

SAFEABROAD



SafeAbroad Forecast Report

FRENCH ANTI-FAR-RIGHT PROTESTS

SAFETY IMPLICATIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Overview

On June 9, French President Emmanuel Macron announced he was dissolving parliament, and terminating the lower house of the French Parliament, moving forward with the election process.¹ Since then, protests have erupted across the country, with many in urban centers devolving into clashes with authorities. Demonstrations are likely to continue in the coming days in the lead-up to the snap elections and may persist in the coming weeks depending on the outcome.

Key Takeaways

- **Protests are occurring nationwide and are expected to continue after the snap elections on June 30 and July 7.** On June 30, thousands of demonstrators gathered at Place de la Republique in Paris after initial polls showed a significant far-right majority.² Similar demonstrations have taken place in other cities such as Lyon, Lille, and Toulouse.
- **Travelers should account for travel disruptions at least through the snap elections on July 7.** On June 30, demonstrations nationwide were highly disruptive in response to the far-right's apparent lead in initial polls. Ongoing protests will likely become more unruly, causing worsened traffic congestion, heightened security, road closures, and occasional security risks. Public transportation will likely suffer delays, traffic on roads will often be slowed or blocked entirely, and clashes with police are possible.

Background

The last time France's parliament was dissolved was in 1997 under President Jacques Chirac.

The dissolution of a Parliament is the simultaneous termination of all its members in preparation for a new election occurring before the general election.³ The last time France experienced a dissolution was in 1997 under President Jacques Chirac.⁴ Chirac proceeded with a dissolution with intentions to breathe new life into the presidential majority of the National Assembly, and a coalition led by the Socialist Party took control of the Assembly.⁵

France has seen three periods of cohabitation, with the prime minister and the president belonging to different political parties. The last occurrence was in 1997 when Chirac's government lost the snap election, Socialist leader Lionel Jospin became Prime Minister. Chirac retained the lead role on defense as commander in chief and on foreign policy, and retained the

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<https://apnews.com/article/france-european-election-national-rally-marine-lepen-b132616d24de829660d8d8e0659e50fd>

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<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/liveblog/2024/6/30/french-parliamentary-election-2024-live-voters-pick-mps-in-test-for-macron>

³ <https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/explainer/dissolution-parliament>

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<https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1995/11/08/chirac-dissolves-new-french-government/4e92d4e8-9cc0-4185-a0e9-8c5d877192d5/>

⁵ <https://theconversation.com/snap-elections-in-france-a-political-scientist-lays-out-whats-at-stake-232036>

power to negotiate international treaties, but lost the ability to set domestic policies.

On June 9, President Emmanuel Macron dissolved the National Assembly, and announced snap elections to be held on June 30 and July 7 to elect new members. Macron decided to dissolve the lower house of parliament after the National Rally (RN) party displayed an overwhelming victory in the European Parliament elections. The RN had received 31% of votes in the election, doubling the amount of Macron's Renaissance party which was estimated to have reached 14.6%.⁶

The National Rally is a far-right nationalist party that has been accused of promoting xenophobia, Islamophobia, and antisemitism.⁷ The party opposes immigration and advocates for France's foreign policies to be independent from NATO and the EU. If the National Rally secures a majority win in the French National Assembly, France will enter a period of cohabitation. This will require President Macron to select a Prime Minister from the RN party. Macron will remain president for three years and retain influence over foreign policy; however, control over domestic policy will be fully vested to the opposing Prime Minister.⁸

Upcoming Protests

Protests will continue throughout the first week of July in urban centers nationwide at least until the July 7 election. These protests are expected to garner hundreds to thousands of attendees, as they have on an almost nightly basis since early June.

Previous demonstrations have drawn large crowds. Around 250,000 people were reported protesting across France on June 15.⁹ Protests have frequently lasted through the overnight hours, with demonstrators marching through city streets and occupying major city squares.¹⁰ Clashes with police are commonplace at these demonstrations, occasionally utilizing violent crowd-dispersal methods including tear gas, water cannons, and stun grenades.

