

---

'They have been LYING from the start,' lawyer tells RT as medics sue French PM

By: RT  
22/03/2020



French medics are seeking the prosecution of top officials over their allegedly negligent response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Among the evidence is an interview with an ex-health minister, who called government action a masquerade.

Three French medics filed a legal complaint this week against Prime Minister Edouard Philippe and former minister of solidarity and health, Agnes Buzyn. The two senior officials, the complaint alleges, failed to perform their duty and organize a proper response to the coronavirus outbreak, which by now has gripped most of Europe and put France on standstill.

As early as January, the two ministers were aware of the threat posed by the virus, but "chose not to act," according to the complaint filed with France's CJR, a court established to try cases of ministerial misconduct. If convicted, the accused could land in prison for up to two years and face heavy fines.

"At some point the truth needs to be told, which is that these people have been lying to us from the start," Fabrice di Vizio, the lawyer representing the three plaintiffs, told RT.

Among the evidence cited in the legal papers is an interview that Buzyn gave to newspaper Le Monde, in which she expressed regret about leaving her ministerial office and running for mayor of Paris for President Emmanuel Macron's La Republique en Marche (LRM) party. She said she was crying as she left the ministry "because I knew there was a tsunami coming."

The minister was called to participate in the race after LRM's first-choice candidate dropped out in mid-February over a sexting scandal. She took third place in the first round of the municipal election last Sunday and has withdrawn from the election.

"We should have stopped [the election]; it was a masquerade," the ex-minister said. She added on January 30 that she suggested canceling the municipal election, but Prime Minister Philippe chose not to.

The French government denies any negligence and said it was paying close attention to Covid-19, but the scientific data did not warrant taking stronger measures in February. Buzyn said she should not have used the word "masquerade" in the interview, explaining that she was under much stress at the time, and has endorsed the government's handling of the health crisis.

Di Vizio, the medic's lawyer, believes the government is still more interested in scoring political points than saving lives.

"Last week the government spoke about the masks. You remember those pompous speeches by the president, who was all commander-in-chief in tone and promised the masks?" he told RT. "Masks are a primary tool of war since they protect the health workers. Have those masks arrived?"

Mask shortages have become an acute problem in France, with the government ordering 250 million pieces of the equipment on Saturday.

---