

Rights of 'gilets jaunes' protesters in France, 'disproportionately curtailed', say UN independent experts

French protesters' rights have been "disproportionately curtailed" during the wave of recent "gilet jaunes", or yellow jacket demonstrations across the country over Government economic policies, [said a group of independent UN human rights experts](#) on Thursday.

The demonstrations were sparked nearly three months ago by President Emmanuel Macron's introduction of fuel taxes, but quickly morphed into a more general revolt against austerity measures, and the political establishment in general, despite a Government climb-down over the tax.

"Since the start of the yellow vest protest movement in November 2018, we have received serious allegations of excessive use of force. More than 1,700 people have been injured as a result of the protests across the country", the experts said.

It is very disturbing to note that despite weeks of demonstrations, the restrictions and tactics of managing rallies and the use of force have not improved – *UN rights experts*

"The restrictions on rights have also resulted in a high number of arrests and detentions, searches and confiscations of demonstrators' possessions, and serious injuries have been caused by a disproportionate use of so-called 'non-lethal' weapons like grenades and defensive bullets or 'flashballs'," they added.

The experts said that they were aware that some of the demonstrators themselves had resorted to violence, "but we fear that the disproportionate response to these excesses may deter the population from continuing to exercise its fundamental freedoms."

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They also expressed "deep concern" over a proposed law aimed at preventing violence during demonstrations and to punish the perpetrators, pointing out that some of the provisions of this law are "not in line with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which France is a Party."

"The proposed administrative ban on demonstrations, the establishment of additional control measures and the imposition of heavy sanctions constitute

severe restrictions on the right to freedom of peaceful assembly. These provisions can be applied arbitrarily and lead to extremely serious abuses,” the experts emphasized.

“We encourage France to rethink its law enforcement policies and encourage the French authorities to establish avenues for dialogue to reduce tension and to recognize the important and legitimate role that social movements play in governance,” the experts said.

The experts adding their names to the statement are Seong-Phil Hong Chair-Rapporteur of the [Working Group on Arbitrary Detention](#); Michel Forst, Special Rapporteur on the situation of [human rights defenders](#); and Clément Nyaletsossi Voule, Special Rapporteur [on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association](#).