
FRANCE'S 'YELLOW JACKETS' INSPIRE PROTESTERS IN IRAQ

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With all eyes on anti-tax protests in Paris, demonstrators in Iraq are revisiting a look that has become a symbol of French dissent.

Protesters donned similar fluorescent neon vests to those worn by France's "Yellow Jackets" as they took to the streets in the southeastern city of Basra on Tuesday. Around 100 people demanding basic services including water and electricity later stormed the office of Basra Governor Asaad al-Eidani. Iraqi security forces responded by firing live ammunition, but no injuries were reported.

Such garb has become the emblem of the French movement that is opposed to President Emmanuel Macron's economic reforms. A proposed hike for gas and diesel taxes has triggered sometimes violent protests in Paris in recent weeks.

But Naqeeb Luaibi, an organizer of the protests in Basra, told NBC News that the choice of clothing worn by the "Yellow Jackets" was familiar to Iraqis.

Demonstrators speaking out against government corruption dressed similarly in 2015, he said.

"We thought that we would be more organized if we wear these vests," Luaibi added.

The latest round of demonstrations in Basra began in June with residents demanding improved public services. Events escalated as a water-contamination crisis meant that more than 102,000 people needed medical treatment.

In September, a curfew was imposed as protesters blocked roads, clashed with police and set fire to the headquarters of political parties.

As the "Yellow Jacket" revolt in Paris reached a violent peak on Saturday, Luaibi said he and his fellow activists were reminded of the neon vests they once wore and decided to put them on again.

Iraqis weren't the only ones inspired by recent events in France.

In Serbia, an opposition lawmaker put on a yellow vest in Parliament while highlighting the high cost of fuel.

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