

Press release from the self-managed social center Le Malaqueen and its support collective

**Against all evictions, against the Kasbarian-Bergé law
and against all anti-social laws.**

For the right to housing and the right to the city for all.

The Malaqueen, a self-managed social center in Malakoff (Paris metropolitan area), is again threatened with eviction.

The collective, composed of about 40 residents, has been occupying vacant offices at 55 rue Étienne Dolet (entrance at 70 rue Gallieni) since May 2021.

After a first eviction order was issued at the end of August 2022, a victorious struggle led by the residents and supporters (from Malakoff and elsewhere) won the winter truce. But April 1st marks the end of the winter break of evictions and the second eviction order has fallen: we are evictable as of April 3rd.

Malaqueen is a place to live, to stay and to live in, for precarious people from all walks of life, whether it be due to an administrative, medical, family, social or political situation (families, exiles, students, queer people who had to cut ties to their families or got kicked out, poor and precarious workers, unemployed people, etc.). But it is also a social, supportive and cultural place open to the neighborhood and beyond.

Today, Le Malaqueen is an integral part of the life of its neighborhood. It hosts workshops on ceramics, music, writing, photography, sewing, repairing objects or installing free software. All these activities have been hosted by the squat's inhabitants or by friends, collectives and neighbors, ready to share their skills, tools and knowledge. Solidarity canteens are organized there, French courses are given, as well as professional psychological consultations and mutual aid regarding administrative dealings. There is also a free shop and a library.

The place hosts many artistic events (concerts, shows, open stages, openings, artists' residencies, film screenings...). We open our doors for meetings, discussions and debates and we provide different spaces (rehearsal room, meeting rooms, multipurpose rooms...). Finally, the place is part of an Ile-de-France network of collections/redistributions (food, clothes, furniture, etc.), which benefits the precarious people living in and around the Malaqueen.

Evolving outside the commercial sphere - a choice made possible by our squat condition - allows us to host these activities for free or at a free price. The economic pressure in Île-de-France which weighs on all cultural and social places (whether institutional or private) makes their access more and more expensive, thus excluding the most precarious. Just as we refuse bad housing, we refuse this state of affairs which confiscates the social link to the poorest and we claim a culture by and for all, in line with the principles of Education Populaire.

The building we occupy, empty since 2019, was bought by Lazard Group Real Estate in 2020, (CEO François Lazard, 148th biggest fortune in France), a company specialized in corporate real estate. This company plans to raze the building to build a 7-story office building. It is an ecocidal, archaic and anti-social project.

Ecocidal first of all. The construction sector alone is responsible for 3/4 of the waste generated by economic activities and 7% of greenhouse gas emissions in France. The project to destroy the Malaqueen, like too many large useless projects, is part of a war against life.

Secondly, it is archaic. Buying, demolishing, rebuilding and reselling offices, even though the number of square meters of empty office space in the Paris Region is only increasing, shows that the approach is more a matter of real estate speculation than of concrete needs (according to the private analyst ImmoStat,

4,082,000 square meters of office space will remain empty in the Paris Region in 2021, up 8% from its level one year earlier)

Finally, it is antisocial. This real estate speculation makes access to housing inaccessible for a growing number of residents in France. The Lazard Group's project is being carried out in defiance of the residents of the Etienne Dolet neighborhood, many of whom are hostile to the creation of yet another office tower.

We are facing an unprecedented housing crisis. A totally artificial crisis since there were 3.116 million vacant homes in metropolitan France on January 1, 2020 (Insee). Malakoff, like a whole part of the Parisian inner ring, is gradually being transformed into a large park of empty, lifeless offices, while the working classes are constantly being pushed further out to the periphery, followed closely by the middle classes. But Lazard Group still wants to build a new building at 55 rue Étienne Dolet to accommodate companies, while you only have to cross the street to find unoccupied offices!

Malaqueen is unfortunately not the only place of solidarity and collective action threatened at the beginning of April; the end of the winter break will lead to the eviction of many other squats without permanent rehousing. Not to mention the violent evictions that occurred during the winter, often illegally, which put many people back on the street in conditions that are more than traumatic.

We denounce a hypocritical and misleading discourse against the squat movement.

At the time of our judgement, the judge and the lawyer of Lazard Group, both recognized the social and even "humanitarian" utility of our approach, but invalidated its legitimacy by arguing that it was not up to the individuals to make up for the lack of decent housing and common spaces, but to the State and the communities. Yet, despite this legal obligation, the number of people without housing or poorly housed is growing disproportionately year after year. This rhetoric, often brandished to evict a squat, delegitimizes any attempt at collective organization that does not fit into the boxes pre-established by the institutions. Moreover, the emergency rehousing that the squatters would benefit from after their eviction rarely corresponds to permanent social housing, but rather to a few nights at the 115 in insalubrious, cramped and often violent spaces, before an almost certain return to the street, even more violent. Finally, the State, always quick to expel us with the help of expensive police forces, is the first to redirect to squats, directly or via associations, the people it claims it cannot take care of.

