Mondialisation.ca
Centre de recherche sur la mondialisation

Sarkozy Launches French Presidential Bid Based on Anti-Muslim Hysteria

Par Kumaran Ira
Mondialisation.ca, 29 août 2016
World Socialist Web Site 29 août 2016

Région : Europe
Thème: Police State & Civil Rights, Religion

Last Thursday, former right-wing President Nicolas Sarkozy of the Les Républicains (LR) party declared his candidacy in November's LR primary for next year's presidential election, with calls for unprecedented attacks on Muslims' basic democratic rights. Sarkozy served as president from 2007 to 2012, when he lost his re-election bid to current Socialist Party (PS) President François Hollande.

With France still under a state of emergency, Sarkozy made proposals whose political character is unmistakable: they would convert Muslims to second-class citizens deprived of basic social and democratic rights. He called for trampling Muslim women's right to exercise their religious freedom and their democratic right to dress as they please, with plans to ban the veil and burqa in workplaces and universities. This means placing Muslim women before an intolerable choice: they must either give up their religion, or the right to work and obtain an education.

Sarkozy had chosen to issue his appeal from the town of Châteaurenard in southern France, where the neo-fascist *Front National* (FN) made significant electoral gains in the last regional elections.

Most of Sarkozy's remarks were taken from his new book, *Everything for France*, which came out last week. In it, he announces his candidacy and calls for suspending the right for immigrants' families abroad to join immigrants in France, drastically reducing the number of migrants, imposing harsh conditions for obtaining French nationality, and eliminating state medical aid for migrants.

Speaking at Châteaurenard, Sarkozy called for banning the veil including "in the schools, universities, public services, and in the workplaces." He charged that such practices threaten French identity, brazenly declaring: "Our identity is threatened if we allow minorities to force upon us a lifestyle which will never be ours." He added, "I want to be the president that re-establishes the authority of the state on every square centimeter of the Republic."

Such remarks from a former head of state testify to a staggering disintegration of French bourgeois democracy. It is ever clearer that, amid an escalating economic and military crisis of the capitalist system, the French ruling class' decades-long strategy of dividing the working class along ethnic lines with appeals to anti-Muslim sentiment is taking on vast new dimensions.

An entire religious community of millions of people, consisting of racial minorities largely drawn from the most oppressed sections of the working class in France, is effectively being accused of treason. The implication of Sarkozy's remarks is that the simple act of peacefully practising a religion shared by millions of people in France means defying the authority of the state and committing an act of disloyalty to the identity of the French ethnicity.

The resurgence of racist policies underscores the deep crisis of bourgeois rule in Europe amidst rising class tensions. As made clear by the growth of neo-fascist movements across Europe—from the FN in France to the far-right Svoboda party in the NATO puppet regime in Ukraine, or the incorporation of the far-right Independent Greeks into the Syriza government in Athens—the European bourgeoisie is moving towards fascistic methods of rule.

Sarkozy's proposals to ban Muslim women from jobs and universities recall several of the initial anti-Semitic laws of the Nazi-collaborationist Vichy regime during World War II, when it barred Jews from key professions, like medicine and the public service, and limited their access to university posts. This paved the way for Vichy to ultimately deprive Jews of French citizenship and carry out mass deportations of Jews from France to death camps across Europe.

Then as now, the targeting of entire ethnic and religious groups for persecution by the state was bound up with escalating class tensions and the eruption of imperialist war on a global scale.

Sarkozy's Châteaurenard speech comes as the French bourgeoisie faces explosive opposition in the working class to the PS' reactionary labor law, which scraps basic social protections for working people, and a danger of world war unprecedented since World War II. France is deeply implicated in NATO's ongoing war preparations against Syria in the Middle East and Russia in Europe, and in Washington's "pivot to Asia" against China.

In this context, Sarkozy pledged in Châteaurenard to introduce the compulsory military service for youth aged 18 who are unemployed or in full-time education. Accusing Hollande of failing to fight terrorism, Sarkozy declared that he would step up the war against terrorism: "In the face of the terrorist threat, I want the French people to feel certain that they are protected, instead of asking themselves why those who should govern react so weakly."

In fact, if the PS has responded weakly to the rash of terror attacks in France and Belgium, it is because they were carried out by Islamists involved in the NATO wars in the Middle East, who continue to enjoy unofficial protection as tools of French and NATO foreign policy.

