

Courts call to jail French neo-fascist Marine Le Pen over party financing

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26 November 2024

On November 13, the Paris prosecutor's office demanded a five-year prison term, a €300,000 fine and five years ban on participation in elections against Marine Le Pen over her party's use of European parliamentary assistants to do party work. This transparently political decision aims to keep Le Pen from running in the 2027 presidential election.

No advance will emerge in the struggle against fascism, genocide and war from such a decision. This struggle requires the mobilization of the working class against imperialism and the capitalist state machine. Nothing of the kind is involved here.

There is no need to sympathize with Le Pen to see that the prosecutor's decision is anti-democratic. It is an insult to millions of voters, including many workers, who vote for Le Pen or her National Rally (RN) out of disgust with President Emmanuel Macron or the big business Socialist Party (PS). It reveals the intense factional struggles inside the ruling class amid the escalation of the NATO war in Ukraine against Russia, the Gaza genocide, and Trump's victory in the US presidential election.

The courts are not waging a struggle against far-right reaction. They have normalized violent police repression of workers under the control of far-right forces like France's monarchist interior minister, Bruno Retailleau. The ruling class is setting up a far-right police state regime, with or without Le Pen and the RN. By attacking the RN on this trumped-up pretext, the French capitalist state is above all creating a precedent that will be used against more dangerous opposition, on its left, in the working class.

The European parliament brought this suit against the RN because it paid parliamentary assistants of RN legislators with European Union (EU) funds, but these assistants allegedly did not assist the legislators but

instead did general party work.

As she came out from the hearing, Marine Le Pen spoke to the television cameras to denounce the prosecutor: "The only thing that interested the prosecutor was Marine Le Pen and how to demand her exclusion from political life ... and then the National Rally, to try to ruin the party." Indeed, the prosecutor also demanded a €2.3 million fine against the RN.

Speaking to TF1 television, Le Pen said, "What they are demanding is my political destruction." RN Vice-President Sébastien Chenu denounced a "prosecutor who is on a political mission." In a letter sent to RN supporters, RN President Jordan Bardella wrote that the courts "want to deprive millions of French people of their vote."

As the trial began, one RN official told the media: "There were no embezzlement or personal enrichment, unlike in the case of François Fillon. It is a debate about the duties of the parliamentary assistant of a member of the European parliament. We think it's normal that such a person do politics, work for the party. It's a complicated suit, which most people don't really care about."

It is apparent that the Paris prosecutors office has demanded a disproportionate penalty, if one compares this case with the sentences imposed in similar cases that affected other bourgeois parties.

In the first months of Macron's presidency, one of his allied parties, the MoDem, obtained several ministerial positions and many deputies in the French National Assembly with substantial numbers of parliamentary assistants.

After a six-year investigation, a trial began in October 2023. In February 2024, MoDem leader François Bayrou was acquitted, while MoDem officials Michel Mercier, Jean-Luc Bennahmias, Janelly Fourtou,

Bernard Lehideux, Anne Laperrouze, Alexandre Nardella, and Jean-Jacques Jegou received suspended prison sentences, fines and bans on running in elections. The MoDem received a fine.

There was also “Penelopegate,” the scandal launched by a January 2017 article in the *Canard enchaîné* weekly that revealed that the wife of François Fillon, then a presidential candidate, had been paid as a parliamentary assistant of her husband and of M. Joulaud.

This article led to an investigation by the National Financial Prosecutor. Initially, in June 2020, Fillon was condemned to five years in prison for embezzlement of public funds, and his spouse to three years suspended sentence for complicity.

In April 2024, the Appeals Court confirmed the guilt of the parties involved in the Fillon case. However, it eliminated Fillon’s sentence, arguing that his prison sentence was not correctly motivated and that he did not necessarily need to reimburse all of the salaries paid to his wife to the Assembly.

Behind the treatment of Le Pen, the head of a reactionary neo-fascist party that has been on the final round of the last two presidential elections and could win in 2027, there lie broader political considerations. Le Pen has repeatedly declared her support for Trump, and her hostility to Berlin and the EU. As the French and European bourgeoisie fears explosive trade conflicts with the United States under Trump, the idea of monitoring Le Pen, either in prison or via an electronic bracelet, no doubt interests many French cops and politicians.

The prosecutors’ actions are not a victory for a defense of democratic rights against fascism. Instead, it will tend to reinforce the sentiment of the RN electorate, reinforced by the demobilization of workers struggles by the union bureaucracy, that the RN is the only genuine opposition party, persecuted by the state. But this only hastens the rise of the RN and the broader ruling elite’s move to the far right.

Indeed, the various trials launched on one or other grounds against Trump, after he organized an attempted putsch by a far right mob on the US Capitol on 6 January 2021, did not prevent his re-election this year, as the Democratic Party had systematically downplayed the significance of his attempted coup.

The rising influence of the far-right in capitalist

regimes around the world confirms that the defense of democratic rights is inseparable from the struggle of the working class for socialism, in France and internationally.



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