



*Summary of the report entitled:*  
**Between foreseen and unforeseen -  
policing in a complex reality**

**How the disturbances in Amsterdam on 7  
and 8 November 2024 were tackled: an  
insight into the preparations and  
response**

Report

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## Foreword

This report by the Inspectorate of Justice and Security examines the actions of the police and the National Coordinator for Counterterrorism and Security (NCTV) prior to and during the disturbances in Amsterdam on 7 and 8 November 2024. These incidents posed significant challenges when it came to maintaining public order and security in the city. The escalation of violence - including targeted attacks on people with a Jewish background or who were perceived to be Jewish, confrontations between various groups and the rapidly changing nature of events - highlighted the complexity of policing in difficult circumstances.

The title, *'Between foreseen and unforeseen - policing in a complex reality'*, is on the one hand a reflection of the need to prepare for expected scenarios but also to confront unexpected developments. Although the police had prepared thoroughly for the risks surrounding the Ajax-Maccabi Tel Aviv match and the events to commemorate the Night of Broken Glass (*Kristallnacht*), the situation unfolded quite differently to what they had foreseen. The rapid spread of calls to violence on social media, the difficult to track movements of the rioters and the sudden escalation of violence resulted in situations which had not been included in pre-prepared scenarios.

The context in which these disturbances took place was complex. The tensions which existed as a consequence of the war in Gaza and Lebanon led to heightened emotions, both among members of the public who were concerned about the situation in the Middle East and within the ongoing public and political debate. While not ignoring this context, the Inspectorate of Justice and Security wishes to focus primarily on an assessment of the facts. This report identifies positive action by the police and explains where there is room for improvement. The report also focuses on how escalations stirred up by social media can be anticipated, the role of the NCTV in interpreting threats and the provision of information and cooperation within the police organisation during the events in question.

As events unfolded the police acted with great commitment, flexibility and professionalism. The Inspectorate of Justice and Security notes that, although the police acted decisively, they were also overtaken at times by the speed and unpredictability of developments. This underlines the need for good intelligence and the ability to adapt quickly in complex and rapidly escalating situations.

The NCTV acted in line with its duties in terms of identifying potential threats associated with the commemoration of the Night of Broken Glass. As usual, this involves requesting information from the intelligence and security services, after which it was concluded that there was no specific (terrorist) threat. At the same time, this case shows that the NCTV needs to communicate (even) more clearly what its role does and does not entail and which parts of the threat assessment it can be called to account on. This applies both with regard to local government and other partners involved.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation for the open and constructive attitude of the many staff members at all levels within the police and the NCTV who contributed to this investigation.

*Inspector General of the Inspectorate of Justice and Security  
on behalf of the above,*

*P.C.J. Neuteboom  
Chief Inspector of Police, Security and Crisis Management*

## Summary

This is a report into the investigation by the Inspectorate of Justice and Security into how the police and the NCTV acted in the run-up to and during the disturbances on 7 and 8 November 2024 in Amsterdam. The reasons for the investigation were the serious incidents of violence which took place in the context of the football match between Ajax and Maccabi Tel Aviv. Violent confrontations took place at several locations across the city, with various groups deliberately seeking each other out, meaning that an escalation in violence was almost unavoidable. The violence reached a low point during the night of 7 to 8 November, when people of Jewish background, or who were perceived to be of Jewish background, were publicly targeted with threats, intimidation and beatings.

The Inspectorate of Justice and Security assessed the actions of the police and the NCTV on the basis of four aspects, namely governance, cooperation, information provision and equipment. The analysis shows that the police had to operate in a context in which the risk of breaches of the peace, social tensions and the rapid spread of messages and perceptions via social media all came together. In such circumstances, it was by no means easy to take effective action.

Within the framework of its responsibilities the NCTV acted in line with its role of identifying potential threats. In accordance with its usual procedures, information was requested from the relevant services, after which it was decided that there was no specific threat.

