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French Police and Yellow Vests

Should you commit suicide? Surely not. But stop obeying!

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Should you commit suicide? Surely not. But stop obeying!

The Minister of the Interior tells us that on Saturday 20 April, 27 900 people took part in demonstrations throughout France, facing over 60 000 gendarmes, riot police and mobile gendarmes. Given two or three for every demonstrator, the exchanges were "calmer than predicted". Nothing like the frightening violence on 1 December around the Arc de Triomphe in Paris. (1)

That's good. But it annoys the profiteers of violence... Luckily for them, there was some verbal violence ... (2)

The slogan "Suicidez-vous !" (Commit Suicide) launched at the police by a handful of anonymous protesters has caused a buzz and provoked anger in the press, the media and politicians, and certainly with a lot of good folk, including some of the Yellow Vest movement (les Gilets jaunes).

The first indignation came from the very man who might lead us to wonder if his management of public order might be somewhat nudging the police and gendarmes towards suicide: the Minister of the Interior, Christophe Castaner. He immediately tweeted: "Shame on those who stooped to such ignominy!". "It's ignominious" was the reaction on FranceInfo from the secretary-general of a police union. "There was disgust with those individuals wearing Yellow Vests. It's shameful. They are real filth who uttered those words." And Christian Estrosi, the Mayor of Nice : "To hear « suicidez-vous » chanted against the police is ignoble, given that there have been 28 police suicides since January 1. It is a dramatic situation for the forces of order and these abject scum are adding to it."

Ignominy, shame, disgust, filth, ignoble, abject scum. How can one not be angry at a slogan that closely resembles a call to murder? It is more than regrettable, it is execrable.

Yes, but.

But how many people actually shouted that slogan? In the four-second video made by the Observateur journalist Lucas Burel, replayed in a loop, one can hear at least ... three voices. Later, on two other videos, there are more. Were those people wearing yellow vests? It is not proven. The group making the noise is filmed from a distance in one of the videos and contains only five or six Yellow Vests; it is invisible on the other video - on which, besides, one can hear voices objecting to that slogan.

One thing is sure: the police suicide of the previous day (the 28th suicide) was not provoked by the slogan. The opposite is true. Because the wave of suicides hitting the police since January - one every four days - is unprecedented, some evilly inspired demonstrators were able to turn that gesture of despair into a vengeful slogan. To avenge what? The repression, clearly, which has likewise been unprecedented and incredibly violent, wielded by the police every Saturday.

On the eve of « Acte 23 » (April 20, 23th Saturday with Yellow Vests demonstrating throughout France), David Dufresne had counted 643 reports of police violence, of which 62 were documented by journalists - 23 demonstrators had lost an eye, 5 had lost hands, and one person in Marseille died.(3) And so - despite those who say the authors of the slogan intended to provoke blunders by the police and give the movement a martyr, the blunders have already occurred and the movement already has a martyr: Zineb Romdhane, an 80-year-old woman, who was at her window on the 4th floor when a grenade hit her, after which she died in hospital

Jérôme Rodrigues, one of the Yellow-Vests who lost an eye, said: "for four months we have got it full in the face, for four months we have been insulted, hit in the eyes, mutilated, beaten, victimised by arbitrary arrests, and like any human being - I am no psychologist - when a guy takes one in the face, or two or three, at a certain point he ends up

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retaliating and hitting out too." (4)

He expands on this later: "The police violence seen repeatedly during these 23 weeks of mobilisation remain unprecedented in the history of the Fifth Republic [since 1960]... In this context where the social climate is manifestly degrading, it is obvious that unfortunate events could and can still emerge here and there, without necessarily being generally supported. In the last event, one policeman politely offered to gouge out my other eye." (5)

That does not prevent him from denouncing the anti-cop slogan (with Priscillia Ludosky) and concluding: "We totally support the families of the 28 policemen and two gendarmes who have taken their own lives since the start of the year". (6) Thirty victims in all. But victims of what?

Who are responsible for all this violence? The President and his Minister of the Interior, who can't tell the difference between maintaining order and massacre games. It is a government unable to respond to the legitimate demands of the Yellow Vests except by LBD40 and GLI F4 grenades, which then imposes window-dressing measures that fool nobody.

The good slogan to shout at the police is certainly not "Commit suicide!", nor is it "Resign!". You'd have to be President Macron to think that one can get a job just by crossing the street. No, the good slogan should be "Stop obeying!".

Obey only orders that are just, sensible and legitimate. Stop obeying iniquitous ones. Refuse the exhausting travel, the interminable days and weeks, the damage to your families, the fear of flying stones, the use of mutilating weapons and the burn-out that threatens to make you fall apart and commit irreparable acts. Don't let them buy you with a bonus. You are worth more than that!

In short, resist, join the resisters. Leave Macron and Castaner to keep order themselves. Or threaten to leave it to them. You could for example invoke the conscience clause and the right to retire - fully justified in such cases. Without you, those men are nothing. Otherwise why did they give you on December 18, without discussion, a sizeable bonus that others don't get, let's call it a big fat tip?

Once they know they can't count on you any longer, they will be quick to satisfy the demands of the Yellow Vests. And thus civil peace will return and you can again do your jobs with general public esteem, as you could after the terrorism at Charlie Hebdo and the Bataclan.

ACDN (Make an End to Hatred !)

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(1)
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(2)
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(3)

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(4)

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(5)

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(6)

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