Tomorrow's Affairs
Analysis of today
Assessment of tomorrow

By: TA | AP Insight

Antisemitism allegations cloud Le Pen's presidential campaign

French far-right leader Marine Le Pen, her National Rally party and its allies closed ranks Tuesday behind her running mate in next year's presidential election, Jordan Bardella, in the face of media accusations that he made antisemitic remarks as a young party member.

The 31-year-old Bardella, who Le Pen says will be her prime minister if she wins the presidency in May, vigorously denied authorship of the comments about supposed Jewish banking monopolies and other antisemitic conspiracy theories that investigative website Mediapart attributed to him and published Monday.

It said they were written more than a decade ago. They included years when Bardella, now the National Rally president, was a teenage member of the party's predecessor, the National Front. It was founded by Le Pen's father, Jean-Marie Le Pen, who repeatedly denied the Holocaust and was convicted multiple times of hate speech before his death in 2025.

Allegations of antisemitism touch a particular nerve at the National Rally because Le Pen has worked for years to distance herself from her father's sulfurous legacy.

To win the presidency, she must overcome obstacles that blocked his presidential ambitions.

His associations with people who collaborated with France's Nazi occupiers in World War II and his multiple convictions for antisemitism, discrimination and inciting racial violence made him anathema to many voters.

All-out war

Sitting side by side, Marine Le Pen, Bardella and their ally Eric Ciotti on Tuesday used a previously scheduled gathering of their lawmakers to demonstrate unity.

They described Mediapart's allegations as the opening salvo of a supposed effort to undermine the National Rally and Le Pen as she campaigns to succeed President Emmanuel Macron, who is constitutionally barred from seeking a third consecutive term.

It's "the beginnings of an all-out war, of attempts to destabilize the presidential campaign, which — I'm telling you — will target us one after another," Bardella said.

"We have both put on our Kevlar suits, because this is heavy stuff coming down on us," Le Pen said. "This manipulation is about as subtle as a charcuterie convention."

> Marine Le Pen expressed absolute confidence in Bardella

"We are not going to let them do this to us!" she added. To applause from their lawmakers, she expressed "absolute confidence" in Bardella, who is particularly popular with young voters and has large followings on social media.

Mediapart said the comments it attributed to Bardella were drawn from private written exchanges but did not specify whether they were emails or another format.

It said it independently authenticated the exchanges but did not detail how or say how it obtained them.

Specializing in investigative journalism, Mediapart has become a leading news provider in France since its launch in 2008, claiming more than a quarter-million subscribers.

Bardella said he has launched a libel action against Mediapart's allegations, describing them as "a dirty-tricks operation."

"These remarks are completely delusional. They are not mine," he told broadcaster CNews.

Antisemitism allegations

At this early stage before the two-round election in April and May, Le Pen is widely

regarded as a front-runner in the race to succeed Macron.

Her campaign has been relatively free of major bumps since an appeals court in July cleared her path for a fourth run at the presidency, with a ruling that shortened a ban on seeking public office handed down to Le Pen for embezzling public funds.

How could a political figure who made such repugnant antisemitic remarks subsequently have risen to such positions of responsibility within a party that claims to have changed - Yonathan Arfi

Bardella, Le Pen's protégé, had been waiting in the wings to take her place as the party candidate if the original five-year ban had been upheld.

On Tuesday, he described the antisemitism allegations as a plot that he alleged had been cooked up to thwart his chances had that scenario played out.

National Rally has courted Jewish voters by positioning itself as a bulwark against Islamic extremism in France and with Le Pen's sustained effort to dissociate herself from her father's legacy.

In a process that researchers and critics of the party dubbed “de-demonization,” she expelled him in 2015 from the National Front and rebranded it in 2018.

Yonathan Arfi, who heads a French Jewish umbrella group, CRIF, said Bardella’s alleged comments, if substantiated, would represent “a stinging repudiation” of the sanitization strategy.

“How could a political figure who made such repugnant antisemitic remarks subsequently have risen to such positions of responsibility within a party that claims to have changed and to be fighting hatred of Jews?” Arfi posted on X.