# Violence in New Caledonia prompts French President Macron to convene special council meeting



In the French Pacific territory of New Caledonia, escalating violence has left at least three people dead and three seriously injured, prompting French President Emmanuel Macron to convene a special defense and security council meeting with top ministers on May 15, 2024. The violence, which has persisted for three days, centers around a contentious constitutional reform proposed by Paris to update voter rolls, enabling residents who have lived in New Caledonia for at least ten years to vote in provincial elections.

The unrest has led to over 130 arrests, ongoing clashes despite curfews, and the closure of schools and the main airport, La Tontoura. High Commissioner Louis Le Franc highlighted the severity of the situation, warning of further potential casualties if calm is not restored.

French authorities deployed additional police reinforcements, including four mobile gendarmerie squadrons and an elite intervention unit. President Macron canceled a planned trip to northwest France to focus on the crisis, emphasizing the need for calm and condemning the violence.

Meanwhile, the National Assembly in Paris adopted the constitutional revision with a significant majority, a move condemned by pro-independence representatives. Tension between the indigenous Kanak population seeking independence and descendants of European colonizers favoring continued French rule has long been a source of conflict in the region. Historical referendums from 2018 to 2021 saw a majority opt to remain part of France, although the results were disputed by pro-independence groups, particularly during the last referendum held amid the COVID-19 pandemic.