News



Israeli Maccabi Tel Aviv supporters are guarded by police after violence targeting Israeli football fans broke out in Amsterdam overnight, in Amsterdam, Netherlands, Nov. 8, 2024. (OSV News/Ami Shooman, Israel Hayom, Reuters)

Luuk van den Einden

View Author Profile

OSV News

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. Learn more

Amsterdam — November 12, 2024
Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

The Dutch bishops' conference and Amsterdam's St. Nicholas Parish reacted with horror to the violence against Israeli soccer supporters in the city Nov. 7.

Both the bishops and the St. Nicholas parish community stressed that differences of opinion should never lead to violence.

"We are shocked by this," the Dutch bishops wrote in a statement released Nov. 8. "Any form of anti-Semitism and hatred of 'the other' is a grave sin against our Creator and does great injustice to our neighbor."

On Nov. 7, Israeli soccer club Maccabi Tel Aviv played a game against Ajax Amsterdam in the Dutch capital. Some 3,000 Israeli soccer fans had flown in for the occasion. Over the course of the day, however, the atmosphere became increasingly grim as pro-Palestinian rioters began attacking Israelis.

The attacks followed multiple social media videos showing Maccabi fans chanting anti-Arab slurs and praising Israeli military attacks in Gaza.

The Israeli Embassy in the Netherlands said that, after the soccer game, hundreds of Maccabi fans "were ambushed and brutally attacked," according to a post on X, formerly Twitter. The embassy also shared a video of the violence. Other videos circulating online seemed to show people being attacked and sometimes chased by people, some of whom chanting anti-Israel slogans.

After nightfall, the situation got out of hand. Several people were punched, harassed and kicked in the process. Five people were taken to the hospital with injuries. Police arrested over 60 suspects during the night.

Many of the Maccabi fans left home earlier on planes sent by the Israeli government specifically for the purpose. Typically, because of the Sabbath, Israeli airlines do not fly on Saturdays. Rabbis, however, gave special permission to do so.

Advertisement

Dutch Prime Minister Dick Schoof called the attacks "terrible" and "horrific."

"Our country must be a safe home for every human being, that differences in opinion or background must never lead to discrimination, oppression and certainly not to violence, verbal or physical," the Dutch bishops said. "Violence is not the solution. The solution lies in respect for the rights and inalienable dignity of every human person."

Amsterdam's St. Nicholas Parish said in its statement, "The Catholic community in Amsterdam has learned with horror and concern about the acts of violence in our city."

"Our prayers are for those who have been innocently victimized," the statement continued.

"We also pray that political and religious differences will not be fought with bloodshed, but that paths of peace and reconciliation may be pursued worldwide and in our own city."

The riots fell right on celebrations of the 750th anniversary of the foundation of Amsterdam; on Oct. 27, the jubilee year opened with Mass in St. Nicholas Basilica.

In its statement, St. Nicholas Parish, featuring the landmark basilica, regretted that the explosion of violence marred the anniversary year. Following the violence, the basilica also offered special prayers Nov. 9 for reconciliation and peace.