This investigation focuses primarily on answering the following question:

How did the police and the NCTV act prior to and during the disturbances in Amsterdam on 7 and 8 November 2024, and to what extent did the way they performed their tasks - in terms of governance, cooperation, information provision and equipment - help to control and limit the impact of the breaches of the peace and ensure public safety?

This question was answered by analysing documents and conducting interviews. Interviews were conducted with staff from the police, the National Coordinator for Counterterrorism and Security (NCTV) and the municipality of Amsterdam. Talks were also held with police liaison staff from the Israeli embassy.

## Findings

### With regard to the police

The police operated within the frameworks imposed by the local authority. Administrative decision-making took place in the tripartite consultation group<sup>1</sup> and was operationalised in the Large-Scale and Special Operations Unit (*Staf Grootschalig en bijzonder Optreden*, SGB0)<sup>2</sup>. Attention was also paid to risk scenarios and related measures, for example the designation of risk areas, preparations for deployment in the context of a demonstration and the coordination of the fanwalk<sup>3</sup>. Governance was properly organised in terms of structure and implementation. There was a well-defined plan and the division of roles and tasks within the police and between the police and the municipality was also clear. At the same time, practical experience has shown that it is impossible to completely predict developments in complex and concurrent events. The escalation during the night of 7 to 8 November is proof that situations can arise that fall outside the scope of pre-developed scenarios. Within the existing structures there was room to adjust in order to respond to unexpected situations and the police were flexible enough to adapt their operations wherever necessary. At the same time, it appeared to be difficult to translate administrative agreements in real time into effective action on the streets, especially when there were groups of rioters who were deliberately seeking confrontation and were prepared to use brute force. Consequently, there were tangible limits to what was feasible in such circumstances.

The cooperation between the police and their partners on (and in the run-up to) November 7 and 8 was characterised by structured coordination and information exchange. Decisions were taken jointly on the relocation of a demonstration, transport flows and deployment priorities. Generally speaking, coordination tasks were performed properly, although vulnerabilities did arise under pressure. It proved to be difficult, for example, to forward information on rapidly changing situations to the right operational levels in time. In doing so, the police constantly had to adapt. There was limited room for manoeuvre, partly because the rioters deliberately evaded the police. During the night of 7 to 8 November, this led to situations in which teams of police were operating at locations scattered all over the city and that made it difficult to maintain a comprehensive overview.

The provision of information prior to the event was organised satisfactorily. The police monitored social media and considered a number of different scenarios. When events escalated, the police were able to gather real-time information, for example via Open Source Intelligence (OSINT), officers on the street and the control room. Nevertheless there is once again evidence that information obtained in advance does not guarantee that all scenarios can be predicted. The role of social media appears to have had a major impact on the course of events. People were able to spread messages and images at lightning speed, thereby heightening existing tensions. In no time, this led to people coming together in groups and to confrontations on the streets. Relatively minor incidents, such as the removal of a Palestinian flag by Maccabi supporters, were shared,

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<sup>1</sup> The police are answerable to the local authority. Decisions on police action are taken on the basis of consultation in the so-called 'tripartite consultation group', whose members not only include the police but also the mayor and the public prosecutor.

<sup>2</sup> In (extra)ordinary circumstances, where more is required to eradicate the threat than regular powers and/or regular coordination, a special form of command or coordination can be chosen in order to fulfil the police's mission. This is known as large-scale or special action. An SGB0 is headed by a Commander General who is in charge of specialists who focus on a specific task within the SGB0, such as a chief information officer and a chief law enforcement officer. For more information see: National SGB0 Scheme 2019.

<sup>3</sup> A 'fanwalk' is an organised march of supporters to a stadium, often prior to a match. This is usually accompanied by singing, flags, torches and other elements to create an atmosphere.