Sarkozy himself bears substantial political responsibility for this state of affairs. It was under his presidency that France played a key role in pressing for a NATO war in Libya in 2011, arming and financing Islamist proxy militias to topple Colonel Muammar Gaddafi's regime. Hollande continued this strategy, stoking a war in Syria and supporting Al Qaeda-linked Islamist militias against the Syrian regime of President Bashar al-Assad.

If Sarkozy can re-emerge to launch a presidential bid, after having been one of France's most unpopular presidents in history, it is above all due to the filthy role of the PS government and its pseudo-left allies. Their policies of austerity, war, and law-and-order hysteria paved the way for the reassertion of ethnic and religious discrimination as a key aspect of French politics.

After last year's *Charlie Hebdo* and November 13 terror attacks in Paris, both carried out by Islamists known to European intelligence services, Hollande repeatedly invited FN leader Marine Le Pen to the Elysée presidential palace to establish "national unity" against terrorism.

Hollande seized on the terror attacks to legitimize the FN, while imposing a permanent state of emergency in France. The PS imposed a state of emergency, scrapping basic democratic rights, and advocated inscribing the principle of deprivation of nationality in the French constitution.

After Sarkozy's speech, Prime Minister Manual Valls postured as an opponent of Sarkozy, denouncing "the brutality of his proposals." Valls added, "He is following the far right, he is taking the democratic right into its camp, and he is dragging the other candidates in the primaries, including Alain Juppé, in this direction, in this path, and it worries me."

Valls' comments reek of hypocrisy, as he himself favors anti-democratic policies and the incitement of anti-Muslim sentiment, supporting calls for a burkini ban. He also played the central role in cracking down in social protests against the PS labor law during the spring and early summer.

More broadly, the entire French political establishment is implicated in the stoking of anti-Muslim sentiment over more than a decade. The right-wing government of President Jacques Chirac imposed a headscarf ban in public schools in 2004, followed by a burqa ban introduced by Sarkozy and the Stalinist French Communist Party (PCF) in 2010.

Pseudo-left groups including *Lutte Ouvrière* (Workers Struggle, LO) and the New Anti-capitalist Party (NPA) backed the headscarf and burqa ban, fraudulently claiming it was a "secular" measure aimed to defend women's rights. While supporting anti-Muslim hatreds, they also supported imperialist wars launched on "humanitarian" grounds, including in Libya and Syria. They bear political responsibility for creating the conditions for Sarkozy to run a far-right campaign calling for unprecedented acts of religious discrimination.

La source originale de cet article est World Socialist Web Site
Copyright © Kumaran Ira, World Socialist Web Site, 2016

Articles Par : Kumaran Ira

Avis de non-responsabilité : Les opinions exprimées dans cet article n'engagent que le ou les auteurs. Le Centre de recherche sur la mondialisation se dégage de toute responsabilité concernant le contenu de cet article et ne sera pas tenu responsable pour des erreurs ou informations incorrectes ou inexactes.

Le Centre de recherche sur la mondialisation (CRM) accorde la permission de reproduire la version intégrale ou des extraits d'articles du site Mondialisation.ca sur des sites de médias alternatifs. La source de l'article, l'adresse url ainsi qu'un hyperlien vers l'article original du CRM doivent être indiqués. Une note de droit d'auteur (copyright) doit également être indiquée.

Pour publier des articles de Mondialisation.ca en format papier ou autre, y compris les sites Internet commerciaux, contactez: media@globalresearch.ca

Mondialisation.ca contient du matériel protégé par le droit d'auteur, dont le détenteur n'a pas toujours autorisé l'utilisation. Nous mettons ce matériel à la disposition de nos lecteurs en vertu du principe "d'utilisation équitable", dans le but d'améliorer la compréhension des enjeux politiques, économiques et sociaux. Tout le matériel mis en ligne sur ce site est à but non lucratif.

Il est mis à la disposition de tous ceux qui s'y intéressent dans le but de faire de la recherche ainsi qu'à des fins éducatives. Si vous désirez utiliser du matériel protégé par le droit d'auteur pour des raisons autres que "l'utilisation équitable", vous devez demander la permission au détenteur du droit d'auteur.

Contact média: media@globalresearch.ca