

'Get out of decaying France while you can', campaign warns

France's youth should leave a "decaying and ultra-centralised country run by old men", according to a new campaign that has sparked debate on how the country treats its younger generation.



Mouloud Achour (pictured) who along with entrepreneur Félix Marquardt and rapper Mokles have formed "Barrez-Vous" Photo: AFP



By [Henry Samuel](#), Paris

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Young [French](#) people should seek work and hope for the future abroad, according to an unlikely trio of influential men in their 30s – entrepreneur Félix Marquardt, rapper Mokless and TV journalist Mouloud Achour, who have launched a campaign dubbed "Barrez-Vous" ("Beat It").

In a tribune in Libération newspaper earlier this month, they said French young people must face the "embarrassing truth" that they lived in a "sclerotic gerontocracy that is collapsing a little more every day".

Mr Marquardt, who has US nationality, said France's failure to teach English better in schools and its obsession with protecting its language was a major obstacle to mobility.

The country's economic policies have put youth so low on their priorities that one in four people under 25 is out of work, they argue. Meanwhile, France's ageing political class refuses to let the younger generation in.

Their call followed numerous reports about a rising tide of wealthy and successful French who are leaving the country to avoid the new Socialist government's plan to tax the country's highest earners at 75 per cent. David Cameron provocatively offered them the "red carpet" should they choose Britain as their new tax home.

The "Barrez-vous" trio said this was not about "tax evasion, but escape plain and simple" that applied as much to "apprentice restaurateurs, hairdressers and chauffeurs as to bankers".

They apparently had little time for President François Hollande's electoral pledge to make youth his top priority and his 2.3 billion-euro programme to create jobs for 150,000 young people without skills.

They received support from Rokhaya Diallo, founder of anti-racism group Les Indivisibles, who said the young felt totally ignored, particularly those from high-immigrant suburbs where unemployment can reach 40 per cent.

"We're not going to tell young people to be masochists and stay put in a country that clearly doesn't like them," she said.

Critics of the campaign were quick to brand the trio unpatriotic and lacking moral fibre.

Michel Sapin, the labour minister, said: "I don't think the idea of going elsewhere should be an ambition to offer young French people, even if it's very important to know what's going on there."

Right-wing former agriculture minister Bruno Le Maire said: "Beware of provocation. I would say to them: 'Stay and roll up your shirtsleeves'. France is a wonderful country that we're in the process of ruining."