

NBC's *Today*

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[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Violent Protests Spread Across France]

SHEINELLE JONES: Now to the ongoing chaos that's sweeping across Europe. Hundreds of thousands taking part in weekend protests in France, fueled by the rising cost of living there, the country's worst unrest in years. Demonstrations spilling over to other countries as well. NBC's Raf Sanchez has that story. Raf, good morning.

RAF SANCHEZ: Sheinelle, good morning. This is some of the worst rioting France has seen in years. What started as peaceful protests over the rising cost of living, poor conditions in schools descending into widespread violence across the country. Authorities say they made around 2,500 arrests, while a thousand police and firefighters were injured in confrontations with mobs in Paris, Marseille, Calais, and other major cities. In central Paris, you saw groups of masked people attacking and looting stores. That includes major luxury brands like Lacoste and Louis Vuitton. But probably the most painful image is the one on your screen right now. This is the 19th-Century town hall in the city of Limoges. You see it going up in flames. This building survived two world wars, only to be burned down by rioters. Now, much of his public anger is aimed at President Emmanuel Macron. He's in his final year in office and is seen by many French people as out of touch. He's been criticized for attending a Celine Dion concert on Friday, the day before the rioting exploded. Macron did address the nation last night. He acknowledged higher prices, and he blamed that partly on the Iran war, but he said nothing could justify the violence we saw all across France, Sheinelle.

JONES: All right, Raf, thank you.