



PRESS RELEASE

**Friday 18 August : 700 bikes and dozens of tractors near Sainte-Soline
- the Water Convoy against *méga-bassines* departs**

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On August 18th, a ‘Water Convoy’ protest on an unprecedented scale - 700 bicycles and dozens of tractors - will set off from near Sainte-Soline, in Lezay, western France. Expected to arrive a week later in Orléans, the convoy will include a protest outside the Loire-Bretagne Water Agency on 25 August, before a final event in Paris (to be announced).

The aim of the convoy is to obtain an immediate moratorium on all *méga-bassine* (water reservoir) construction projects, and to promote real action to preserve and share water in areas suffering from the effects of industrial agriculture and climate disruption. The tour will include visits to a diversity of struggles against land grabbing, water grabbing, and land artificialization, and will be hosted each evening by local collectives, communes and friendly farms. The first stop on the evening of the August 18 will be Jazeneuil (Vienne), followed by Migné-Auxances, Coussay-les-Bois, Dolus-le-Sec, Lussault-sur Loire, Lestiou and Bou.

The convoy will depart this Friday, August 18, in Lezay, a few kilometres from the Sainte-Soline basin, with a picnic and speeches starting at 12pm.

Two press conferences will be held on Friday, August 18:

- at 9am in Longré (Charente) with the Bassines Non Merci Aume-Couture collective, who will be the first to set off on their bikes to join the Water Convoy;

- at 1pm in Lezay (Deux-Sèvres) with spokespeople from Bassines Non Merci, Confédération Paysanne, Soulèvements de la Terre, and a representative from the local movement against the Lezay methanizer. The exact locations will be announced the day before.

Les Soulèvements de la Terre had temporarily put on hold their involvement in the Water Convoy in order to focus on the legal battle against government efforts to ban the movement. Last Friday 11 August, this ban was suspended by the *Conseil d'Etat*, meaning *Les Soulèvements de la Terre* are able to resume their full participation alongside *Bassines Non Merci*, *Confédération Paysanne* and 130 other organisations in this latest step in the fight for an end to mega reservoirs and for an equitable use of water.

The convoy's starting point near Sainte-Soline is a powerful symbol. As the first mobilisation around Sainte-Soline since the huge protest on March 25, the Convoy will pay tribute to those injured by police grenades, and look ahead to the trial on September 8 in Niort, where nine representatives will stand trial for organising prohibited demonstrations, among other charges. Before setting out on this crucial journey, the groups will reaffirm their commitment to ensuring that work on the mega reservoir does not resume.

Also on August 18th, the full demands will be unveiled and sent to the Loire-Bretagne Water Agency (the body that finances *méga-bassines* projects in the region), and the Water Convoy organisers will set out the terms of a moratorium that would open up the possibility for real dialogue around water sharing and the agricultural practices that preserve it.

The convoy is already a success! After huge interest in participation, registrations were limited to 700 bikes per stage at the end of July, in order to safely and comfortably meet the logistical challenges of hosting and supplying the convoy on a daily basis.

Locals living along the route can still participate by welcoming the convoy and showing their support for this adventure, which will rival the Tour de France in sheer scale and excitement, both political and sporting! The Water Convoy follows in the footsteps of the historic and ultimately victorious Larzac convoys and marches in 1973 and 1978 to stop the extension of the military camp, and the winter convoy of 2015 that set off from the Notre-Dame-des-Landes ZAD during the state of emergency, to finally put an end to the planned airport.

Practical guide with full information [in French]: Link to the guide for the Water Convoy with the dates of the different stops: https://bassinesnonmerci.fr/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/GUIDE-PRATIQUE_V3_compressed.pdf

There will be media updates every day. If you would like to cover the convoy as a journalist, please contact presse-soulevements@riseup.net as soon as possible.

Join the Telegram channel to receive the latest updates: <https://t.me/convoideleau2023>