

# French police arrest 473 as ‘Block Everything’ sweeps France

written by Gary Wilson  
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A protester holds a placard that reads, “let’s tax the rich,” during a rally of the

“Block Everything” movement in Strasbourg, eastern France, Sept. 10.

French police reported 473 arrests by 5 p.m. as over 250,000 protesters (number provided by the CGT labor federation) rallied nationwide on Sept. 10.

In the Paris region alone, 203 people were arrested as authorities deployed 6,000 officers; nationwide, 80,000 police were mobilized as nearly a thousand actions took place.

Prime Minister Sébastien Lecornu, a Macron loyalist and former defense minister, took office after François Bayrou’s government collapsed on Sept. 8, toppled by a no-confidence vote over a 2026 budget plan featuring more than \$50 billion in cuts, the scrapping of two national holidays, a 2026 pension freeze, and reduced health care spending.

### **Transport and city centers snarled**

Protesters targeted transport arteries across the map. They blocked the Toulouse-Auch rail line and tried to storm tracks at Paris’ Gare du Nord, where police fired tear gas as hundreds chanted “Step down, Macron.”

Ring roads and major highways in Paris, Lyon, Marseille, and Rennes saw rolling blockages. Parts of central Paris were closed to traffic. In the east of the capital, protesters set garbage bins ablaze and attempted to halt highway traffic, while students blocked entry to a local high school. Graffiti hit luxury storefronts, including a Jean Paul Gaultier shop tagged: “People are hungry, Death to luxury!”

### **Austerity backlash fuels anger**

Endorsed by Jean-Luc Mélenchon, leader of the left-wing France Unbowed party, the “Block Everything” strategy was driven on the ground by unions like SUD-Rail and militant sectors of the CGT, who targeted strategic infrastructure like railways and

oil refineries. France's more moderate union federation, CFDT, mobilized only for the marches.

The "Block Everything" actions had wide working-class support.

"This is the frustration we've felt all summer — fed up and angry since the Bayrou budget plan," said Eric Challal of SUD Rail-Paris. "We're working hard and barely staying afloat. Being told the deficit is our fault is unbearable."

Crowds massed at Place de la République, cordoned off by police, for one of the day's biggest gatherings. An 18-year-old student compared today's politics to the grievances of 1789: "The government doesn't listen to us and acts as it pleases."

Rachid, a 56-year-old contractor draped in Lebanese, Palestinian, and Algerian flags, blasted the wealth divide since 2017: "There's money in this country, but it's badly distributed. The same people get richer and richer while ordinary citizens can't make it to the end of the month."

### **Echoes of the Yellow Vests**

Like the 2018 Yellow Vests, "Block Everything" is nonpartisan, organized outside party structures, and powered by social media. With unions calling fresh strikes for Sept. 18, protesters are already gearing up for the next round.