Faced with us, the state judicial system tightens its grip. In general, for squats, the legal procedures are accelerating and the daily allowances for occupation are increasing exponentially (in Malaqueen, the delay of eviction after judgement was 2 months, and only the struggle allowed us to stay longer). A few decades ago, squats comparable to ours could last for more than 10 years! This change of temporality makes it almost impossible to try to organize collectively. Today, as soon as a place starts to establish itself on a territory, to propose other social practices, to get out of the emergency and the survival, hardly has it the time to create a link between the inhabitants of the squat and the district, that it is already threatened of eviction.

While the situation is already catastrophic, the government is about to vote an umpteenth anti-poor law in the straight line of the liberticidal and anti-social laws it is used to; another attack on the right to housing: the Kasbarian-Bergé Law.

This law penalizes both squatters and precarious tenants (who can be evicted from their housing as soon as the first month of late payment). In addition to the unpaid rent for some and the daily occupation indemnities for others, this law condemns to pay fines automatically levied from 15000 euros for the tenants to 45000 euros for the squatters and up to three years of prison for the latter.

Presented in the media as a law protecting "housing against illegal occupation" and "small landlords", this law actually protects the rents of the minority of large landlords (3.5%) who own more than half of the rental properties. Moreover, it extends to "economic" properties, i.e. offices and businesses (even if long abandoned). Therefore, this law can also be applied to workers occupying their factories, who will be considered as squatters and treated as such!

Contrary to what the bourgeois propaganda puts forward with isolated and often truncated facts, the immense majority of squatted places is constituted by "buildings with economic purpose" very often property of rich multi-owners and big speculative companies and not by homes of "small owners". The myth of the squatter, knife between his teeth, methodically squatting and ravaging private homes is a myth that is not based on any tangible reality. It is strangely reminiscent of the myth that the Versaillais, in 1871, told about the Paris Commune. The Communards were portrayed in the bourgeois press as barbarians who would come at any moment to strip the land of the unfortunate peasants. All this was done in order to build up the famous Versaillais army that massacred the Commune during the blood week, an army composed in large part of peasants, often poor, but manipulated by the ruling class and terrorized by the idea of being robbed by poorer people than themselves!

Let's not let the bourgeoisie divide us once again and let's unite!

Moreover, this law will in no way solve the housing crisis and its consequences. Indeed, it would be naive to believe that the thousands of people, including families, put on the street by the Kasbarian-Bergé law, will stay outside in the cold or the heat, prostrate wisely in front of empty buildings, without seeking shelter, even for a few nights! Ironically, while it will prevent self-managed squats from existing by reducing procedures, this law, by multiplying evictions, also risks multiplying squats! Squats occupied out of misery, quickly evicted in violence and indifference, and whose criminalized occupants will have no other choice than to squat again, in emergency and extreme precariousness. The era of every man for himself and survival for all, without any possible alternative! The world dreamed up by the capitalists who govern us!

It is not only the squat that this law and this government want to destroy, it is the solidarity and the self-organization of the working classes.

The eviction of the Malaqueen, the eviction of all the squats and all the precarious tenants, the Kasbarian-Bergé law like the reform of the pensions, the Darmanin law (law of disciplining and absolute merchandising of the labor power of the international proletariat) or the Olympique law (security law), all of this is the result of the same project of ultra-liberal, reactionary and authoritarian society carried by the government. We don't have to remain powerless in the face of the destruction of our living conditions by speculation, gentrification, large-scale urban projects and scurrilous laws! We can and we must reclaim the city and our lives! We can and we must reverse this power struggle!

For all these reasons, Le Malaqueen will resist as long as possible and other squats will open as often as necessary.

The requisition of empty buildings is not only legitimate but also indispensable for the emergence of a society based on other principles than the one of ultraliberalism. We claim our right to act on our immediate environment, we claim the right to the city. We are in solidarity with all the current struggles, many of which are organized in and around squats, the last non-market spaces in our sanitized cities.

To get informed and organize for the struggle in Malaqueen and against the Kasbarian law: two meetings every week.

Every Tuesday at 7pm: public information and organization meeting against the Kasbarian Law

Every Thursday at 7pm: public general assembly around the future of Malaqueen.

Practical information:

Online petition against eviction: tinyurl.com/MALAQN

Contact : soutien_malaqueen@riseup.net

Facebook : Au Malaqueen

Address : 70 rue Gallieni, 92240 Malakoff

