



Riots, Fires Rock France After Police Shooting of Young Man

France appears to be having its George Floyd moment.

The violence rocking Paris and other metropolitan areas of France continues unabated after the police shot and killed a 17-year-old delinquent named Nahel. For Americans, events in France are eerily reminiscent of the George Floyd riots. Like George Floyd, for example, young Nahel, who was awaiting an appearance in juvenile court for other crimes, was no innocent victim. He was driving a yellow Mercedes with two passengers when police pulled him over in western Paris' affluent Nanterre prefecture. Instead of complying with police orders, Nahel decided to drive away, whereupon police, worried that a high-speed chase would cause an accident, opened fire, killing the young man.



AP Images
Cars burning in Paris suburb of Nanterre

Video of the event clearly shows the car suddenly driving away from two policemen into heavy traffic, yet popular reaction was swift and, as is always the case with the mob, irrational. Wednesday night, massive violent demonstrations erupted across Paris and many other French towns and cities. Many cars were torched, and police stations, town halls, and schools in many areas were set ablaze.

Also similar to the George Floyd case, the policeman accused of taking Nahel's life has already been accused of acting illegally. And to top it off, a [CNN report](#) on the story even unironically characterized a huge demonstration on Thursday as "mostly peaceful," while acknowledging that "there was some violence on the edges."

Not since 2005 has France seen race riots on this scale. The French government is deploying tens of thousands of police, including 5,000 in Paris alone, to try to quell the unrest and avoid the downhill spiral that led to a national state of emergency in 2005. Meanwhile, the grievances being voiced by the "mostly peaceful" rioters and arsonists have a familiar ring: Everything is the fault of police brutality, the targeting of "people of color," and systemic racism preventing people of African and Arabic ancestry in France from getting ahead.



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