



## WATCH: Riots Break Out, Strikers Block Fuel Refineries as Millions Protest in France Against Pension Reforms

### Description

Violent riots and economically damaging activist actions broke out in France on Tuesday as the country saw one of its biggest mass mobilisations of protesters in years in response to President Emmanuel Macron's plan to raise the pension age from 62 to 64 years old.

Millions of people took part in protests across 200 towns and cities in France on Tuesday, with the organising CGT union claiming that up to 3.5 million people flooded out onto the streets, while the French Interior Ministry put the number at around 1.28 million.

The protests and accompanying trade union strikes were the sixth such demonstration since January against President Macron's planned pension age hike to 64, which would still be lower than other major European nations such as Britain, Germany, and Spain. Nevertheless, the proposal has sparked outrage among the French public that has been suffering under economic hardship caused by rampant inflation.

? Tensions entre le SO CGT et un blackbloc : les syndicats font usage de gaz lacrymogène. [#greve7mars](#) [#manif7mars](#) [#ReformesRetraite](#) [pic.twitter.com/tvNQw385lw](https://pic.twitter.com/tvNQw385lw)

— Clément Lanot (@ClementLanot) [March 7, 2023](#)

According to President Macron, the raising of the pension age is required to keep the programme solvent given the the independent Pensions Advisory Council has predicted that large deficits will hit the system over the next 25 years. In addition to raising the pension age, the Neo-liberal president and former Rothschild banker has also called for workers to have put into the system for 43 years before becoming eligible for full retirement benefits.

According to CGT, Tuesday's demonstrations were the largest of their kind since 2010 against then President Sarkozy's own pension reform plans. A protester [speaking](#) to the left-wing paper *Libération* said that he hopes for "a greater balance of power emerge, like the Yellow Vests" and that the only solution to stop the pension reforms are to "block the economy".

? Des manifestants contre la [#ReformeDesRetraites](#) bloquent depuis tôt ce matin plusieurs portes du Grand port maritime de [#Marseille](#) !

À la porte 4, les grévistes de la CGT ont brûlé une épave de bateau et dressé des barrières de béton pour empêcher toute entrée ou sortie [pic.twitter.com/7Ra5tYRosG](https://pic.twitter.com/7Ra5tYRosG)

— La Provence (@laprovence) [March 8, 2023](#)

This sentiment seemed to be widely shared, with deliveries of fuel being blocked from all eight major French refineries by activists on Tuesday, with the intention of bringing the country to its knees. The head of the supermarket group Les Mousquetaires, Thierry Cotillard [claimed](#): "If the refineries are blocked, we could run out of petrol by the end of the week."

The protests in Paris and Marseilles, in particular, took a violent turn as the day marched on, with black bloc clad radicals attacking police officers in both cities. In Paris, protesters were seen digging up cobblestones from the street to launch at officers as projectiles with tear gas being fired in return.

? La voiture d'un médecin en intervention a été dégradée durant la manifestation contre la [#ReformedesRetraite](#) [#manif7mars](#) [pic.twitter.com/G67GLqN3uA](https://pic.twitter.com/G67GLqN3uA)

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The protest in the capital was also criticised for the actions of some, who were [filmed](#) smashing a car that was later revealed to be the property of a doctor for the SOS Médecins emergency medical service. Upon his return and his brandishing of a badge proving that he was a doctor, the crowd backed off.

In Marseilles, which saw up to 245,000 people demonstrate, saw at least seven officers were injured after they were assaulted by a group of between 50 and 100 radicals. One of the officers who was attacked recounted: "They called us murderers, that everyone 'hated us' and that we 'were going to die'."

? Un groupe de policiers isolés est en difficulté, un policier est extrait du groupe par ses collègues.

Manifestation contre la [#ReformedesRetraite](#) sous tensions. [#greve7mars](#) [pic.twitter.com/aMffGdseeW](https://pic.twitter.com/aMffGdseeW)

— Clément Lanot (@ClementLanot) [March 7, 2023](#)

On the back of what is being hailed as a major victory for the protesters, by the sheer numbers in

attendance, alone, the organising union has already prepared another demonstration on Saturday and another protest at a date to be determined.

***by Kurt Zindulka***

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**Date Created**

03/10/2023