

Police fire tear gas at a barricaded high school in Paris as school protests show no sign of ending
By Jade Le Deley & Lorne Cook, *Independent*, Oct 8th, 2026

Dozens of students dragged rubbish bins into position outside a high school in northeastern Paris early on Thursday, erecting fresh barricades before police moved in with tear gas as France's nationwide protests show few signs of ending.

5 The Helene Boucher Lycee has been a flashpoint for clashes in the French capital, and is one of hundreds of schools disrupted by protesters Thursday.

At least a dozen demonstrations in support of the high school students' movement are planned around France later in the day.

Riot police gathered in side streets as students converged on the school. Many protesters wore surgical masks or hoodies, apparently afraid to be recognized.

10 Police have made more than 6,600 arrests since late September, when students, most of them under 18, started protesting to demand more education funding, according to the Interior Ministry. The Education Ministry said that 375 schools were either fully or partially closed on Thursday.

Pressure mounts on an embattled administration

15 While the number of school closures was down compared to Tuesday, pressure is mounting on the government of outgoing President Emmanuel Macron.

The protests against the under-funding of schools — many of them struggling with dilapidated facilities and insufficient staff — have drawn troublemakers not concerned about the aims of the protest movement as well as unions and political groups.

20 In a TV address, Prime Minister Sebastien Lecornu lamented the “violence, students and staff being attacked, police officers and gendarmes injured, schools set on fire or vandalized, thousands of hours of classes lost, not to mention threats and insults.”

He took aim at “political leaders who use this anger to conduct their electoral battles.” France goes to the polls for a presidential election in April. “We cannot play with the safety
25 of France's youth,” Lecornu said.

At the Lycee, 18-year-old university student Emma Khelil came to offer support to those at the barricades at her former high school. She told The Associated Press that she's really concerned about police violence.

“We're here to defend our rights, not to lose an eye or a hand,” Khelil said. She also said
30 that she had noticed insulation problems and water leaks in the school building and had even seen rats on occasion. Other students confirmed that they'd seen rats too.

She was not convinced by Lecornu's efforts to calm the situation.

“I don't think the movement is going to lose momentum. As long as things don't change, we're going to see the movement grow stronger, and potentially a convergence of struggles,
35 especially with the next presidential election coming up,” she said.

Not long after she spoke, police surrounded a nearby square. The crowd surged, and tear gas was fired.

The protest movement crosses borders

The impact of France's protests is also being felt north of the border, in Belgium.

40 Liege Mayor Willy Demeyer issued a ban on public gatherings until midnight on Oct. 16, given what he described as the “real, serious and imminent risk” of repeated clashes and vandalism that authorities expected in coming days.

City police said they used water cannon and tear gas on Wednesday to keep several hundred protesters at bay. Authorities sent emergency mobile text messages warning
45 shopkeepers to close their premises due to rioting.

Almost 90 people were arrested and several police were injured. Police reinforcements were sent from the capital Brussels and from Antwerp, and more are coming. Smaller protests have been held in Mons and Charleroi.

In a post on social media, Belgium’s Interior Minister Bernard Quintin said the
50 “perpetrators will have to answer for their actions before the courts.”

The Belgian protests, organized through social media chat groups, include demands for more teachers and smaller classes as well as complaints about education reform in Belgium, but are also likely inspired by events in France.

55 Cook reported from Brussels. Masha Macpherson in Paris contributed to this report.