

Thousands of French protesters demand Macron's impeachment and resignation

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Michel Barnier and Emmanuel Macron caricatures at a protest against the new government,

Paris, September 22 (RHC)-- Thousands of demonstrators have taken to the streets across Paris and other French cities to demand President Emmanuel Macron's resignation and impeachment.

The massive demonstrations took place across France after Macron named a new government led by Prime Minister Michel Barnier Saturday, several weeks after an inconclusive parliamentary election.

The largest demonstration was in Paris, where organizers claimed up to 40,000 people took part. Protests also took place in Lyon, Nantes, Marseille, Bordeaux, Angouleme, and Strasbourg.

Protesters waved flags and signs reading "Rule by idiots" and "Impeachment for Macron," and called for the president's resignation. Some wore Macron masks topped with a crown, accusing the French leader of trying to become a "president-monarch" by attempting a "coup de force" with Barnier's appointment.

The angry demonstrators denounced Macron and his new conservative prime minister, claiming they had disregarded the the July parliamentary election. They were objecting to a cabinet they say does not reflect the outcome of the election.

Footage also showed protesters chanting slogans against the Macron-Barnier government and calling for the people to mobilize against them and defend their right to choose their leaders.

"We are here to reiterate that we will never give in, that we will never accept the anti-democratic power grab by the president of the republic," one demonstrator was quoted as saying.

"Macron no longer has any legitimacy in power... The French people voted, and it was clear that the New Popular Front (NFP) alliance was in the lead. But [Macron] took as prime minister one of the group that received the fewest votes," another protester said.

Many in France are breathing a sigh of relief after the far-right National Rally party surprisingly fell to third place in snap legislative elections, with no party gaining a majority, resulting in a hung Parliament.

Macron appointed Barnier, a 73-year-old former foreign minister who acted as the European Union's Brexit negotiator, as prime minister, after snap elections in which his centrist alliance came second.

But the NFP, a left-wing coalition, which emerged as France's largest political bloc after the June-July elections has denounced Macron's appointment of Barnier. The alliance wanted Lucie Castets, a 37-year-old economist, to become prime minister.

However, Macron refused to appoint the NFP's choice, triggering accusations that he "denies democracy." The French presidential palace unveiled a long-awaited new government Saturday dominated by conservatives and centrists.

The protesters saw this as an act of "disrespect" for the left-wing alliance's electoral victory and democracy as a whole. This came more than two months after elections that produced a hung parliament and deepened political divisions as France grapples with growing financial and diplomatic challenges.

France's far-right leader Le Pen says the country is in a political 'quagmire', just nine days ahead of Olympics. In addition to the popular discontent, France's new government faces a slew of problems, from sorting out tax policy to fixing the budget crisis.

Many experts have warned that an added challenge will be to actually manage to push legislation through a highly fractured parliament. Barnier's new government is already feeling the pressure from opposition politicians on both sides amid growing threats of a no-confidence vote in parliament

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