

France Erupts in Rebellion After Police Killing of North African Youth

17-year-old was shot at point blank range in the Parisian suburb of Nanterre

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A young person was brutally shot to death during a traffic stop in the Paris suburb of Nanterre on June 27 prompting mass demonstrations and rebellions in various areas in France.

On June 29, thousands marched in Paris demanding an end to police brutality and institutional racism which people believe was the motivating factor in the death of **Nahel M**, a legal citizen in France of Moroccan and Algerian descent.

In France, many of the oppressed people communities exist in the suburban areas outside of Paris and other major municipalities. These neighborhoods are subjected to intensive police patrolling and surveillance. The suburbs are often predominantly composed of people of African and Middle Eastern descent who have direct and ancestral lineages among the Black and Arab peoples formerly enslaved and colonized by France.

A video of the actual shooting revealed that Nahel was sitting in a vehicle after being pulled over by the French police. As the video illustrates, the shooting was completely unprovoked.

The French national newspaper [Le Monde wrote](#) on the video saying:

“The teenager was killed as he pulled away from police who tried to stop him for traffic infractions. A video, authenticated by Agence France-Presse, showed two policemen standing by the side of the stationary car, with one pointing a weapon at the driver. A voice is heard saying: ‘You are going to get a bullet in the head.’ The police officer then appears to fire as the car abruptly drives off.”

Over a two-day period, French authorities said that 180 people were arrested on June 28-29 as people engaged in peaceful marches along with violent attacks on commercial and

government buildings. Dozens of cars were set alight in protests against the racist violence emanating from the police.

French **President Emmanuel Macron** came out publicly saying the police shooting of Nahel was unacceptable. However, when the oppressed communities engaged in violent protest, the neo-liberal president said that the spontaneous response of the masses was unjustified prompting the deployment of 40,000 law-enforcement personnel to quell the unrest.

Although the French political leadership has attempted to distance itself from the police killing of Nahel, this is not the first time where the brutality and misconduct of law-enforcement has resulted in serious injury and death. Just recently in the early months of 2023, when French trade unions and students went out on a series of general strikes in opposition to the pension reforms which raised the age levels and work requirements for retirement payments, there were several hundreds reports of excessive uses of force by the police to quell demonstrations.

In [an article published by the New York Times](#) on June 29, it states that:

“Police stations were vandalized or targeted with fireworks in cities including Trappes, near Paris, and Rouen, in the north. In Clamart, a Paris suburb, a tramway was briefly set ablaze. About 40,000 officers will be deployed across France on Thursday (June 29) evening to contain further unrest, the interior minister said, a significant increase over the 9,000 deployed on Wednesday night.”

Nahel Represents Millions of Oppressed People in France and Around the World

There has been very minimal information released by the corporate and government-controlled media outlets in France, Britain and the United States as it relates to the ethnicity and race of the latest victim of police brutality in Paris. This reluctance to report on racially charged incidents involving law-enforcement points to the volatile social situations prevailing in the capitalist states in Europe and North America. The ruling class and state officials are well aware of the ongoing economic exploitation and national oppression which undergird the capitalist and imperialist system.

Obviously, the investigative reporting on these issues of bias within policing would not be in the interest of racist capitalist states since it exposes the inherent contradictions in the political system. The only real alternatives would be to either provide a rationale for the continuance of the same system or demand its dismantling.

In death as in life, the victims of state and racist vigilante violence are denied their humanity while being presumed guilty of offenses which ostensibly brought about their own demise. Police always attempt to justify their murderous behavior under the guise that they felt threatened by people of color. This narrative coincides with how African and Arab peoples are treated within French society. Despite the presence of several million people who have African and West Asian ancestry, they have not been accepted fully into the mainstream of the body politic and are therefore susceptible to discrimination.

According to the same above-mentioned article published by the New York Times and other sources:

“Nahel, 17, was a French citizen of Algerian and Moroccan descent. He was an only child being raised by his mother in Nanterre, a working-class suburb 15 minutes by commuter train from central Paris. His grandmother told a French journalist that he had dreamed of being a mechanic. ‘He was kind,’ she said. ‘He was a nice boy.’ He played on a local rugby team that was part of a French association, Ovale Citoyen. A lawyer representing his family told the French television program “C à Vous” that he had no criminal record. But Pascal Prache, the top prosecutor in Nanterre, said that the teenager had been known to the police for not complying with traffic stops and had been summoned to juvenile court in September for such an incident. Nahel M. was driving a yellow Mercedes AMG on Tuesday morning. Mr. Prache told a news conference on Thursday (29) that a search of the car did not find any ‘dangerous’ material or illegal drugs.”

Not an Isolated Incident

France has been the scene of widespread demonstrations and rebellions going back to 2005 when various suburbs across the country witnessed unrest sparked by police killings of Black and other people of color. In 2005, the then French Interior Minister Nicholas Sarkozy described the demonstrators as “social scum.”

Sarkozy was later elected president of France becoming a major proponent of the destruction of the North African state of Libya in 2011. The former president was later indicted and convicted in a corruption scandal. Nonetheless, Sarkozy was not sent to prison and given a suspended sentence for his crimes against the French state.

Today, President Macron is desperately seeking to reassert French imperialist influence in various geopolitical regions of the world. In Africa, the anti-French sentiment throughout the Sahel and other areas is palpable. Macron last year announced the liquidation of Operation Barkhane which was a counterpart to the U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM). However, French military and economic interests remain on the continent of Africa.

France has gone along with the defeatist proxy war led by Washington in Ukraine against the Russian Federation. Long term economic relations with the Russian Federation have been jeopardized by the sanctions imposed on Moscow which is partially responsible for the rising rates of inflation and credit tightening by the European Central Bank.

Workers and oppressed people in France are being forced to give up even more social benefits and freedoms. This pattern is spreading rapidly throughout the European continent and the United Kingdom which has also been struck by industrial actions and racial problems.

Although the officer in France who fired the shots that killed Nahel has been placed under investigation for homicide, these actions by the state do not address the fundamental issues of racism, class exploitation and police violence which are embedded in the governmental policies of the country. The thousands who marched in Paris on June 29 are demanding immediate reforms in policing culture. If these measures are not implemented there will more mass demonstrations and rebellions in France and other geopolitical regions throughout the globe.

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