



[Human Rights Activists and Journalists Protest a New French Security Bill](#)

France has faced backlash this week after the introduction of a new security bill that is accused of curbing individual freedoms. The bill, which was introduced by members of President Emmanuel Macron's LREM Party, was presented as part of the government's reaction to the spate of recent murders that have stunned France. However, certain parts of the bill have drawn criticism among journalists and human rights organizations for impinging upon individual freedoms. Specifically, provisions within the bill heavily sanction individuals who photograph police officers with the aim of harming their "physical or psychological integrity." Critics argue that this undermines the public's right to hold law enforcement accountable. France's Interior Minister, Gerald Darmanin, said the bill was designed to "protect those who protect us," although the public's opinion on the legislation was made clear through several demonstrations against the bill across France.

France's La Republique en Marche party introduced the bill to the country's General Assembly with provisions that would bar sharing images of law enforcement, and give police the ability to use drones equipped with cameras. Critics of the legislation argue that it further denigrates the relationship between the public and law enforcement, which is already fractious after several high-profile instances of police brutality. Detractors of the bill also argue that it will undermine journalistic freedom and impede the public's right to information. International human rights organizations and watchdogs encouraged people to protest against the legislation, and the United Nations Human Rights Council took the unusual step of condemning the law and urged French politicians to not support its passage. Several media organizations also condemned the legislation, calling it an affront to freedom of the press in France.

Throughout France, tens of thousands of people took to the streets to demonstrate against the proposed law. Protests occurred in several cities across the country, including Paris, Lyon, Toulouse, Bordeaux, and others. During these protests, civilians were exposed to the exact abuse that human rights organizations and watchdogs had warned against, with police using heavy-handed tactics to disperse demonstrators. Several journalists were also assaulted and arbitrarily detained by security forces. Police brutality became a hot-button issue in France following the murder of George Floyd in the United States. There have been several incidents in France involving law enforcement using excessive force, including some that were documented using methods that would be outlawed by the new legislation.

The government has defended the proposed bill by saying it will dissuade people from encouraging violence and abuse against police officers online. France's Prime Minister Jean Castex responded to some of the criticism of the bill, saying that it would be amended so as not to impede freedom of information, and it would only be applied when there was "clear" intent to physically or mentally harm a police officer. However, his comments have failed to appease protesters, with several individuals tied to media and human rights organizations calling the amendments inadequate in dealing with their concerns. The bill is due to be voted on in France's General Assembly on Tuesday, before going to the Senate for further deliberations if it passes.