

Thousands of protesters demonstrate against French government's immigration plans

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Protesters hold a banner, which reads "solidarity with asylum seekers," during a demonstration

against the French Minister of Interior Gerald Darmanin's legislative proposal on asylum and immigration, in Rennes, western France, on April 29, 2023. (Photo by AFP)

Paris, April 30 (RHC)-- Thousands of protesters, including a large group of migrants, have marched in Paris and other French cities, protesting planned changes to immigration laws and evictions from the Indian Ocean island of Mayotte.

During Saturday protest In the French capital, Paris, demonstrators held a banner reading, "No to the [Interior Minister Gerald] Darmanin law. Against repression, imprisonment and deportations, for a welcoming migration policy." Protest organizers said 2,300 people turned out for the protest in Paris.

One migrant protester told reporters that the immigration bill, which the government has just postponed until the fall, "is a racist law, which aims to criminalize foreigners" and will lead to "more deportations."

The protesters also took aim at Operation Wuambushi (Take Back), which is being carried out by the authorities on the French Indian Ocean Island of Mayotte to send back illegal immigrants, who are mostly from neighboring Comoros and currently live in unsanitary shanty towns.

"The way undocumented Comorans are treated is unworthy of a country like France," said Marie-Christine Vergiat, vice-president of the French Human Rights League and a former member of the European Parliament.

The Darmanin bill and the operation in Mayotte are linked, Said Mhamadi, a Comoran civil leader, said in the southern port city of Marseille, where up to 300 people demonstrated.

The controversial immigration bill has been introduced by the French interior minister and is entitled "Controlling immigration while improving integration." It is aimed, among other things, at providing greater scope for deporting foreigners.

The bill requires a minimum level of French before a multi-year residence permit could be granted, would introduce mandatory fingerprinting, and tighten requirements for the renewal of long-term permits.

Earlier this week, on Wednesday, the French government once again failed to reach consensus on the immigration bill, which is considered too divisive in an already abrasive social climate.

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