



Far left fined for misusing Marianne, the symbol of France

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Combo was demanding €900,000 in compensation from Jean-Luc Melenchon of using his work without permission

DENIS PREZAT/ALAMY



The radical anti-capitalist who leads France's left-wing opposition alliance has been fined for the unauthorised use of a street artist's depiction of Marianne, the national symbol, as a bare-breasted Asian woman.

The court of appeal ordered [Jean-Luc Mélenchon](#) and his hard-left party, France Unbowed, to pay €40,000 in compensation and legal costs for using the work by the street artist Combo in campaign videos without permission. It is the first time a French court has ruled that street art is copyright protected. The decision overturned a lower court ruling that his Marianne mural, painted in 2017 on a building in the Marais district of Paris, was not covered by copyright.

The figure of Marianne has personified the republican values of liberty, equality and fraternity since the Revolution and her image occupies a place of honour in town halls and law courts.

Combo portrayed her as an Asian woman wearing jeans, with her right breast bare, carrying a tricolour bearing the slogan Liberty, Equality, Humanity alongside the caption "We want justice".

He objected to his art being associated with the hard left. The court of appeal upheld his claim for moral and proprietary damages, but awarded far less than the €900,000 he had sought. "His main complaints were the political exploitation of his work and damage to his reputation," according to Nicolas Le Pays du Teilleul, his lawyer.

France Unbowed leads the Nupes alliance of left-wing parties which dominates the parliamentary opposition to President Macron's centrist government, although Marine Le Pen's hard right [National Rally](#) is the largest single opposition party.

Mélenchon and his party have come under fire not just from the government but also from some of their own left-wing allies for refusing to call for calm [during riots](#) sparked by last month's police shooting of a teenager of Algerian origin.

Aurore Bergé, an MP from Renaissance, Macron's party, said on Sunday that France Unbowed should be renamed Incendiary France.

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