

# *French far-right leader Le Pen barred from presidential race after embezzlement conviction*

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Paris, April 1 (RHC)-- Marine Le Pen, leader of France's far-right party National Rally (RN), has been found guilty of embezzlement, a verdict that bans her from running for president in 2027.

On Monday, Le Pen, the RN and 24 party figures were found guilty of misusing more than 4 million euros (\$4.33 million) of European Parliament funds to the benefit of their party.

The judge said investigations "showed that these were not administrative errors ... but embezzlement within the framework of a system put in place to reduce the party's costs."

Le Pen was sentenced to four year in prison, two years of which are suspended and two years to be served under home detention. She was also fined a 100,000-euro (\$108,200) and banned from running for public office for five years with immediate effect. Meanwhile, the RN was ordered to pay a two million euro fine, with half the amount suspended.

The ruling was a catastrophic setback for Le Pen, who has been the front-runner in opinion polls for the 2027 contest. She will appeal, according to her lawyer. But appeals in France can take months or even years.

Arnaud Benedetti, a political analyst who has written a book on the RN, said the five-year ban on Le Pen was a milestone in French politics. "This is a seismic political event," he said, adding: "Inevitably, it's going to reshuffle the pack, particularly on the right."

Far-right leaders from European countries, including Italy, Spain and the Netherlands, also condemned the ruling as judicial overreach. "We will not be intimidated, we will not stop: full steam ahead my friend!" Matteo Salvini, Italy's deputy prime minister and head of the far-right League, told Le Pen in a statement.

Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban said, "Je suis Marine!"

Anger in the RN, the single biggest party in the National Assembly, could push the hung parliament into deeper disarray. Le Pen supporters accused judges of policing politics, but some opponents hailed the ruling, saying the independence of the judiciary must be respected.

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