

French cops shoot two dead on same day amid wave of police violence

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The headline “Refus d’obtempérer” [Refusal to comply] followed by the number of people killed in a police shooting has appeared over and over in French newspapers and TV news since Macron’s re-election on April 24. This intensifying campaign of police violence reached a peak on Wednesday, with two more victims killed in separate police shootings during traffic stops.

The first of the two newest incidents took place in the early hours of Wednesday morning in Rennes. In a traffic stop, a police officer fired a single shot into a Peugeot 208 driven by a 26-year-old man. The driver was struck in the arm, but the bullet ricocheted and fatally wounded his 22-year-old girlfriend, who died an hour later.

According to the official police account, the driver had initially complied with the traffic stop, but then started to pull away causing the police officer shoot, allegedly in self-defense.

Police claimed that the man was a suspect for drug trafficking and was someone they had been tracking for weeks. Officers retrieved a bag with 111 grams of cocaine near the scene. One officer testified that he had seen the bag thrown out of the vehicle before it came to its initial stop. No witnesses have been able to corroborate the police account of events so far.

The second incident took place on the boulevard Henri-Matisse in Nice at 4:30 on Wednesday afternoon. After witnessing a car performing “zigzags,” a road safety brigade chased the vehicle, which was eventually stuck. The vehicle then turned around and was blocked by a police car. One of the officers in the police car then came out into the road and fired a single shot through the driver’s side window, which instantly killed the man.

Following the incident, Laurent Martin de Frémont,

secretary of the SGP police union, made a statement defending the officer involved: ‘My colleague realized that if he didn’t fire, his teammate would die and fall under the wheels of this crazy vehicle, and rightly decided to use his service weapon. Our colleagues defended themselves, they were attacked. It was genuine self-defense, the investigation will clarify this.’

In fact, an investigation was not needed to clarify what had taken place. When De Frémont gave the statement, he was seemingly unaware that bystanders had recorded the incident showing that the shooting was in fact not an act of self-defense. The graphic footage of the incident showed that, contrary to the police account, the driver was reversing away from the officer and his colleague. It clearly demonstrates that neither officer’s life was under threat during the driver’s maneuver. Nonetheless, the driver was shot dead.

Me Guez Guez, the lawyer for the victim’s family, said that the video showed “there was no danger of death that justified shooting the man... It is obvious that this is a homicide, there is no discussion about that.’

Discussing the video of the incident on RMC, Arié Alimi, a lawyer and member of the League of Human Rights, stated, ‘It is a summary execution, there was no situation of danger for the police officer.’

The two most recent shootings come in the aftermath of interior minister Gérald Darmanin’s fascist pledge to support police officers “a priori” in such cases. In every case, including the two most recent, officers have claimed they were forced to shoot “in self-defense.” However, as in Nice, following May’s shooting at the Porte du Clignancourt in Paris, multiple witnesses contested the official account of that shooting, insisting that the vehicle did not move toward police before

officers fired eight rounds at its inhabitants, which killed a 21-year-old woman in the passenger seat.

So far, no witnesses have publicly come forward to corroborate or contradict the police accounts of the deaths of two people in Paris on the night of Macron's election victory, two young men in Venissieux on August 19, nor Wednesday's shooting in Rennes.

Since Macron's re-election, five "refusal to comply" incidents in as many months have led to the brutal deaths of nine people at the hands of French police. None of these people had been convicted or charged with any crime when the police acted as judge, jury, and executioner to prematurely end their lives. Despite clear evidence contradicting the official accounts in two of the five incidents, no officer has been charged with any crime.

As has been the case with the other investigations following such shootings, the latest incidents will be investigated by an oversight body which is part of the interior ministry and thus under the control of Darmanin himself, who, as mentioned above, regularly assures police they will face no consequence for deadly actions against the population.

For all their brutality, these deaths are not "senseless" acts of violence, but the product of a mortal crisis of capitalism in France and internationally. After Macron's proclamation of the "end of abundance"—a euphemism for imposing massive price hikes for food and energy that will devastate living standards and provoke mass protests amid the NATO war on Russia—the Interior Minister is giving a blank check for police violence.

As the WSWS has explained in its analysis of the August 19 shooting of two young men by the police in Lyon, the French capitalist class is stoking a culture of gratuitous violence among police to prepare for violent crackdowns against mass struggles emerging across Europe as a result of the intensifying economic, health, and war crises. One aspect of this is massive increases in police numbers across France, including in Lyon and Marseilles. Another is official assurances given to police that they can shoot to kill with impunity.



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