

COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION  
OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

**Statement 3 (2023)**

**Prevention of Racial Discrimination, including Early Warning  
and Urgent Action Procedures**

**France**

*The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination,*

*Acting under its Early Warning and Urgent Action Procedures;*

*Alarmed by the killing of Nahel M., a 17-year-old of North African descent, by a police officer in France on 27 June 2023;*

*Deeply concerned by the continuing practice of racial profiling combined with the excessive use of force by law enforcement officials, in particular the police, against members of minority groups, particularly people of African and Arab descent, which frequently results in disproportionately recurrent killings with near impunity<sup>1</sup>;*

*Deeply concerned also that the practice of racial profiling of members of minority groups, which takes the forms of excessive identity checks, discriminatory stops, and the use of racist language by law enforcement officials, creates a climate of continued tension between law enforcement and these groups;*

*Concerned that structural discrimination in law enforcement, in particular in the police, and the racial disparities against people of African and Arab descent, are perpetuated and reinforced notably in the enjoyment of the right to equal treatment before the tribunals, security of person, and other rights enshrined in the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination;*

*Deploring the looting and destruction of private and public property as well as reports of mass arrests and detention of protesters;*

*Welcoming the launch of an investigation into the circumstances that led to the death of Nahel M.;*

*Recalling its concluding observations of 29 November 2022 ([CERD/C/FRA/CO/22-23](#), paras. 23-26) on France, in which the Committee raised concerns about racial profiling and the excessive use of force by law enforcement officials against members of minority groups;*

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<sup>1</sup> See [CERD/C/FRA/CO/22-23](#), paras 25 and 26.

*Recalling* its general recommendations No. 36 (2020) on preventing and combating racial profiling by law enforcement officials; No. 35 (2013) on combatting racist hate speech; No. 31 (2005) on the prevention of racial discrimination in the administration and functioning of the criminal justice system; and No.13 (1993) on the training of law enforcement officials in the protection of human rights; and

*Reaffirming* the rights to peaceful assembly, expression and opinion:

1. **Calls upon** France to fully respect its international obligations, in particular those arising from the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, to which it is a party;
2. **Reiterates its recommendation** to the authorities to address as a matter of priority the structural and systemic causes of racial discrimination including in law enforcement, in particular in the police;
3. **Urges** France to promptly ensure that the investigation into the circumstances that led to the death of Nahel M. is thorough and impartial, to prosecute the alleged perpetrators and, if convicted, to sanction them in a manner commensurate with the gravity of the crime;
4. **Calls upon** France to adopt legislation that defines and prohibits racial profiling and to develop clear guidelines for law enforcement officials, particularly the police, that prohibit racial profiling in police operations and discriminatory identity checks and other racist behavior;
5. **Urges** France to review its legislative framework regulating the use of lethal force by law enforcement officials to ensure full compliance with international human rights law and standards;
6. **Urges** France to respect the principles of legality, necessity, proportionality and non-discrimination while countering mass protests and demonstrations, and ensure that all allegations of excessive use of force by law enforcement officials in the context of the ongoing protests are investigated, including through independent oversight bodies to ensure accountability;
7. **Calls upon** France to take immediate and appropriate reforms aimed at eliminating structural discrimination in the criminal justice system, ensuring the rights of victims of racially motivated crimes, promoting ethnic diversity within the police, and thus promoting understanding between the police and the general population, in particular minority groups;
8. **Calls upon** France to introduce continuous training to law enforcement officials, particularly on de-escalation techniques and on relevant international standards such as the Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials, the United Nations Human Rights Guidance on Less Lethal Weapons in Law Enforcement and the Basic Principles on the

Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials, and the Convention itself;  
and

9. **Calls upon** the people of France to claim and exercise their human rights peacefully and with due respect to the values enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

7 July 2023