

# *French burn fewer cars on New Year's Eve due to pandemic*

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Paris, January 1 (RHC)-- Hundreds of empty, parked cars go up in flames in France each New Year's Eve, set afire by young revellers, a much-lamented tradition that appeared in decline this year, which saw only 874 vehicles burned.

The number of cars burned overnight has declined compared with New Year's Eve in 2019 when 1,316 vehicles went up in flames, Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin tweeted on Saturday. Fewer arson attacks occurred because of an enormous police presence on city streets this New Year's Eve, enforcing law and order and restrictions on public gatherings and wearing face masks as infections driven by the fast-spreading Omicron variant surge, he said.

There is no information on burned cars last year because of a nationwide lockdown in 2020 during the coronavirus pandemic. Like many countries, France sees cars set on fire during the year for many

reasons, including gangs hiding clues of their crimes and people making false insurance claims.

But car-torching took a new step in France when it became a way to mark the arrival of the New Year. The practice reportedly began in earnest among youths – often in poor neighbourhoods – in the 1990s in the region around Strasbourg in eastern France.

It also became a voice of protest during the fiery unrest by despairing youths from housing projects that swept France in the fall of 2005. At the time, police counted 8,810 vehicles burned in less than three weeks.

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