

French Take To The Streets In May Day Anti-Sarkozy Protest

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PARIS (AFP)—Tens of thousands of protesters took to the streets across France Friday in May Day marches in a fresh show of force against President Nicolas Sarkozy's handling of the economic crisis.

In what unions predicted would be the biggest Labor Day turnout in decades, marchers paraded in several cities, including Marseille, Bordeaux and Grenoble, with a massive Paris protest due to start at 1200 GMT.

"Work, not death," said a banner in Grenoble carried by workers from the German car parts maker Schaeffler, which will soon close a plant in the area, as they marched behind colleagues carrying a coffin.

France's eight main trade unions have agreed to hold united rallies across the country - rather than hold rival May Day events - for the first time since the end of the Second World War.

About 300 rallies were due to be held nationwide after unions and the left-wing opposition called for the public holiday to be turned into a "historic" protest to demand more help for workers and families hit by the slowdown.

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