‘A lot of hope’: French left rejoices at unexpected election win

AFP- As the first projections showed the left in the lead of France’s parliamentary polls, against all expectations, a large crowd of left-wing activists erupted in joy in Paris.

“I’m really happy, there’s this crazy energy and I’m getting the chills,” said Marie Delille, a philosophy student, in the capital’s Stalingrad Square.

“It feels good right now, but we’re still waiting for the final results,” she added at the gathering of the hard-left France Unbowed (LFI) party.

Many French voters had feared the anti-immigration, Eurosceptic National Rally (RN) party would seize the largest portion of parliament’s seats.

But early projections put a broad left-wing alliance including LFI ahead in the race with 177 to 198 seats, in front of both President Emmanuel Macron’s centrist alliance with 152 to 169 seats and the RN with 135 to 145.

Nearby, fellow LFI activist Dalil Diab was also visibly moved.

“We’re relieved, there’s a lot of hope. There’s a lot of hope for the future of France, for the left,” said the young man who works in transport logistics.

Hugo Chevalley, a history student, was more tempered in his enthusiasm.

“It’s a victory, but it’s a relative victory,” he said,

referring to the large chunk of seats the RN is likely to have gained.

“So we have to continue to fight. It’s not over… But it’s a relief, that’s for sure. We weren’t expecting it.”

Hundreds of supporters of the left-wing New Popular Front also gathered to celebrate in the capital’s Republique Square.

“We’ve won, we’ve won,” members of the crowd chanted under a blue, white and red France flag marked with the words “France is weaved from migrations”.

“No to the RN, no to Macron,” read one placard held up by a participant.

— ‘I won’t give up’ —

Macron took the gamble to call the elections after the RN trounced his centrist alliance in June 9 European elections.

Three-time presidential candidate Marine Le Pen had hoped her RN party would go on to win an absolute majority in the national polls and even form a government.

But that dream was dashed after the left and centre rallied together to ensure there was only one anti-RN candidate in most districts.

In another part of Paris, the mood was less festive for the RN, where leader Jordan Bardella accused the president’s party and left of “electoral arrangements”.

Olivier Mondet, a 64-year-old nurse, was annoyed that so many people had voted against the far right.

“They tell the French people any old thing and they swallow it all up. They’re manipulating them,” he said.

Cecilia Djennad, 32, said she was disappointed.

“People have been demonising the RN for years. The extreme left plays on people’s fear,” she said.

But “I won’t give up,” she added, looking forward to local elections planned for 2026.

Among a group of young party followers dressed in suits and ties for the occasion, history student Noah Ludon also remained optimistic.

“The RN is a high-speed train. Our voters are increasing,” he said.

“Victory will come next time.”

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