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interpreted and magnified within minutes. It was difficult for the police to assess the impact of such images in advance. The speed at which groups mobilised and distributed messages meant that the police could often do no more than simply react to developments as they occurred. Even though information had been widely shared, it was almost impossible to translate signals into preventive action, partly because it was difficult to distinguish between incitement and actual threat.

In principle, the police were sufficiently equipped. More than 1,200 police officers including specialised units were deployed, making it a large-scale operation. The police had access to resources such as drones, arrest teams, reconnaissance units, liaison officers, the Riot Squad, horses and water cannons. In regular situations, this level of deployment and resources would provide the police with enough options for taking action.

However, the disturbances on 7 and 8 November show that traditional resources (for example the deployment of the Riot Squad) are not always sufficient. Blitz attacks<sup>4</sup> by small groups of rioters, using taxis and scooters to move around quickly and target Jewish people on the streets made different demands on the approach taken by the police because they then had to operate in a dynamic and rapidly changing environment. Fixed structures and units were less well-equipped to respond in such situations. The police appeared to be very good at improvising, but this also has its limits.

The Inspectorate of Justice and Security found that the police acted with great commitment, flexibility and professionalism during the events. Nevertheless, they were unable to control the disorder fully because they were sometimes overtaken by the speed and unpredictability of developments.

### With regard to NCTV

Within the framework of its responsibilities the NCTV acted in line with its role of identifying potential threats relating to the commemoration of the Night of Broken Glass (*Kristallnacht*). In accordance with its usual procedures, information was requested from the relevant services, after which it was decided that there was no specific threat.<sup>5</sup> The NCTV's role within the surveillance and security system was therefore fulfilled as intended.

At the same time, this case shows that there is a lack of clarity within local government and police about what the NCTV does and does not do. The NCTV has no role to play when it comes to identifying public order issues. The task of the NCTV is to identify any (terrorist) threat<sup>6</sup> as soon as it appears. No (terrorist) threat - other than general threat level 4 - had been identified in relation to the football match. In practice, it would appear that local government and the police are not always clear on who has which responsibility when it comes to the NCTV interpreting threats, in other words what they do and do not assess.

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<sup>4</sup> 'Blitz' (attack); a form of hit-and-run attack in which individuals or small groups move quickly through an area to attack individual 'adversaries'. These attacks are carried out using, among other things, fatbikes, scooters and taxis, or on foot and are characterised by their speed, distribution across multiple locations and lack of direct group confrontation. Perpetrators select their victims based on external features and strike at times when the police are not immediately present. Unlike hit-and-run attacks, which take place within a 'defined conflict zone', 'blitz' attacks are characterised by their unpredictable nature and the rapid movement of perpetrators. Such attacks create a situation in which the police struggle to intervene immediately and effectively. In the case of the disturbances in Amsterdam, these were physical attacks on individuals or small groups of people who were mistaken for being Jews, regardless of their actual background.

<sup>5</sup> The National Coordinator for Security and Counterterrorism (NCTV) protects the Netherlands against threats that could disrupt society. It is responsible for the coordination of counterterrorism, cybersecurity, national security, crisis management and resilience to state threats. <https://www.nctv.nl/documenten/publicaties/2022/03/31/wat-doet-de-nctv>

<sup>6</sup> Ditto.

## Analysis of the events and approach

*In this analysis the Inspectorate of Justice and Security assesses the actions of the police and the NCTV on the basis of four aspects, namely governance, cooperation, information provision and equipment.*

### **Governance**

The police operated within the frameworks imposed by the local authority, with the tripartite consultation group - consisting of the mayor, the police and the public prosecutor - playing a guiding role. Decision-making prior to the event was careful and based on risk scenarios. The police prepared thoroughly, identified threats and made appropriate plans in relation to deployment. Up until the outbreak of violence in the early morning of 8 November, the work done to prepare for these risk scenarios, the structure of decision-making and action and the operational management appeared to be working out well in practice. The police managed to respond effectively to most of the disturbances.

