

FROM SPORT TO STRIFE

“AMSTERDAM” *pogrom*”





Overview

On November 7, 2024, significant clashes erupted in Amsterdam following the Europa League match between Israel's Maccabi Tel Aviv F.C. and the Netherlands' Ajax Amsterdam. The confrontations primarily involved Maccabi Tel Aviv supporters and local youth, especially from the North African, mainly Moroccan, Muslim community. Initial reports suggest that the violence was sparked by an incident involving a Palestinian flag, leading to injuries, property damage, and heightened diplomatic tensions between Israel and the Netherlands.





Key Developments

- **Initial Confrontation:**

Violence reportedly began when Maccabi Tel Aviv fans tore down a Palestinian flag in central Amsterdam, angering local Muslim youth, leading to physical altercations.

- **Escalation of Violence:**

Social media footage shows widespread confrontations as Maccabi Tel Aviv fans faced harassment and assault while departing the stadium and moving through central areas like Dam Square. Reports indicate vandalism, vehicle damage, and confrontations in popular public locations.

- **Injuries and Arrests:**

Preliminary reports suggest over a hundred Israelis have sustained injuries. Amsterdam police have detained 57 individuals on charges of public disorder and fireworks possession.



- **Diplomatic Response:** Israeli National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir has contacted the Dutch Interior Minister. Israel's National Security Council issued warnings to Israelis in Amsterdam to avoid public areas. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu arranged emergency evacuation flights for Israeli citizens.
- **Public Statements and Reactions:** Former Israeli PM Naftali Bennett condemned the events as "reminiscent of historical pogroms." Far-right Dutch politician Geert Wilders controversially called for the deportation of non-Europeans in response to the unrest. Some Israeli media sources have stirred tensions with calls for retaliation against Muslim and Arab communities.



Implications



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- **Heightened Ethno-Religious Tensions:** This event has amplified existing tensions between the Dutch public and the Moroccan Muslim community. Statements by Wilders risk intensifying xenophobic sentiments, potentially straining social cohesion in the Netherlands.
- **Security Concerns:** The Israeli government has reportedly sanctioned Mossad and Shin Bet agents to assist in securing Israeli nationals in Amsterdam. While intended to protect Israeli citizens, this move could strain Israel-Netherlands relations, with concerns about interference with local law enforcement.
- **Regional Impact and Media Coverage:** The incident has garnered significant media attention across Europe, with narratives polarized by political and ethnic perspectives. The incident is anticipated to shape EU discourse on migration, security, and social cohesion.



Recommendations

- **Enhanced Security Coordination for Israeli Nationals:** Israeli authorities should work with Dutch law enforcement to establish secure transit routes and accommodations for Israeli citizens until the situation stabilizes.
- **Community Engagement for De-escalation:** Dutch authorities are advised to engage local community leaders to mitigate ethnic tensions, promoting calm and preventing retaliatory incidents.
- **Social Media Monitoring for Incitement:** Close monitoring of social media is necessary to identify inflammatory rhetoric and preempt further escalation. This includes content in Dutch and Israeli channels calling for retaliatory acts.
- **Engagement with EU Diplomatic Channels:** To maintain positive relations with Dutch authorities, Israel should involve EU diplomatic bodies, ensuring alignment on security responses and upholding Dutch sovereignty.



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