

Wake up, France! "Free Gaza" Isn't a Cost-of-Living Demand

THE LIE

Jean-Luc Mélenchon, leader of the far-left party La France Insoumise (LFI), says the protests sweeping France are a “disciplined,” “restrained” youth movement.

THE TRUTH

The movement Mélenchon praised burned town halls and looted shops across France, leading to 1,200 arrests and 150 injured police officers. French intelligence had already warned it was an operation organized by Mélenchon’s own party, and its marches carried “Free Gaza” slogans into a protest about schools and fuel prices.

BACKGROUND

→ In September 2026, students at high schools in Paris’s working-class northern suburbs launched protests over teacher shortages and run-down school buildings. The protests spread across France as unions and other groups joined in, adding demands over inflation, fuel prices, and public spending.

→ On October 6, Prime Minister Sébastien Lecornu told the National Assembly that LFI had been “sowing chaos” since the high school protests began. The same day, Mélenchon, who is running for president, praised the protesting students as a “disciplined” youth “risen for its future” and called their movement “restrained.” [Sud Radio](#)

→ On October 17, about 550,000 people marched across France. Violent groups burned the city hall in Limoges, broke into Marseille’s city hall, torched Lyon’s tourist office, and looted banks and boutiques in Paris. Police made about 1,200 arrests, and 150 officers were injured. [Times of Israel](#)

TRUTH EXPLAINED

→ **French intelligence says Mélenchon’s party organized the protests.** At a government crisis meeting on October 1, French intelligence agencies assessed that the high school protest wave was “an operation organised by LFI and its proxies on the far left,” according to a readout shared by a source close to Prime Minister Sébastien Lecornu. LFI, short for La France Insoumise (“France Unbowed”), is the far-left party led by Jean-Luc Mélenchon. LFI denies the charge. [The Print](#)

→ **After the riots, the government again pointed to the far left.** Interior Minister Laurent Nuñez, who oversees France’s police, said the vandalism came “at the very clear instigation of the hard left.” Lecornu warned that some groups wanted to use the violence as a “warm-up” for next year’s presidential election. In the government’s own account, the people who marched peacefully for cheaper fuel and better schools were not the ones driving the riots. [Times of Israel](#), [France 24](#)

→ **“Free Gaza” slogans appeared at a protest about French prices and schools.** On October 17, during a nationwide march against the cost of living and fuel prices, protesters climbed the statue at Paris’s Place de la République holding a French flag and a Palestinian flag. A photographer for Agence France-Presse (AFP), France’s national news agency, captured “Free Gaza” sprayed on a shop shutter on Paris’s Boulevard des Capucines. The protesters’ demands that day concerned prices, fuel, and schools, and none of them mentioned Israel or Gaza. The slogans of the campaign against Israel appeared on the streets of Paris anyway. [Times of Israel](#), [Times of Israel](#)

→ **A French journalist reported that rioters in Marseille singled out Jewish-owned businesses.** Speaking on CNews, a French 24-hour news channel, journalist Paul Amar said rioters came prepared with the addresses of town halls and of Jewish shop owners. He said that on one street in Marseille, France’s second-largest city, every Jewish-owned business was set on fire, while Muslim-run businesses were left untouched. French authorities have not yet confirmed his account. If it is confirmed, a riot that began over fuel prices and schools ended with Jews singled out as targets. [Visegrád 24](#)

→ **LFI built its brand on the campaign against Israel.** LFI made Gaza the main theme of its 2024 European Parliament campaign and placed Rima Hassan, a Syrian-born French-Palestinian activist, on its candidate list. Supporters cheered her like a rock star, even though she called Hamas’s October 7 attack a “legitimate action.” Voters elected her. That same year, French police questioned Hassan on suspicion of “advocacy for terrorism.” When the party that French intelligence links to the protests runs on

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Gaza, "Free Gaza" on the streets of Paris is no surprise.

[i24NEWS](#), [Europe 1](#)

→ **French Jews have seen pro-Palestinian protests turn on them before.** In July 2014, during the war between Israel and Hamas in Gaza, a banned pro-Palestinian march in Sarcelles, a Paris suburb with a large Jewish community, turned into a riot. Rioters set fire to a kosher grocery and looted shops. France's interior minister at the time, Bernard Cazeneuve, said it was unacceptable to target synagogues or shops "simply because they are managed by Jews." In the first three months of 2014, more Jews left France for Israel than at any time since 1948, citing economic hardship and rising antisemitism. For French Jews, the scenes of October 17 are painfully familiar.

[Christian Science Monitor](#)

QUOTES

"They started with issues but then were quickly hijacked by ultra-left radicals..." — John Spencer, urban warfare expert

TAKEAWAY

This fall, students in France took to the streets over real grievances: teacher shortages, run-down schools, and rising fuel prices. Then the far left moved in, and the cause became Palestine. On October 17, Palestinian flags went up at the Place de la République, "Free Gaza" appeared on Paris storefronts, and the marches turned into riots that burned a historic town hall and left public buildings in ruins. Days earlier, Mélenchon had praised the movement as "disciplined." France's own intelligence services called it an operation organized by his party, LFI. The students marched for better schools. The far left turned their march into a cause for Palestine, and French Jews already know the truth: they are a target, and they are not safe.