staff, and then arrested.

Within a few hours, the incident had been transformed, in the words of French Interior Minister Christophe Castaner, into an “attack” on the hospital by rioters. In a press conference on Wednesday evening, in which he sought to conflate the mass protests with small groups of black bloc anarchists, Castaner declared that “people have attacked a hospital. The nurses were forced to defend the urgent care area. Our police forces immediately intervened to save the urgent care area.”

An hour later, Castaner tweeted, “Here at Pitié-Salpêtrière, a hospital has been attacked. The health

care staff have been assaulted. And a police officer sent to protect them has been injured.” The tweet was accompanied by wide-angle and close-up pictures of a resolute Castaner shaking hands with riot police and walking through the hospital ward with health staff.

Macron’s Minister of Solidarity and Health Agnès Buzyn called the event “unspeakable” and “undignified.”

“Maybe there were people who wanted to take refuge, and others who wanted to steal,” she said, without providing any evidence for the latter claim. As if to emphasize the alleged blood lust of the protesters, news reports emerged that a police officer was being treated at the same time in the same hospital for an injury—implying that he or she could have been the target of a coordinated revenge attack.

Media in France and internationally immediately repeated and amplified the Macron government’s lies.

The French edition of *The Local* published a report headlined: “‘Unspeakable’: Why did dozens of protesters burst into a Paris hospital during May 1st demonstrations?” The Murdoch-owned *Sun* in Britain reported “DANGER TO LIFE: Fury as Yellow Vest protesters storm Paris hospital where Princess Diana died.” *Le Figaro* declared that “dozens of ‘black blocs’” had broken into the hospital.

The media’s role as a mouthpiece for state propaganda was best exemplified by the public news channel France Info. Its report, headlined “Intrusion at Pitié-Salpêtrière: ‘Discussion was not possible,’ hospital director says,” featured a banner photo of a hooded man attacking a gate with a metal pole.

Within hours of the article’s publication, the photographer who took the picture, Geoffrey VdH, tweeted that the photo was taken the same day in a completely different location, outside a Paris police

headquarters.

France Info subsequently removed the picture and replaced it with an image of a man threateningly brandishing a hammer outside a hospital—at a different building from where the incident occurred.

As documented by Liberation’s “CheckNews” segment, the picture had been cropped at the bottom to remove dozens of “yellow vest” protesters who were angrily confronting the individual with the hammer and telling him they would not allow such a provocation. The original picture had been published by *Le Parisien* the same day.

The Macron government’s lies had well and truly collapsed by Thursday, with the publication of numerous videos of the incident on social media. A video shot by one of the hospital workers shows a group of protesters running away from a column of riot police down a thoroughfare of the hospital compound, climbing the stairway to a building entrance, and standing on the upper platform, visibly terrified of being attacked by the police.

The staff inform the group that it is an urgent care area and contains ill patients, and refuse to let them in. The hospital workers can be heard speaking with one another inside the building. “They’re scared, they’re just afraid,” one says, to which another responds: “Yes, they [the police] have chased them.” Another states: “They didn’t know [that it was the urgent care unit], they were just looking for a way out.” Hospital workers have also given interviews adamantly insisting that they were never threatened.

The entire incident on the video is over within a few minutes. Police arrive and arrest the protesters without any clashes. With the collapse of the government’s story, all 32 were released yesterday, the majority of them reportedly young university students. Castaner has angrily denounced all those who accused him of lying, absurdly declaring he may have “misspoken” and not used the word “attack.” Multiple parties have called for his resignation.

The affair underscores an essential political reality. The Macron government, like its counterparts and bourgeois parties internationally, led by the Democratic Party in the United States, utilizes the banner of fighting “fake news” to censor the internet and social media and prevent workers from accessing alternative news sources which the government and corporations

do not control. The real purveyors of fake news, however, are the government and its mouthpieces in the corporate media.

The Macron government’s lies about a non-existent hospital attack serve a definite purpose: to slander all left-wing opposition to the government as criminal and morally reprehensible and justify the ongoing unleashing of police state violence against the working class.

In February, a murky verbal confrontation between a “yellow vest” and right-wing Jewish commentator and Zionist Alain Finkielkraut was similarly used to slander the entire “yellow vest” movement as anti-Semitic.

Police were filmed looting stores during violent clashes on the Champs-Élysées in March, to which Macron reacted by blaming all the looting on the “yellow vests” and banning protests on the avenue. The government then ordered soldiers of the Operation Sentinel anti-terrorism mission deployed against the “yellow vests,” with authorization to shoot.

The collapse of this brazenly fabricated story about an “attack” on the Pitié-Salpêtrière discredits not only the corporate media that peddled this story, but all the unproven allegations the Macron government has used to justify intensifying repression against the “yellow vests.”



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