

# We refuse to comply with your racist and misogynist system

## Statement against the French Republic's violence

"We're gonna put a bullet in your [head](#)." These were the last words that Nahel Merzouk heard before the French police shot him in Nanterre on Tuesday, 27 June. Nahel was 17 years old. He is the fifth victim of the French police this year, based on the so-called "refusal to comply." Like [Alhoussein](#), 19 years old, shot by the police in Angoulême, two weeks before, Nahel was killed because he tried to save his life. "And this is not tolerable, right. That a racialised man cares for his life, defends his life, fights for it, it is not tolerated." Those words, written by [Kaoutar Harchi](#) just after Nahel's murder, amplify the racist, gendered, and classist violence that Black and Brown people suffer in France. Since 2017, the number of people killed following what the law defines as a "refusal to comply" (*Refus d'obtempérer*) have increased fivefold. In 2017, François Hollande's government decided to [change](#) the law on the use of firearms by the police. To the already broad notion of "legitimate defense" was added another protection to police officers in their use of firearms: the extremely fatal notion of "refusal to comply." Killed because they refused the system, because they feared an institution that never protects them but that systematically criminalises them and towards whom all means should be used: "We're gonna put a bullet in your head". And they did. "Shoot him." And they did.

But Nahel's killing was filmed. It was documented. Sounds and images. This time, the police can not fabricate their own narrative. They are not the ones writing the facts. They can not twist and invent them. There is direct proof of what really happened. If Nahel's voice will never be heard, who is responsible for his killing will be loudly repeated and stated. For all those who have been silenced forever, for all those killed in the dark and without witnesses, like Alhoussein, the images and sounds of Nahel's killing are the ultimate proof of what families, movements, networks, and friends of those killed by the French police have been denouncing for years: the systematic harassment, racial profiling, violence, and killing of racialised people especially in working-class [neighborhoods](#) by the French institutions and their agents.

This same violence towards those proclaimed by the French police unions as "nuisance species" (*nuisibles*) has been expressed in Mayotte since the beginning of the Wuambushu's [operation](#). Revealed by [newspapers](#) in February, Wuambushu is an extremely large-scale operation coordinated between the French police and military to fight "informal housing, illegal foreigners and crime." The accelerated deployment of police agents and soldiers aimed to achieve 400 expulsions a day of those considered by the French government since 1974 as non-nationals, and the daily destruction of 10 per cent of "informal housing" on the island, still colonised by France. From Mayotte to Nanterre, the same colonial and racist violence is exercised by the French [government](#).

*A permit to kill and to harm.* The Republic of France created categories of people that can be harassed, harmed, and killed every day. In the peripheries of all French cities, at its national [borders](#), in the slums of [Mayotte](#), and everywhere on what France claims as its territory, and even beyond, the French Republic continues to reinforce and develop politics and operations that devalue the lives of racialised people—to the point of being considered *killable* and expandable. Lives that can be sacrificed in the name of a white, colonial, elitist, patriarchal, ageist, and ableist “public order”.

But their lives matter! Up to 20 000 people gathered around Nahel's mother in Nanterre on [Thursday](#), June 29, screaming those words: “No Justice, No Peace.” (To scream three times, then listen to the testimony of a grieving parent). To the anger and pain of the people, the police replied with tear-gas and even more violence. To the demands of Justice and reparation, the French president responded with the “responsibility of the [parents](#)” to keep their [children](#) at home and that people should react with “calm and respect” towards the institutions. From this statement, it becomes clear how the state wants to outsource its ‘responsibility’ to control and surveil young people to the parents of the nuclear family; so that if the parents do not do “their job” properly, the state has the right to punish and even kill the children.

To stop the wave of revolt that is expressed in different parts of the country, the government sent more police forces to [silence](#) and suppress every popular movement. Curfews were [implemented](#), people expressing their anger were systematically [arrested](#), and prison sentences with detention warrants were almost always required by the [prosecutors](#). From Mayotte to Nanterre to Marseille, the judicial system is used to [blame](#) and criminalise the people suffering state violence for speaking loudly and trying to be heard.

In the meantime, an online fundraising campaign in support of the murderer of young Nahel has raised over one million euros; neo-fascist groups all around the country are calling for the creation of citizens' defense militias. On Sunday July 2, on the streets of Lyon, a thousand people armed with iron sticks gathered in front of the Town Hall screaming racist slogans such as “France for French people.” The tolerant reaction of the French police reveals what according to the French government represents the real danger and must be treated as such.

As abolitionist feminists, we stand in solidarity with those defying and resisting state racism and classism, the carceral and prison violences, and the transnational border regime. To those who want to divide us and defeat our struggles, we reply that our resistance is collective. No one's life is less valuable and we won't stop fighting until the last border, the last wall, the last cage has fallen.

There is no justice, there's just us!

—Feminist Autonomous Centre for research