

Wiesenthal Centre Alert on Upcoming Rallies in France

Paris, 27 November 2022

In the year preceding the Covid-19 pandemic, the streets of France saw a multitude of rallies – regularly held on Saturdays – by the so-called “Gilets-jaunes” movement (Yellow Jackets). Organized through social media, the movement accused the French Government of not addressing rising poverty – seen as a globalization effect – of lower and middle classes in a context of economic stagnation.

After several chaotic Saturday rallies, as early as January 2019, the Wiesenthal Centre's Director for International Relations, Dr Shimon Samuels, warned that, “Lacking any recognized leadership, the once spontaneous ‘movement’ was being hijacked by extremes of right and left, inciting conspiracy theories, antisemitism and other forms of hatred.”

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Unsurprisingly, over the following months, this warning had proven founded, as the hate climaxed into outrageously fake news and violence, showcasing explicit antisemitic tropes.

The movement was further infiltrated by the pro-Palestinian groups, waving flags and wearing keffiyehs in the logic of “intersectionality” – veering into anti-Israel and anti-Zionist narratives. The “globalized” Jews were an easy target.

The Covid outbreak brought necessary lockdowns and public social action, that contributed in temporarily quelling the movement, but, as soon as it could reboot, it seemed to morph into the “no-virus, no-mask and no-vax” denialism, its antisemitic facet culminating in the “JeSuisPartout” screed (by the way, promoted through Russia's VK and Yandex). Our alert saw decisive action by the French Government:

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This Saturday, November 26, the Yellow Jackets were back on the streets of Paris and other French cities. In the next weeks, the movement will build on old and new grievances.

The economic situation, in France, Europe and Worldwide, is surely aggravated by Russia's direct War on Ukraine – illustrated by the savage bombing of civilians and essential infrastructures and indirect War on the West – illustrated by the calculated shortages and cuts in exporting gas, oil, wheat, fertilizers and other raw materials. The rise in consumer prices and ensuing inflation have all but given the people more reason to be worried.

As we did three years ago, we are alerting again the French Government – in the person of Interior Minister, Gerald Darmanin – of the risks inherent to this protest dynamic.

“The authorities as well as the Yellow Jacket coordinators must learn from past lessons. No space must be given to purveyors of conspiracy theories and antisemitism. This movement must not be manipulated for political agendas that result in extremists inciting hate and violence,” concluded Samuels.

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