# Marine Le Pen decries conviction as a witch-hunt at Paris rally



Marine Le Pen, the leader of France's far-right National Rally (Rassemblement National, RN), has decried her recent conviction for embezzling European Union funds, labelling the ruling a “witch-hunt” aimed at eliminating her from the upcoming presidential election. During a fervent rally in Paris, attended by thousands of passionate supporters, Le Pen vowed to appeal the court's landmark decision, which restricts her eligibility to run for office and includes a prison sentence potentially leading to home confinement.

In a judgment that highlights the dire need for political accountability in a democracy, the court found Le Pen and several RN officials guilty of diverting approximately €4.4 million in EU parliament funds, claimed to support parliamentary staff, yet instead funneled towards the party's activities in France. Le Pen received a total sentence of four years in prison, with two to be served at home under electronic monitoring, alongside a hefty €100,000 fine. While an appeals court has set a timeline to reconsider her case by the summer of 2026, this ruling casts a long shadow over her ambition to participate in the 2027 presidential race.

At the rally, Le Pen's rhetoric framed the court's ruling as an egregious violation of democratic principles and a hindrance to the electorate's right to select their leaders. "This decision has trampled on everything I hold most dear: my people, my country and my honour,” Le Pen declared, positioning herself as a guardian of the rule of law and likening her situation to other political figures who have faced similar scrutiny.

Her remarks resonated with party chief Jordan Bardella, who asserted that the ruling not only constitutes an injustice directed at Le Pen but represents a broader attack on French democracy itself. He proclaimed, “The people must be free to choose their leaders—without interference from political judges,” framing the verdict as an outright violation of democratic freedoms.

The atmosphere at the rally was charged with outrage, as countless supporters expressed their anger at the conviction. Attendees like Laurence, a 45-year-old voter, condemned the ruling as "scandalous," maintaining that it impedes the critical transformation needed within France's political arena. Placards declaring it a “judicial dictatorship” dotted the crowd, encapsulating the sentiment of discontent amongst the public.

In stark contrast, a rival rally took place a few kilometres away at the Place de la République, spearheaded by opponents comprised of left-wing activists and centrist politicians. Their leaders derided Le Pen's claims as a dangerous affront to judicial independence, with Green party leader Marine Tondelier harshly critiquing her narrative as “a total conspiracy theory.” She emphasised the need to protect the integrity of the judicial system against such divisive rhetoric.

Former Prime Minister Gabriel Attal addressed the counter-demonstration, highlighting that political leaders must be held accountable and that the ruling reflects the fundamental principles of justice, irrespective of Le Pen's popularity. He warned against the harmful nature of political protests that undermine judicial decisions, underscoring the importance of the separation of powers enshrined in the French constitution.

Despite the stark ideological divide exposed by the two rallies, which necessitated a heavy police presence due to minor clashes, the events reveal a deeply fractured political landscape in France following Le Pen’s conviction. As she presses on with her appeal and maintains her stance as an advocate for the French populace, the implications of her case for the future elections remain a contentious subject, spotlighting a pressing need for accountability and transparency in governance.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

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