Large-scale, rapidly evolving breaches of the peace require immediate coordination and a high degree of flexibility when it comes to taking action. In the case of the events which took place in Amsterdam, the police exhibited resilience by adapting the deployment of resources quickly to events as they occurred. One example of this was how they managed to nip several fights in the city in the bud.

At the same time, it is clear that the police were not always able to cope with the unforeseen and highly fragmented use of violence, with rioters moving around in a targeted way, striking quickly and then disappearing before police units were able to intervene. This was particularly so in the early hours of 8 November. Small-scale, rapidly executed attacks in scattered locations placed (in retrospect) different demands on police deployment. Even then, the police managed to adapt quickly and adjust their strategy by bringing threatened individuals to a safe location in order to protect them.

The NCTV acted within the framework of the surveillance and security system. In accordance with the approach to dealing with moments of heightened risk for people who need to be protected in the national security domain, and at the request of the local authority, it applied its threat assessment process and informed its partners by sending them an operational notification. The local authority was responsible for taking decisions on measures, while the NCTV advised and informed. Although this division of roles was clear in theory, in practice it was not obvious to all parties where the boundaries of the NCTV's duties and powers lay. One example of this was that it is not one of the NCTV's tasks to identify threats to public order (such as a football match).

Following the disturbances, the NCTV fulfilled its role in terms of facilitating and coordinating national and international political activities and ensuring the safety of the Israeli Foreign Minister and ambassador.

### **Cooperation**

Cooperation played a crucial role in tackling the events. Coordination and decision-making within the SGBO and the tripartite consultation group was structured, for example in relation to relocating the demonstration and designating high-risk areas. The police used their multidisciplinary expertise and cooperated effectively with other bodies. The partners were agile and were able to adapt quickly in dynamic situations. Nevertheless, the alignment of intelligence and execution continued to be fragile, especially when confronted with unexpected behavioural changes on the part of rioters, for example when identifying the blitz attacks.

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The cooperation with the NCTV took place in accordance with standard procedures. The NCTV shared threat assessments and information on people who required protection in the national security domain in the form of an operational notification. This notification underlined the importance of vigilance, for example with regard to the commemoration of the Night of Broken Glass. The NCTV coordinated actions with the police in the municipality and helped share insight into the risks, but was not involved in operational decision-making.

### **Provision of information**

The police had gathered sufficient intelligence prior to the events. They monitored risks, analysed real-time information and coordinated actions using the information channels at their disposal. It nevertheless appeared to be difficult to identify online signals in particular, because messages on social media can spread at lightning speed and that can drive people to form unanticipated groups. There is also the question of what weight should be given to (online) communications which generally incite violence. As evidenced by the findings, the police responded appropriately to the available information, but often had to act under considerable pressure of time, and that made it difficult to take preventive action. After all, a large group of people can be mobilised in a short space of time via online posts and there is almost no way of knowing how many people are going to turn out at which location.

The level of intelligence the NCTV has at its disposal is based on, for example, information provided by the intelligence and security services. No indications of a specific (terrorist) threat were received in this case. The NCTV communicated this in a timely manner, while stressing the importance of staying vigilant. This approach aligned well with the existing process, although the case does show that there should be more transparency between the NCTV and its partners when it comes to interpreting the threat assessment.

### **Equipment**

With over 1,200 officers, including specialised units, the police were capable of responding to foreseen risks. They used drones, horses, arrest teams and other resources to prevent escalation. They had the capacity to improvise, but they also had to deal with rioter tactics which could not be adequately tackled using the usual structures. Although the Riot Squad was present in the city, it appeared to be insufficiently equipped to respond speedily to fast moving and simultaneous attacks at multiple locations.

This case shows that even when people and resources are widely deployed, as in Amsterdam, there are tangible limits to what is feasible. Police traditionally prepare for large-scale breaches of the peace in concentrated areas. In this case study, however, small, rapid and difficult-to-predict activities were taking place simultaneously at numerous different locations. This required different tactics and possibly different organisational forms of action.

