



UnitedHealthcare
Global



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ALERT+

General Strikes Planned Across France

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SITUATION SUMMARY

Several major French labour unions have called for two general strike days on 10 and 18 September. The strike action, called “Bloquons Tout” (“Let’s shut everything down”), was initially popularised on social media as a reaction to a series of austerity policies, such as scrapping two national holidays and some welfare programs, proposed by Prime Minister François Bayrou as part of his plan to reduce the government deficit. Although Bayrou was forced to resign following a no-confidence vote on 8 September, the organisers of the strike have pledged for it to go ahead.

While initially developed as a citizen-led initiative, the 10 September strike has attracted the support of several large labour unions, representing railway, airport and healthcare workers, as well as student unions. The 18 September strike had initially been planned by an inter-union group representing various public and private sector workers. In addition to the labour unions, the strike actions are supported by several left-wing groups, most notably the far-left France Unbowed (LFI) party, and by environmentalist, far-left, and pro-Palestine direct action groups. These direct-action groups have called for additional demonstrations, aimed at maximising the disruptions caused by the strike. For example, in Paris, collectives have called for a blockade of the Périphérique (the ring road that surrounds the city) starting at 07:00 (local time).

INTELLIGENCE ANALYSIS

The general strike will almost certainly result in severe transport and service disruptions across France. Rail travel, particularly services transiting through Paris, is highly likely to be affected by severe delays. Travel to and from the country's main airports, including Paris Charles de Gaulle (CDG/LFPG), Paris Orly (ORY/LFPO), Lyon Saint Exupéry (LYS/LFLL), and Nice-Côte d'Azur (NCE/LFMN), is also likely to be affected.

Flight operations at the main international airports are almost certainly to be impacted by the strike. According to available projections from local media, flight cancellations on the two strike days will total between 25 and 40 per cent of all flights, with average delays of around 90 minutes. A drop in operations at the key international flight hubs will highly likely impact smaller airports, further disrupting domestic flights.

While the organisers have pledged to carry out the strike despite the collapse of the Bayrou government, the scope and intensity of the strike action will highly likely be heavily influenced by President Emmanuel Macron's decision on how to respond to the government crisis. LFI has called for new elections, as have several other left parties and the far-right National Rally (RN). However, such a move would likely be damaging for the already-weakened centre coalition that supports Macron, who may therefore opt to instead appoint a new prime minister. Such a move would almost certainly result in violent anti-government unrest in the short term, particularly in Paris.

Violent cases of unrest are likely. These will likely include sabotage and vandalism, particularly aimed at government offices and properties operated by multinational companies. Direct action groups may also target public infrastructure, as observed on the eve of the 2024 Paris Olympics. French police often respond violently to large protests, deploying pepper spray, tear gas, water cannons, and other crowd control tools. It is highly likely that clashes between the police and protesters will occur during the strike days, particularly in Paris and other large urban centres.

INTELLIGENCE TEAM'S ADVICE

- Closely monitor government alerts and local news reports.
- Monitor airport and public transport sites for live updates on possible disruptions from the strikes.
- Allocate additional time for travel to airports due to the high likelihood of delays.
- Avoid protest hotspots, such as government buildings and university campuses.
- If caught in a protest, try to move away if it is safe to do so, and always abide by authority directions.
- If you are unable to leave, take precautions to minimise risks. These include moving away from hard barriers, remaining upright, and moving with and not against the crowd.
- Have emergency contact numbers saved on your phone. These should include local authorities, medical facilities and any consular support. Ensure that mobile phones are charged ahead of travel.
- In Paris, avoid travelling on the Périphérique due to the threat of road blockades.



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