

France rocked by third night of riots over police killing of Algerian teenager

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Paris, June 30 (RHC)-- Major cities in France experienced a third night of rioting as President Emmanuel Macron fought to contain growing public anger triggered by the police killing of a 17-year-old teenager of Algerian and Moroccan descent during a traffic stop.

National police said on Thursday night that its forces faced new incidents in the cities of Marseille, Lyon, Pau, Toulouse and Lille including fires and protesters hurling fireworks, as some 40,000 police officers deployed across the country to contain the unrest in the wake of the killing of 17-year-old Nahel M, who was shot dead on Tuesday.

In Nanterre, the western suburb of Paris where the teenager was killed, protesters torched cars, barricaded streets and hurled projectiles at police following a peaceful vigil. Protesters scrawled “Vengeance for Nahel” across buildings and bus shelters and, as night fell, a bank was set on fire before firefighters put it out and stopped flames from spreading to an apartment building above. No one was reported to be hurt.

In central Paris, a Nike shoe store was ransacked and windows were smashed along the Rue de Rivoli shopping street, Paris police said. Local authorities in Clamart, 8 km (5 miles) from central Paris, imposed a nighttime curfew until Monday, and Valerie Pécresse, who heads the greater Paris region, said all bus and tram services would be halted after 9 pm (19:00 GMT) local time after some were set alight on Wednesday night.

Fire damaged the town hall in the Paris suburb of L’Ile-Saint-Denis, not far from the country’s national stadium and the headquarters of the Paris 2024 Olympics.

In Marseille, France’s second city, police fired tear gas grenades during clashes with youths in the tourist hotspot of Le Vieux Port, the city’s main paper La Provence reported. Special police units were deployed in Lille, Lyon and Bordeaux, and in Grenoble, a bus was pelted with firecrackers and the employees of the local transport company stopped work.

Belgian media showed images of a burning car and police officers in riot gear. The Belgian news agency Belga reported that tensions were especially high around Brussels’ central Anneessens district.

The mass unrest in France has revived memories of riots in 2005 that convulsed the country for three weeks and forced then-President Jacques Chirac to declare a state of emergency. More than 6,000 people were arrested at that time.

That wave of violence erupted in the Paris suburb of Clichy-sous-Bois and spread across the country following the death of two young people electrocuted in a power substation as they hid from police. Two police officers were acquitted in a trial 10 years later.

The shooting of the teenager and the days of clashes between police and protesters has brought longstanding complaints in France of police violence and systemic racism inside law enforcement agencies to the fore, particularly the in low-income, racially mixed suburbs that ring major cities in France.

Karima Khartim, a local councillor in Blanc Mesnil northeast of Paris, said people’s patience was running thin. “We’ve experienced this injustice many times before,” she said.

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