The NCTV is not charged with operational deployment, but focuses on analysis, interpretation and national coordination. The way this task was performed in this case meets the requirements in the context of the surveillance and security system and more broadly the general task of the NCTV in identifying (terrorist) threats. The NCTV therefore made a substantive contribution to preparation and perception.

## Conclusion and recommendations

*On the basis of the analysis the Inspectorate of Justice and Security has arrived at the following conclusions.*

### **With regard to the police**

- 1. The police acted professionally and with huge commitment in a demanding situation.**
- 2. The police displayed flexibility by reacting quickly to the course of events. At the same time, it became clear from events that it was unrealistic to expect the police to be able to keep a complete grip on rapidly escalating and unpredictable developments in all circumstances.**
- 3. The events demonstrated that good intelligence and flexible action are key to managing complex situations and to dealing effectively with breaches of the peace.**

### **With regard to the NCTV**

- 1. The NCTV acted in line with its duties in terms of identifying potential threats associated with the commemoration of the Night of Broken Glass.**
- 2. Clear communication about the NCTV's tasks and boundaries is essential to keep expectations among administrative and operational partners realistic and to avoid misunderstandings.**

## **Recommendations**

Based on its conclusions, the Inspectorate of Justice and Security makes the following recommendations.

### **Recommendation to the chief of police**

**Continue to invest in refining the process of gathering information and its interpretation, as well as in the development of flexible intervention strategies.**

### **Recommendation to the National Coordinator for Security and Counterterrorism**

**Provide clear and proactive communication about the NCTV's tasks, responsibilities and boundaries, so that administrative and operational partners have a realistic picture of its role and possible courses of action in the context of security issues.**

## Concluding remarks: between foreseen and unforeseen - judgements on policing in a complex reality

The disturbances in Amsterdam on 7 and 8 November 2024 showed how quickly a situation can change and exposed the complexity of maintaining public order in such circumstances. The police and other agencies involved found themselves in an arena of conflicting interests. On the one hand, they needed to keep groups separate and prevent conflicts from escalating. On the other hand, they themselves were facing physical violence.

The police found themselves positioned between parties that regarded each other as enemies, with little room for nuance. They then had to protect all the various groups from each other, while protecting people's right to freedom of expression and movement. This required continuous assessments to determine when intervention was necessary and when it was better to wait and see. The escalations that occurred - from confrontations between supporters and pro-Palestinian sympathisers to violence perpetrated by rioters in the city centre - showed how difficult it is to achieve that balance.

What stands out is the speed with which everyone expressed an opinion in the aftermath of the events. Politicians, administrators and the media immediately jumped to conclusions, without having any insight into exactly what had occurred. There was talk of a failure to act, negligence or, indeed, an incomprehensible degree of tolerance. Such judgements, expressed before the facts were known, had an influence on sentiment in society and directly affected the police officers who were on the streets. Many of them had worked long shifts of sometimes more than fifteen hours in a dynamic situation that cannot be captured in a single frame.

The events revealed how difficult it is to maintain order in a society in which local tensions are fuelled by global conflicts, in which digital messages can mobilise groups at lightning speed and in which expectations of the police response are varied. Finding the right balance between enforcement and freedom continues to be a difficult task, especially when reality evolves faster than the scenarios which were considered in advance. This requires an astute assessment of the facts, a flexible approach in the moment and careful reflection when the dust has settled, not only with regard to the actions taken by the police, but also the speed with which judgements were made.

**Inspectorate of Justice and Security**  
Supervision, because justice and security  
cannot be taken for granted.

**Published by:**  
Inspectorate of Justice and Security  
Ministry of Justice and Security  
8 Hoge Nieuwstraat | 2514 EL The Hague  
PO Box 20301 | 2500 EH The Hague  
**Contactform | [www.inspectie-ienv.nl](http://www.inspectie-ienv.nl)**

May 2025

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