

**EXTERNAL**

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**FRANCE: THE ALLEGED POLICE ASSAULT ON JACQUES CHERIGUI**

On 11 June 1992 Jacques Cherigui, a 48-year-old mechanic, was arrested by police officers at his flat in Argenteuil. In a statement to Amnesty International he described the violence used by the police during and after his arrest and complained of continuous racial abuse by officers. After 19 hours in detention he was released and charged with verbally insulting the police and resisting arrest. He will be tried on 5 October in the Chambre Correctionnel of the Tribunal in Pontoise.

At 4pm on 11 June five officers of the Police nationale called at Jacques Cherigui's flat. Before allowing them in he asked the police why they had come. They did not give a satisfactory answer and he therefore asked them to wait while he rang the local police station to find out. According to his statement, the officer in the police station was also unable to explain why they were at the flat. He finally opened the door to the police and inquired if they had the right to enter private property at will. He claimed that at this point one of the officers seized him and threw him face downwards on the floor; another officer knelt on his neck and another handcuffed him behind his back. They pushed him down four flights of stairs and threw him into a van. During the journey to the police station he was made to sit handcuffed, doubled up, with his head between his knees. A policeman balanced on his neck compressing his diaphragm so he could not breathe. According to Jacques Cherigui, this policeman remarked to the other that "Have you seen this? It's not bad. This trick calms them down very quickly. These wogs." (The word for wog in French - bougnoul - is a very insulting racial pejorative used most often against North Africans). Although Jacques Cherigui was born in metropolitan France of a French mother, his father had been born in Algeria which was then part of France. Eventually the policeman got up off Jacques Cherigui's neck allowing him to breathe. He was then punched hard in the stomach.

On arrival at the police station an inspector ordered that the handcuffs be taken off. They had been secured so tightly that areas of skin were removed and permanent nerve damage had been caused to his right hand. The officer who had sat on his neck in the van said "You ought to go back to your country, you filthy wog".

He was released after 19 hours in the station and went to obtain medical treatment for the cuts and bruises he had suffered. Photographs taken afterwards show injuries to his arms, thigh and wrists. A medical certificate, dated 12 June 1992, described injuries - mostly cuts and bruises to his right thigh, left calf, chest, shoulder, arms, neck and back.

Jacques Cherigui was charged with insulting the police by calling them "pieces of shit, filthy cops, etc.". He claimed that he only did this in the van after he had been assaulted and as part of a "survival instinct". He denied resisting arrest. He made a formal complaint against the police on 17 June and again on 30 June to the court in Pontoise alleging ill-treatment, consisting of blows and injuries. He was informed by telephone by a clerk in the court that both his complaints had been declared inadmissible. On 10 September he wrote to the court to ask them to give him the reason for their decision.

Jacques Cherigui claimed that no investigation was carried out into his complaint despite the medical evidence which is consistent with it.

