

Death of Nahel Merzouk: Who sows violence?

written by Nancy Luc Skaille
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The brutal behavior of the French police only fuels the anger of the population.

July 3 - French President Emmanuel Macron canceled his state visit to Germany over the weekend because of one of the biggest crises of his tenure. Clashes between the population, which is tired of the ongoing police violence, and the 45,000

police officers who have been dispatched have shaped events since Tuesday after 17-year-old Nahel Merzouk was [shot dead at close range](#) by motorcycle policeman and ex-soldier Florian M. during a vehicle check in Nanterre. However, the reasons for the anger that broke out on these summer nights lie much deeper than the misconduct of a single police officer.

Hundreds of buildings – police stations, tax offices, town halls, schools, etc. – and thousands of vehicles burned. The rebellion spread across the country over the weekend and as far as Brussels, Belgium. The discourse of an “inexcusable act” that the state leadership is trying to create seems unbelievable because the past few months have been marked by excesses by the emergency services. The gunman M., who has since been arrested, pleaded self-defense until his lie was exposed.

Alongside social and racial segregation, police violence remains a problem that has never been seriously addressed, particularly in the outskirts of large cities. Unemployment and social cuts lead to weariness in the “banlieues” [impoverished suburbs], which is now turning into violence.

After just four nights, the authorities reported more than 2,000 arrests – as many as during the entire five-week uprising of 2005. At that time, the rebellions were triggered by the police-inflicted deaths of two youths in Clichy-sous-Bois. Meanwhile, the “anti-separatism law” of 2021 and a normalized state of emergency serve as the basis of police-state policy.

Since the relaxation of firearms legislation under Social Democrat François Hollande in 2017, deaths by police have skyrocketed, particularly during vehicle stops. At the time, Michel Tubiana of the LDH Human Rights League called the amendment a “license to kill.”

The UN has already condemned France’s authoritarian doctrine of order three times since May. According to official information, the deadly shot in Nanterre was the

third fatal use of firearms by the emergency services since the beginning of the year. But the number of unreported cases is higher.

On June 14, patrol officers shot dead 19-year-old Guinean Alhoussein Camara during a vehicle stop in Angoulême. And the most recent riots are also claiming fatalities: A 54-year-old died on Thursday near Cayenne in French Guiana from a “ricochet.” That same evening, near Rouen, a youth fell to his death from the roof of a supermarket. A young man has been in mortal danger since Friday because of the use of firearms by the special unit RAID in Mont-Saint-Martin.

As in the previous crises of the Macron regime, from the “yellow vests” to the “pension reform” protests to the now-banned environmental campaign “Uprisings of the Earth,” state violence was preferred to dialogue. Typical of this are Macron’s trips around the country. For his visit to the violence-plagued Marseille suburb of Busserine on Monday last week, special units cordoned off the district and prohibited residents from leaving the blocks of flats.

Macron only tolerates cheers. In France, the police protect the state, not the population.

Translated by Melinda Butterfield

Source: [*Junge Welt*](#)

