Outrage grows as fund for French police officer who killed Nahel M tops $1 million
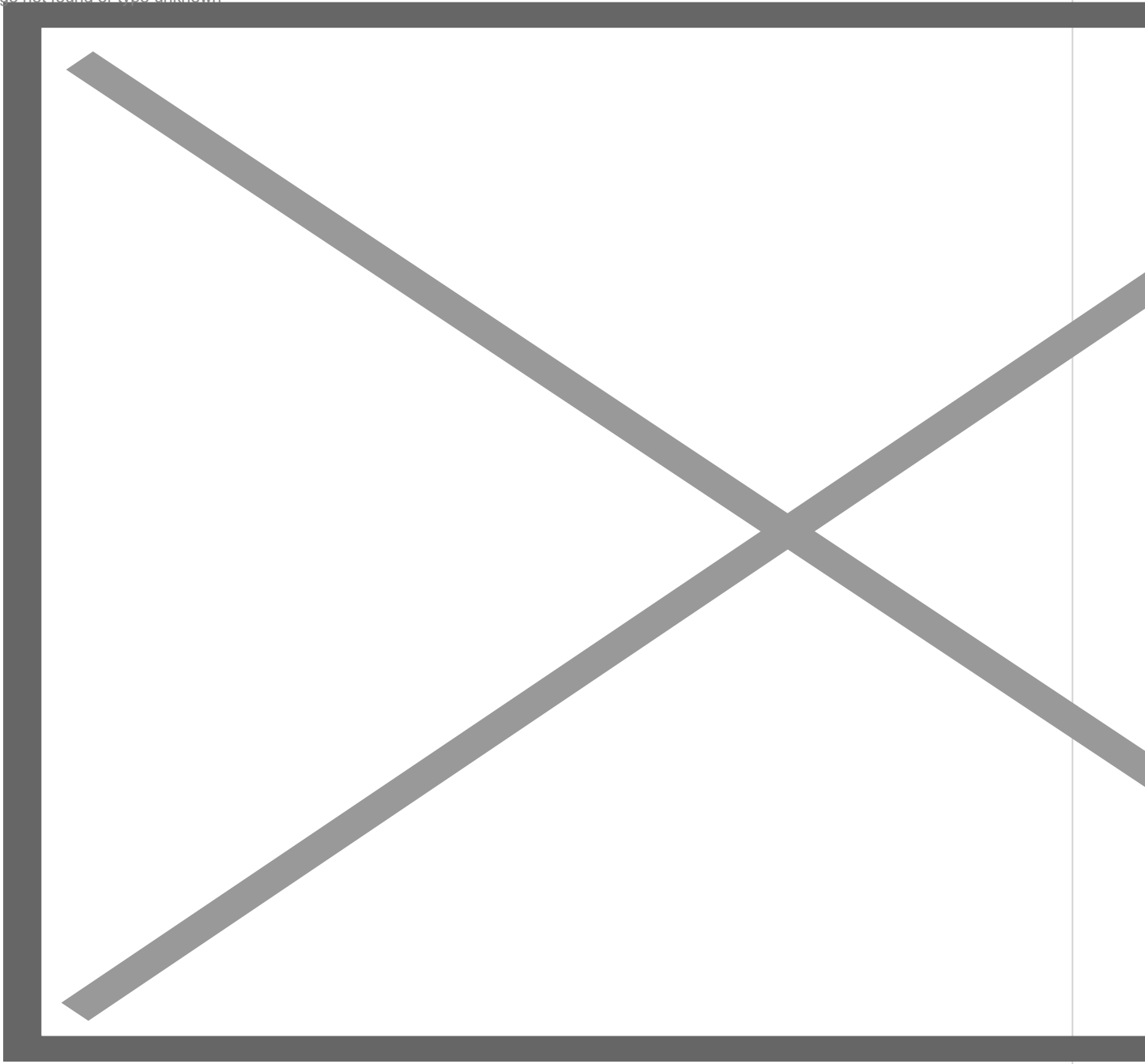
Outrage swells on social media as fund for accused police officer grows, with calls on GoFundMe to close the pot.

Paris, July 4 (RHC)-- A collection for the French policeman who sparked nationwide riots by killing a teenager during a traffic stop has been growing, prompting outrage among politicians and activists.

Set up by Jean Messiha, a former adviser to the French far-right politician Marine Le Pen, the appeal on GoFundMe had raised 963,000 euros ($1.05 million) at the time of this report on Monday.

On June 27, the accused officer was filmed shooting into a car being driven by Nahel M, a 17-year-old of North African descent. The shot killed the teenager and has led to days of unrest across France, as anger rages over the incident.

Nahel's grandmother, Nadia, was recently asked about the crowdfunding campaign, and she replied: "My heart aches."

The boy's death has renewed debates on France's long and troubled history with its ethnic minority populations, and allegations of police brutality.

Eric Bothorel, from the En Marche party of President Emmanuel Macron, wrote on Twitter: "Jean Messiha blows on the embers. It is a generator of riots. The pot of several hundred thousand euros for the police officer indicted in the homicide of young Nahel is indecent and scandalous."

Olivier Faure, head of the Socialist Party, called on GoFundMe to close the fundraiser, accusing the platform of "hosting a pot of shame." Some called out the hypocrisy of the pot still taking donations.

In 2019, the fund for a former boxer who had punched several police officers during "yellow vest" anti-government demonstrations in 2019 was quickly closed down.

Left-wing politician David Guiraud wrote on Twitter: "The assumed message is kill Arabs, and you will become millionaires, and the government watches this horror pass without saying anything when it had closed the yellow vest pot in 2 days who hit a policeman. Repugnant."

The French activist group Sleeping Giants tweeted the "sheer existence" of the fund "inflames the sentiment of injustice and furthers tensions."

Amid the riots, which often feature vandalism and see protesters clash with police, France has been deploying 45,000 officers onto the streets each night to quell unrest in cities including Paris, Strasbourg, Marseille and Nice.

On Monday, demonstrations began at French town halls opposing the riots, during which violence and looting has also been reported. Called a "mobilisation of citizens for a return to republican order", the anti-riot rallies came after the home of the mayor of a Paris suburb was rammed with a flaming car.

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