

French cabinet approves measures to incite vaccination

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The French government approved a draft law Monday that is intended to pressure non-vaccinated people to get a jab against COVID-19 as the country faces a surge in new cases.

The law, which is expected to be presented to parliament at the end of the week, was approved at a cabinet meeting on Monday, said [government](#) spokesman Gabriel Attal.

It will massively extend a "health pass" system that will require people to produce evidence of vaccination or a negative test when they visit public venues such as restaurants, bars or shopping centres.

The government has said the legislation is intended to incite people to take up the offer of jobs, and more than three million people have booked appointments since it was outlined by President Emmanuel Macron last Monday.

The proposals have led to mass protests and accusations from some politicians that Macron is abusing his powers and even running a "dictatorship".

A former member of Macron's parliamentary party, Martine Wonner, urged protesters at the weekend to "go lay siege to lawmakers, go invade their headquarters, to tell them you do not agree."

Around 114,000 people rallied around France on Saturday to protest the system, with some wearing a yellow star, seeking to liken the treatment of the non-vaccinated with that of Jews in Nazi-occupied Europe during World War II.

The government and Holocaust survivors have condemned the symbolism.

"This is an odious comparison," Joseph Szwarc, a survivor of a notorious roundup of Jews in Paris, said at a remembrance event on Sunday, adding that the sight of the yellow stars had greatly saddened him.

"I wore the star. I know what it is. It's in my flesh," he said.

Europe Minister Clement Beaune called the comparisons "monstrous".

Elsewhere, a COVID-19 vaccination centre in southwest France was set on fire in a suspected arson attack early Sunday in Urrugne in the southwestern Basque region, local prosecutor Jerome Bourrier announced.

Overnight on Friday, a centre in Lans-en-Vercors, southeast France, was vandalised and tagged with anti-vaccination graffiti.

The government says it has no choice but to urge people to get vaccinated as the country faces a fourth wave of cases linked to the spread of the more contagious Delta variant.

Opinion polls show that most French people approve.

"We have a fourth wave that is taking off, with a rise in cases that is stratospheric," government spokesman Attal told journalists on Monday.

The country reported 12,500 daily cases on Sunday, double the number of a week ago.

Health Minister Olivier Veran has said that nine out of 10 newly infected people are unvaccinated.

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