



## The News

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*by Sarah Heath*

French unions are intending to bring the country to a standstill today. Strong words have also mentioned wanting to severely disrupt the economy. Today sees the sixth big day of protests against proposed pension reforms. The consequences are far-reaching and there will be disruption in many sectors: schools, public services and transport. Only 1 TER and TGV out of 5 will be running as scheduled, and the RATP in Paris is likely to be badly affected. The CGT has called for action to block fuel deliveries leaving from refineries for national distribution. The government has suggested that between 1 and 1.5 million demonstrators are expected today as part of more than 250 planned protests throughout France. To the west of Rennes, a main road, the RN24, was blocked last night by around one hundred demonstrators.

In the rest of the news, the Drôme and the Ardèche last night joined the list of départements placed on early drought alert. Restrictions on the use of water will be put in place in the face of a rain deficit in these past weeks. The Pyrénées-Orientales, the Ain, the Bouches-du-Rhône and the Var have already been partially or fully affected by such a drought alert.

The provisional detention of Pierre Palmade was lifted last night by the examining magistrate for medical reasons. The comedian, who was under the influence of cocaine when he caused a serious road accident in the Seine-et-Marne on February the 10<sup>th</sup>, has been placed under judicial supervision and remains hospitalized. However, the public prosecutor in Melun has appealed this decision, an appeal which will be examined on Friday.

In Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelensky is refusing to give up the battle to save Bakhmout, after several weeks of fighting. The president last night called on his army to find the strength to continue to defend the city which risks being surrounded by Russian forces.

And finally to football. It is highly likely that the season is over for PSG star player Neymar, after the Brazilian striker injured his ankle again and will have to be operated on. The 31-year-old is expected to be sidelined for three to four months.