

Judiciary must be protected, says Macron, as judge who sentenced Le Pen put under guard

French president tells ministers that judges are independent and ‘all litigants have the right of appeal’

Emmanuel Macron has said the French judiciary is independent and must be protected as a judge was put under police guard after sentencing Marine Le Pen to an immediate ban from running for office.

Speaking on Wednesday, two days after the far-right leader’s conviction for the embezzlement of European parliament funds, the French president told ministers that “judges must be protected” and that “all litigants have the right to appeal.”

Le Pen, the head of the far-right National Rally party (RN), [has expressed fury](#) at what she called a “nuclear bomb” by the “system” and has already lodged an appeal.

A court found her guilty on Monday of running a [system of fake job contracts](#) to embezzle the European parliament, siphoning funds intended for parliamentary assistants to instead pay party workers in France.

Le Pen has since said the judges’ decision to impose an immediate ban on her taking part in elections for five years “excluded” her from the 2027 presidential race and was a threat to democracy.

[Le Pen’s party president](#), Jordan Bardella, who has complained of “red judges” trying to scupper the election, said the party would hold a peaceful rally in protest this weekend, warning that any threats and violence against judges were unacceptable.

The Paris public prosecutor, Laure Beccuau, said an investigation had been opened into threats made against the panel of judges who convicted Le Pen.

The presiding judge in the case, Bénédicte de Perthuis, an expert in financial crime, is receiving protection, including increased patrols and regular rounds around her home, after receiving threats, a source close to the case told AFP.

Le Pen expressed satisfaction on Wednesday at the court of appeal’s announcement that it would examine her appeal quickly, with a verdict expected next summer – a timeline that would allow her a window to still run for president if her sentence were to change.

But the issue has nonetheless spilled over into parliament, with politicians on the left, centre and right criticising the centrist prime minister, François Bayrou, for appearing to support Le Pen’s querying of the sentence.

Bayrou was attacked by the left and even centrists for suggesting in parliament that “questions” could be asked about the fact that the ban on running for public office had been handed down “with immediate effect”. His office had earlier said he was “troubled” by the sentence. He also appeared open to the idea of a bill to change the way such sentences were handed down.

Xavier Bertrand, the rightwing head of the Hauts-de-France region, said Bayrou should never have said he was “troubled” by Le Pen’s sentence. He told RTL radio that the prime minister and other politicians were “falling into a trap by Marine Le Pen: the trap of victimisation. [Marine Le Pen](#) is not a victim of

miscarriage of justice. She was found guilty by the criminal court of extremely serious activities: embezzlement of public funds.”

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He said the fact that Le Pen's appeal was happening so unusually fast in [France](#) was proof that "there is no plot and she is not a victim."

Christophe Bourgeois, the secretary general of the magistrates' union, said: "Everything will be done so there is an appeal decision in the summer of 2026" but he said this meant other cases would have to be pushed back behind Le Pen's, saying that was "regrettable".

The former centrist prime minister Gabriel Attal said: "I'd find it hard to explain to a family who had been victim of violence by criminals that their dossier was be pushed back because Le Pen's comes first."

Bayrou and other members of his centrist Democratic Movement (MoDem) party recently went on trial accused of a smaller scheme to use European parliament money intended for parliamentary assistants to fund party work in France.

Bayrou was cleared in the case, with the judge ruling that he was owed the "benefit of the doubt". But the state prosecutor has appealed against the acquittal, which means that Bayrou will face a retrial, the date of which has not yet been set.