

Violent Clashes Break Out At A Protest Over Water In France

written by Hamna Seyyed | April 3, 2023



On March 25, 2023, a demonstration against the creation of a new water reserve for agricultural irrigation in Sainte-Soline, central-western France, was organised by the collective “Bassines non merci,” the environmental movement “Les Soulevements de la Terre,” and the French trade union Confederation paysanne. Clashes broke out during the demonstration. The latest in a string of violent standoffs as social tensions flare up across the country saw French police and protestors brawl once more on Saturday as activists attempted to halt reservoir building in the southwest. After days of violent protests around the country over President Emmanuel Macron’s pension reform, which forced the postponement of a visit by King Charles III of the United Kingdom, violent events broke out in Sainte-Soline in western France.

The worst internal problem of Macron’s second term has been the protest movement against the pension reform, which has resulted in daily conflicts between police and protestors in the streets of Paris and other towns. In the skirmishes near Sainte-Soline, demonstrators and security personnel suffered injuries as they attempted to halt the construction of reservoirs for the agricultural sector. Around 25,000 people, as estimated by the organizers and at least 6,000 by local authorities, participated in the late-morning procession. “We will stand up to safeguard water at the same time the nation rises up to defend pensions,” the organizers gathered under the banner of “Bassines non merci” said. Even if they are unrelated to the campaign against pension reform, the disputes over the building of a water reservoir have raised tensions in an environment where the administration is facing more and more difficulties. Charles’ state visit, which was to be his first overseas as king, was cancelled, which was a big embarrassment for Macron and an admission of the gravity of the issue. The past 24 hours have seen a decrease in protest activity following Thursday night’s deadliest skirmishes of the three-month movement. The events in France have shocked

people throughout the world. Over a photo of trash building up, the Times of London said, "Chaos reigns in France."



Due to a garbage collectors' strike, the capital's streets are also littered with trash. The Council of Europe has issued a warning that intermittent violence in protests "cannot justify disproportionate use of force," but there has also been disagreement around the strategies employed by the French security forces to disperse the demonstrations. In a television interview on Wednesday, Macron resolutely refused to make any compromises, stating that the measures must come into force before the end of the year.