



Written by [James Murphy](#) on March 18, 2019

Violence in Paris Causes French Government to Restrict Future Demonstrations

After weeks of relative calm from the Yellow Vest protesters in France, [violence erupted](#) along the iconic Champs-Élysées on Saturday. The protests, which began last November, are now entering their fourth month. Now, at their wit's end, officials in France have announced more draconian measures to deal with the unrest.



On Saturday, some protesters became rioters and arsonists as fire was set to several buildings, including a Bank Tarneaud branch, where 11 were injured. A woman and her infant child had to be rescued from the burning bank, according to the fire department. Rioters also set fire to an upscale handbag store and two newsstands. Smaller fires were seen up and down most famous avenue of Paris.

On Monday, French Prime Minister Edouard Phillipe announced several new measures intended to maintain order, including the replacement of current Paris police chief Michel Delpuech with the top police official from the Nouvelle-Aquitaine region, Didier Lallement.

"The strategy for maintaining order was not correctly implemented," Phillipe said.

Phillipe also announced a ban on further demonstrations in parts of Paris (including the Champs-Élysées), Bordeaux, and Toulouse if radical protesters are known to be involved.

"I am not mixing up the rioters ... with the large majority of Yellow Vests, who are no longer demonstrating," Phillipe said. "All those who are participating in these undeclared demonstrations are complicit. Their only cause is violence."

Phillipe also announced that the fine for participating in undeclared demonstrations (currently €38) will be increased.

At the Arc de Triomphe, which was vandalized in December at the height of the movement, police fired tear gas into the unruly mob, while rioters fought back by throwing large rocks at police.

Fouquet's, an upscale restaurant where conservative Nicolas Sarkozy celebrated his presidential win in 2007, was vandalized and had its awning burned. [Several stores along the Champs-Élysées were looted.](#) Police arrested 240 rioters in an attempt to restore order, and 42 protesters were injured, along with 17 police officers. The interior ministry estimated that as many as 10,000 participated in the Paris protests, with over 30,000 participating nationwide.

The attacks on the upscale stores and Fouquet's were seen as an attack on the country's elite. French journalist Charles Baudry was on hand, [live-tweeting the events](#) as they occurred.



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Interior Minister Christophe Castaner said that about 1,500 of the protesters were “ultra-violent” and out looking to cause trouble.

Protesters had promised bigger numbers this weekend to coincide with the four-month anniversary of the beginning of the protests in November.

The protests, which began in part because of onerous and now-scrapped gasoline taxes, have evolved into a more general dissatisfaction with the French government, elitists, and French President Emmanuel Macron.

Macron was forced to cut short a ski weekend in the Pyrenees to meet with ministers in a crisis session.

“We are attached to constitutional rights, but we’ve got people who through all means quite simply want to make a wreck of the republic, to break things and destroy, running the risk of getting people killed,” Macron said.

Macron told ministers, “I want us to very precisely analyze things and as quickly as possible take strong, complimentary decisions so this doesn’t happen again.”

The Yellow Vest protests had been waning as of late, with only about 3,000 participating the previous weekend. Castaner believes that this weekend’s outburst may be a signal that the protests are dying out.

“They decided, perhaps as a swansong, to come attack — and I use their words — Paris,” Castaner said.

After the violence of December and early January, Macron ordered a police crackdown on the protests in January. He also began a series of [national debates](#) to address the many and varied concerns of the French citizenry. This week’s violence also coincided with the end of those debates.

At its organic, leaderless beginning, the Yellow Vest protests were a reaction to onerous taxes brought about by an elitist government. At this point, they’ve been hijacked by violent elements of French society looking only to do damage. It appears that the Yellow Vests have lost their original meaning and have become cover for violent anarchists.

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