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France

A crude intimidation operation against Philippe Poutou

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During his previous election campaign in 2017 Philippe Poutou caused a stir when he advocated disarming the police. He returned to the question of policing on Wednesday 13 October stating "Yes, there is police violence. The police kill, then we can discuss: assassination, murder, accident, blunder or self-defence. We know it, we see it. When you are a demonstrator, you are not protected by the police, you are attacked and assaulted. [...] The police kill, but the police especially mutilate. How many hands have been ripped off, how many faces disfigured, how many people in custody when they have done nothing?" [1]

This factual statement [2] has provoked an outcry from the government and right wing, and the threat of prosecution from the Minister of the Interior. We publish the statement from the NPA.

The Minister of the Interior Gérald Darmanin announced this morning his intention to file a complaint against Philippe Poutou, the NPA's candidate for the 2022 presidential election. For what reason? Comments made last night on France Info TV, when Philippe Poutou said that "the police kill" during a sequence in which he denounced police violence against working-class neighbourhoods and demonstrations. According to Darmanin, these remarks were "unworthy and insulting", and he intended, by filing a complaint, to "defend the honour of all police officers".

Once again, the Minister of the Interior is giving in to pressure from the police unions, which had come out a few hours earlier to denounce Philippe Poutou's remarks. This is yet another attempt at intimidation by far-right unions and a minister who takes orders from them, and aims to silence all those who denounce police violence and crimes. A posture consistent with the refusal to recognise as a state crime the massacre of hundreds of Algerians by the French police on 17 October 1961, the 60th anniversary of which we will commemorate in three days' time.

With all due respect to Gérald Darmanin, who is not well placed, given his pedigree, to give lessons in "dignity", stating that "the police kill" is nothing more than relating facts and denouncing the crimes of an institution - not attacking individual police officers. Darmanin's comments are in fact an insult to the memory of all the victims of police violence, whose list would be too long to establish here, and an insult to their relatives.

We will wait to see if Gérald Darmanin actually files a complaint before communicating further. But we can already affirm that we will not be intimidated by this kind of manoeuvre, we will not stop denouncing police crimes and we will continue to stand by the victims and their relatives in the struggle for justice and truth.

Montreuil, 14 October 2021

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[1] [Le Figaro](#), 15 October 2021.

[2] See (in French) this report on police violence from *Basta Mag* "[Entre 1977 et 2020, 746 morts](#)".