

Anonymous targets Montreal Grand Prix to back students

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File photo of the Circuit Gilles Villeneuve in Montreal in 2011 during the Canadian Formula One Grand Prix race. The global group of computer hackers known as Anonymous threw its support behind Quebec students protesting hikes in tuition fees by threatening to disrupt the Montreal Grand Prix.

The global group of computer hackers known as Anonymous threw its support behind Quebec students protesting hikes in tuition fees by threatening to disrupt the Montreal Grand Prix.

The activists, who earlier this month claimed responsibility for downing a dozen Quebec [government websites](#), blasted organizers for intending to run the race in the Canadian province that recently passed an emergency law restricting protests.

Special Law 78, it said, has been "universally condemned by human rights watchers around the world as tyrannical, draconian -- and (has left)

Quebec in clear violation of its basic human rights obligations."

"Beginning on June 7th and running through race day on June 10th, Anonymous will take down all the F1 websites, dump the servers and databases -- and wreck anything else F1-related we can find on the Internet," said a statement.

Anonymous, which in 2010 targeted websites of companies such as Visa and Mastercard after they stopped supporting whistleblower [Wikileaks](#), also warned race spectators not to purchase tickets online for the event or risk having their [credit card information](#) stolen and posted online for all to see.

The threats came as students and government representatives headed into a second day of talks to end protests that have raged here since mid-February over a plan by provincial Premier Jean Charest to raise rates at Quebec universities by 82 percent to rein in a [budget deficit](#).

Hundreds of demonstrators have been arrested and clashes have erupted sporadically as more than 165,000 students have refused to attend class as tens of thousands have taken to the streets.

A tentative deal was reached after marathon negotiations a month ago but soon fell apart, and nightly protests in Montreal and other cities resumed.

Special Law 78 was passed on May 18 in an effort to quell the unrest, but has only served to galvanize opposition to the government.

The measure requires organizers to give police at least eight hours advance warning of times and locations of protest marches, with hefty fines imposed for failing to do so.

Last week, some 1,000 protesters were detained in some of the biggest mass arrests in the province's history.

Meanwhile Tuesday, talks between students and the Quebec government aimed at ending the tuition fees protests appeared to be moving forward.

During a dinner break, Martine Desjardins, president of the Federation of University Students (FEUQ), said she and her colleagues had submitted offers to the government.

"We expect the government to get back to us tonight," Desjardins said without going into details. "It's clear the negotiations will continue tonight."



Photo illustration of a masked member of the hacker Anonymous group. Anonymous, which in 2010 targeted websites of companies such as Visa and Mastercard after they stopped supporting whistleblower Wikileaks, also warned spectators at the Montreal Grand Prix not to purchase tickets online for the event or risk having their credit card information stolen and posted online for all to see.

The discussions between Education Minister Michelle Courchesne and student leaders have been touted as a "last chance" to resolve the conflict before the start of summer festivals and other major tourist draws such as the Montreal Grand Prix.

Going into the session, one of the student leaders, Leo Bureau-Blouin, said he was expecting Courchesne to unveil a new proposal.

"The minister of education said she would present a new offer today. We're hoping that it's significant," Bureau-Blouin said.

Courchesne said she was "satisfied" that the talks were going well.

On Monday Premier Charest met with student leaders for the first time since the crisis erupted, joining the talks to hear their demands.

Gabriel Nadeau-Dubois, spokesman for the radical student group Classe, said this showed "that the government recognizes the extent of the crisis" and maybe "a certain sincerity on the part of the government in regards to the negotiations."

"The prime minister spent a half hour with us," said Desjardins, "but he did not have many answers to our questions."

Also Tuesday, Transportation Minister Norman MacMillan evoked the triggering of early legislative elections in July to end the stalemate if the government failed to reach a deal with the students soon.

"I would be a liar if I told you otherwise," he said in response to a reporter's question.

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