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France

# Anti-racist marches: From Minneapolis to Paris, everything to play for

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**It is of course too early to say that Saturday 30 May will have been a turning point. But the ingredients are there. In the morning, thousands marched through the streets of Maubeuge in the North against the announcement of job cuts at Renault and the threat to close their factory. And in the afternoon in Paris, thousands of undocumented migrants imposed their right to demonstrate for their regularization.**

In Paris, the demonstration had been banned under the pretext of the health crisis. But, under the impetus of the undocumented groups, the Marche des Solidarités decided to defy the ban.

## **Police overwhelmed**

The government had warned that measures would be taken to prevent the demonstration.

And the measures were employed bluntly, with the arrest of the first arrivals on the two squares in the west of Paris (Madeleine and Opera) cordoned off by the police, charges and bludgeoning on the groups nevertheless trying to rally in the square, massive use of tear gas. But the police could not hold because they were overwhelmed.

Overwhelmed first by the numbers, because groups and processions arrived from everywhere in Madeleine as in Opera, multiplying the fronts, here and there pushing back the police cordon trying to repel the demonstrators. In addition, leaving from Montreuil, at the other end of Paris, and unable to take the metro, a procession of 1,000 undocumented migrants and supporters decided to cross the whole city to reach the place called for the demonstration. Some of the police had to leave in an emergency to block them. And faced with the determination of the demonstrators, these police forces were not able to return to block Opera or Madeleine.

Overwhelmed also by the determination of the undocumented migrants. Because rather than leaving at the first or the second charge of the police, the contingents regrouped to resume the assault and try to reach the place of assembly, until the police were forced to withdraw.

Thousands of undocumented migrants and supporters then came together. After the liberated Place de l'Opéra it was Madeleine's turn and a huge procession was formed, joined by people learning through social networks that the demonstration was held as promised and that a veritable human wave had formed to cross Paris.

## **In Paris, and elsewhere...**

The demonstration had been banned, it was held. And migrants, symbols of all obstacles to the right to move, on the front line in the face of repression and exploitation, have become the advanced point of the struggle for freedom. After more than two months of lockdown, alongside the Renault workers, taking every risk they have reopened the path of combat.

This is undoubtedly why there was an unprecedented response to this demonstration in which few believed, including on the left. Media coverage of course, as well as indignant reactions from the fascists and the whole right, whose violently racist content illustrates the level of issues for all of society. But also an enthusiastic response from all those

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to whom this demonstration of determination of undocumented migrants gives hope. One of the comments reacting to the press release on the Marche des Solidarités blog sets the tone: "You may not know it, but in front of our screens, unable to be present in the capital, many of us were crying, we were so proud of you". Videos are circulating on all social networks.

Rallies and demonstrations also took place in many cities around the country, despite police pressure, from 100 to 400 demonstrators in Lyon, Rennes, Rouen, Lille, Strasbourg, Limoges, Grenoble, Poitiers, Nîmes, Perpignan, Orléans, Le Havre and elsewhere. But also in Brussels and Bologna.

There will be new gatherings in the coming weeks. Because it is not only a question of the right to demonstrate but of obtaining the regularization of all undocumented migrants, accommodation for all, the closure of detention centres. And, as in Minneapolis, what is at stake here is determinant for society as a whole. And it is also a springboard for the national day of mobilization in hospitals called by the collectives of struggle and the trade unions for 16 June. As the poster for this demonstration on 30 May said: "Health = equality + freedom + solidarity".

The coming days will tell us whether 30 May was a turning point. Everything must be done now for this to happen. The next world is now!

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