A similar number of participants are expected at demonstrations in the coming days. If the far-right party wins the snap elections, protests will likely continue in the coming weeks.

Implications for Travelers

The French election protests have garnered hundreds of thousands of people nationwide. Continued large-scale protests will disrupt major roadways, increase the chance of unrest, and strain emergency response times.

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<https://www.france24.com/en/europe/20240611-france-dissolution-parliament-snap-elections-how-it-works-what-next-macron>

⁷ <https://bridge.georgetown.edu/research/factsheet-national-rally/>

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<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/france-enters-election-mode-after-far-right-win-european-parliament-vote-2024-06-10/>

⁹ <https://crisis24.garda.com/alerts/2024/06/france-activists-to-stage-demonstrations-nationwide-throughout-early-july-amid-french-elections-update-4>

¹⁰

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/france-150-arrests-overnight-unrest-after-teenager-killed-by-police-2023-06-29/>

What to watch for in July:

- **The ongoing anti-far-right protests frequently escalate into violence.** Anti-riot police often use various methods such as tear gas and water cannons to scatter crowds. Additionally, protestors have occasionally set fire to street furniture, set off fireworks, vandalized monuments, and committed similar acts of property damage during demonstrations. Protests can turn violent or escalate unexpectedly, and travelers could inadvertently become caught up in a tense or dangerous situation. SafeAbroad advises travelers to avoid any protest areas in urban centers.
- **Highly attended protests have caused widespread travel disruptions in city centers.** Road closures, traffic congestion, and disruptions to public transportation have also occurred regularly.¹¹ Authorities have shut down entire rail stations during past demonstrations of a similar scale.¹² Local authorities may increase security measures in response to protests, that can affect local travel, including checkpoints, heightened police presence, or curfews. Travelers should abide by local security directives.

Timeline of Events

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June 9, 2024	On June 9, 2024, President Emmanuel Macron announced he was dissolving the Assemblée Nationale, the lower house of Parliament ¹³	
June 10, 2024	On June 10, 2024, thousands gathered in cities across France protesting the dissolution. ¹⁴ A crowd of 3,000 gathered on the Place de la République in Paris. 6,200 people gathered in Toulouse.	Paris
June 22, 2024	On June 22, 2024 a protest was planned in Montpellier at 11:00 at Place Krsucki and another in Nantes in front of the Castle of the Dukes of Brittany at 2:00 ¹⁵ .	Montpellier Krusucki
June 23, 2024	On June 23, 2024 protests were planned in the following locations; Place de la Victoire in Bordeaux at 2:00, Place de la Republique in Caen at 11:00, Porte de Paris in Lyon at 3:00, Plage de la Republic in Paris at 2:30, Reformes Canebieres in Paris and 3:30, Old Port in Marseille at 4:00, Place Ile de Beaute in Nice at 4:00, Esplanade	Bordeaux, Caen, Lille, Lyon, Paris, Marseille, Nice, Rennes,

¹¹ <https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/world/thousands-protest-against-far-right-across-france/ar-BB1oi79r>

¹² <https://www.ma-ligne.co/metro-1>

¹³

https://www.lemonde.fr/en/les-decodeurs/article/2024/06/10/snap-elections-in-france-how-it-works-precedents-and-consequences_6674391_8.html

¹⁴

https://www.lemonde.fr/en/politics/article/2024/06/11/thousands-demonstrate-against-far-right-across-france_6674473_5.html

¹⁵ <https://www.internationalsos.com/services/evacuations>

	Charles de Gaulle in Rennes at 3:00, Place Kleber in Strasbourg at 3:00, and Place Jean Jaures in Toulouse at 11:00.	Strasbourg, Toulouse
June 27, 2024	On June 27, 2024 a protest was planned at the Place Felix Baret in Marseille at 11:00.	Marseille
June 30, 2024	First round of legislative elections.	
July 7, 2024	Second round of legislative elections.	
<i>Not an exhaustive list.</i>		

