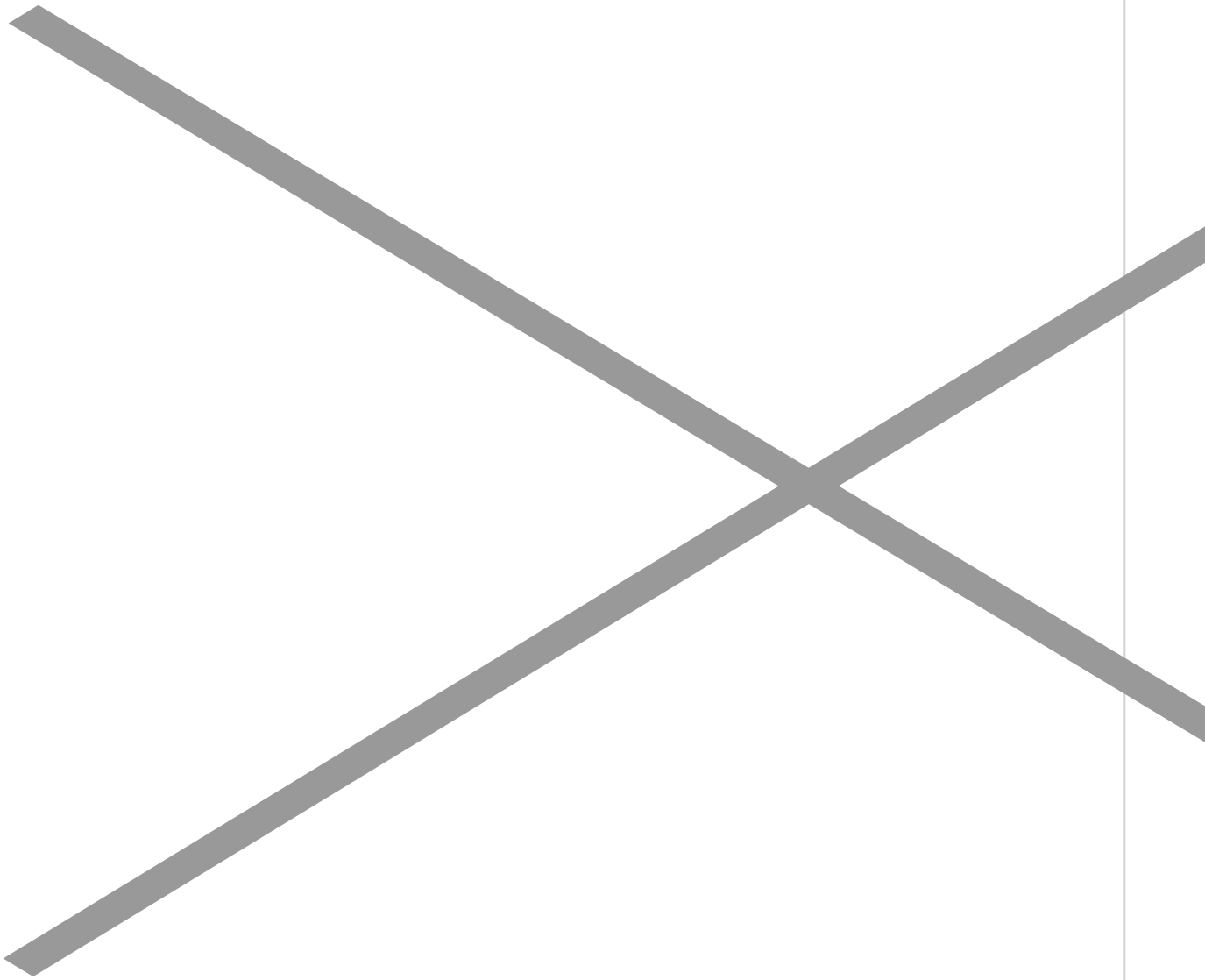


Syria condemns French killing of teenager, exposing false claims of equality

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French police stand in position during clashes with protesters, following the death of Nahel M, a 17-year-old teenager killed by a French police officer during a traffic stop, in Nanterre, Paris suburb, France, on June 30, 2023. (Photo by Reuters)

Damascus, July 2 (RHC)-- Syria has condemned in the strongest terms the fatal shooting of a teenager of Algerian and Moroccan descent by French police, stating that the incident exposed the hollow nature of claims by French authorities about equality and fight against racial discrimination.

The Syrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates, in a statement released on Saturday, denounced the “cold-blooded and intentional” murder of 17-year-old Nahel M on June 27 in the western Parisian suburb of Nanterre.

“Syria joins those who advocate an end to the racist behaviors of French officials, which mainly target members of other communities,” the statement said. “This crime reflects the racist and colonialist mentality of French authorities, and repudiates the French government’s claims about equality and combat against discrimination.”

According to Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin, France deployed 45,000 police officers nationwide, backed by light armored vehicles, on Friday to quell the fourth night of nationwide protests. Public display of anger was also on in the cities of Lyon, Marseille and Grenoble with bands of youth setting fires and pelting officers with projectiles.

France’s Interior Ministry announced on Twitter that 1,311 people had been arrested overnight, compared with 875 the previous night, although it said the violence was “lower in intensity.”

President Emmanuel Macron said more officers would be deployed to contain the violence, but stopped short of declaring a state of emergency. He urged parents to keep rioting children at home and social media platforms to remove certain content.

Nahel M was shot at point-blank range after refusing to stop for a traffic check and died after emergency services arrived at the scene. A video, shared online, showed two police officers trying to stop the vehicle and one pointing his weapon at the driver.

The police officer responsible for the shooting has been detained and is facing charges of voluntary homicide.

“It happens again and again and again in France. Police kill our children and our men – we, people of color,” she said. “So we have young men – Nahel was a teenager. ... He’s French, but if we look at his origins or ethnicity, he’s also North African, and that’s why he’s been shot by the police,” Ja-Rachedi said.

The incident has fed longstanding complaints of police violence and systemic racism inside law enforcement agencies, and stirred resentment within the low-income, racially mixed suburbs around major cities in France.

At a march in Nanterre in memory of Nahel, participants demonstrated against what they lambasted as a culture of police impunity and a failure to reform law enforcement in a country that has experienced waves of rioting and protests over police conduct. The violent disturbances have revived memories of protests in 2005 that broke out across France for three weeks, and forced then President Jacques Chirac to declare a state of emergency.

Tuesday’s killing was the third fatal shooting during traffic stops in France so far in 2023, down from a record 13 last year, a spokesperson for the national police said.

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