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Belgium

To defend our future, against austerity and repression: everyone in the streets alongside the youth!



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After a scorching and deadly summer for the working classes, the mobilizations for decent, free and democratic education that began in June are back in full force!

In June, the government of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation forced through its reforms to dismantle education: increased working hours for teachers in upper secondary education, increased tuition fees for higher education, and cuts to budgets for school infrastructure (just a few weeks after heat waves that turned classrooms into veritable ovens).

Youth at the heart of the movement and the target of repression

The Degryse government hoped that summer would quell the mobilization, but for several days now, actions have been multiplying and intensifying throughout Wallonia and Brussels. At the heart of this movement: a sacrificed, forgotten, and scorned youth who refuse to have their future stolen from them. Faced with an increasingly elitist education system that is desperately under-resourced, and with ever-widening inequalities, the government persists in its austerity measures. Secondary school students are on the front lines of this struggle and are showing us the way! They are demanding decent conditions for learning and studying, with adequate equipment, but also better working conditions for their teachers and more staff. They are also denouncing the price increases, particularly for public transport passes and tuition fees, in the face of already widespread precarity, especially among young people.

The level of repression was extremely high during the June protests, particularly against young people of colour and those from working-class neighbourhoods, but the escalation in recent days has become increasingly brutal and alarming. Several dozen arrests had already been made across Wallonia by the middle of last week, including several judicial arrests and one young person placed in a juvenile detention centre. On Tuesday, the mayor of Dinant banned a gathering organized by students, and on Thursday, the mayor of Liège went even further by prohibiting any gathering of more than three people: serious anti-democratic attacks! At the October 9th demonstration, the repression accelerated even further: more than a hundred arrests and an astonishing use of tear gas and water cannons! A criminal police force acting with the tacit approval of the mayor of Brussels, Philippe Close.

Meanwhile, the right-wing government, with Bernard Quintin and Georges-Louis Bouchez at the forefront, is attempting to silence and discredit the movement, with an obsession about the “rioters.” This narrative obscures the underlying causes of the mobilizations and focuses far more on the material damage than on the fierce repression against the protesters, who are often minors. In this respect, we regret that the mainstream media often treat the movement through such a sensationalist lens, relegating the students' demands to the background. The violence the movement may resort to is merely a response to the radical offensive of the right-wing government. The real rioters are those who dismantle sectors essential to society, imposing precariousness and repression!

Structure the movement in order to endure and strengthen it

Right-wing governments are counting on repression and on exhausting the movement to force their way through. To sustain itself and grow stronger, the youth movement should develop its own tools for discussion and

decision-making, completely independent of existing structures (unions, left-wing parties, student unions like the CEF and the FEF). Such spaces would serve as forums for formulating demands and for strategic debates (on the role of violence in the movement, building links with other social and political forces, etc.). This structure would prevent the recent social unrest from quickly subsiding, for example, during school holidays. This grassroots self-organization will be key to keeping the movement alive and democratic.

The movement will also need the support of the unions. The demonstration on October 9th was symbolic of the potential of such an alliance and the road that still lies ahead: on the one hand, young people were present en masse at the demonstration, making it one of the youngest union mobilizations in recent years. On the other hand, the union and youth blocs formed two separate marches, and the unions rushed to the Gare du Midi train station, leaving the young people at the mercy of police repression. The struggle of young people is that of the entire working class, and it is crucial that union leaderships provide support and solidarity to the whole movement!

To defend a just, egalitarian, and democratic society, we demand:

- The complete withdrawal of the education reforms;
- The release of all young detainees and the dropping of charges;
- The resignation of the political figures responsible,, at all levels of power;
- The disarmament and defunding of the police and the establishment of genuine citizens' control;
- Massive refinancing of education and healthcare!

12 October 2026

*Translated by **International Viewpoint** from [Gauche Anticapitaliste](#).*

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