# French Government Deploys Thousands of Forces to Quell Riots in New Caledonia Amid Voting Rules Controversy



**New Caledonia Experiences Intense Riots: French Government Responds**

**New Caledonia, May 17, 2024**—New Caledonia, a French Pacific territory, has faced five days of violent riots, leading to the deaths of five individuals, including two police officers and three indigenous residents. The unrest erupted on Monday following legislative changes in Paris regarding voting rules that residents viewed as undermining the indigenous Kanak population.

The riots have resulted in over 200 arrests, hundreds of injuries, and the destruction of buildings and vehicles. To regain control, the French government has deployed nearly 3,000 police officers and gendarmes to the capital, Noumea, and imposed a state of emergency. High Commissioner Louis Le Franc announced a curfew from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. and emphasized penalties for curfew violations, which could include up to six months in prison and fines.

The legislation at the center of the unrest would allow French residents who have lived in New Caledonia for ten years to vote in provincial elections. This has stoked fears among the Kanak community, which comprises about 41% of the population, that their influence would be diluted. The French government aims to pass the constitutional changes by the end of June unless a new agreement is reached with local politicians.

Historically, New Caledonia has experienced tensions between the pro-independence Kanaks and those favoring continued ties with France. This week's violence is reminiscent of past conflicts, notably a civil war in the 1980s. Amid escalating tensions, France has also restricted social media platforms to curb the organization of protests.

This deployment marks a substantial escalation and reflects the broader geopolitical concerns, including fears of increasing Chinese influence in the Pacific region. Officials have called for severe penalties for those involved in the unrest, while leaders of the Kanak community in Paris have expressed sorrow over the violence and loss of life.

As the situation progresses, French authorities and local leaders continue to navigate a complex landscape of historical grievances and contemporary geopolitical strategies.