

Far-right National Rally candidates, including one who wore Nazi cap, scrutinized in French election

AP – As it stands on the threshold of power in France, the far-right National Rally is facing scrutiny about some of the candidates it hopes will help it secure a ruling majority in legislative elections on Sunday, including a woman it has pulled from [the high-stakes race](#) over a photo of her wearing a World War II-era Nazi officer's cap.

Other National Rally candidates whose suitability is being questioned by the party's critics and opponents include a woman said by French media to have once held a town employee hostage at gunpoint, a man who may not be eligible to serve as a lawmaker because he is under guardianship, a candidate who tweeted that "gas brought justice to the victims of the Shoah" and others who have been little-seen on the campaign trail.

Revelations by media and citizens risk puncturing [the polished image](#) that National Rally leader and three-time presidential candidate Marine Le Pen has sought to craft of her party to shed its historical links to antisemitism, racism and France's painful WWII collaboration with the Nazi occupation.

They also raise questions about the party's readiness to wield power [if it secures an absolute majority](#) in Sunday's second-round vote to determine the makeup of the 577-seat National Assembly. An absolute majority would give Le Pen the leverage to force President Emmanuel Macron to accept her 28-year-old protege, [Jordan Bardella](#), as prime minister.

French political analysts say the party has struggled to keep pace with its surge in voter support, including finding and

vetting candidates to represent it.

Macron [called the surprise legislative election](#) on June 9 after his centrist alliance suffered a punishing defeat at the hands of the National Rally in French voting for the European Parliament. Preparing for the flash campaign proved difficult for all parties.

“They tend to take what they have at hand, even if it means not paying attention,” said far-right expert Jean-Yves Camus, a researcher with the Institute of International and Strategic Relations. “There is the top of the basket, but there is also the bottom of the basket, with candidates who are often embarrassing for them.”

In Mayenne, northwestern France, citizens shared an article from regional newspaper Ouest-France reporting in 1995 that National Rally candidate Annie Bell, then using the surname Jaccoud, had taken a mayoral employee hostage for several hours. The newspaper said she was heavily indebted, entered her town hall armed with a rifle and took a secretary hostage. A shot was fired, but nobody was injured, the newspaper reported. Bell has advanced in voting to the decisive second round.

It is unclear whether she was ever convicted, and the Associated Press could not find any contact details for her. A press officer for the party did not respond to a request for comment.

The party’s president, Bardella, acknowledged in a radio interview Wednesday there were a few “infected sheep” in the campaign.

Other candidates have also come under fire.

After Ludivine Daoudi won nearly 20% of the vote in her district in round one, the National Rally announced that it was withdrawing her from round two after a photo of her

wearing a Nazi officer's cap, with a swastika, emerged on social media.

"She does not deny that she took this photo," Philippe Chapron, a regional National Rally representative, said in a radio interview. He stressed that the photo, "clearly in bad taste," had been taken "a long time ago" and before Daoudi joined the party.

A National Rally candidate in Mayenne, Paule Veyre de Soras, was asked in a video interview about critics' allegations that the party still has xenophobes and racists in its ranks. She responded that it no longer did, adding that "I myself am Catalan, my grandfather was born in Barcelona, I have a Jew as an ophthalmologist and, as a dentist, a Muslim."

Veyre de Soras got more than 28% of her district's vote, setting her up to possibly become a lawmaker in round two.

In some districts, National Rally candidates didn't include a photo of themselves or biographical information on campaign leaflets that instead showed Le Pen and Bardella. Some have been seen so rarely in the campaign that opponents have likened them to ghosts.

In the Jura region, National Rally candidate Thierry Mosca is subject to a court-ordered limited guardianship, according to regional newspaper *Le Progrès*, meaning he is ineligible to be a lawmaker. French broadcaster France 3 quoted Mosca as saying that the protection measure, which a judge can order for adults considered in difficulty and in need of help, was applied to him because he has financial problems.

The party's vice president, Louis Aliot, said some candidates don't tell the party about their judicial records "even though we ask them" and that if they lie, "they will be dismissed."

Candidates of other parties have also come under fire. A campaign video shared on social media by Sebastien Delogu, a

lawmaker for the hard-left France Unbowed party who was re-elected in the first round, showed the head of Jewish lawmaker Habib Meyer next to a box of frozen pizza and an oven. Meyer said he regarded the video as antisemitic. Delogu denied that accusation.

The Associated Press