Dozens detained after protesters defy

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BBC News

EPA

Dozens of pro-Palestinian demonstrators have been detained by police in Amsterdam after defying a ban on public protests in the Dutch capital.

Hundreds gathered in Dam Square on Sunday, calling for an end to the conflict in Gaza and expressing dissent towards the ban.

Demonstrations were temporarily banned by the mayor after Israeli football fans were targeted in what she called "hit-and-run" attacks on Thursday night after a match between Maccabi Tel Aviv and Ajax Amsterdam.

The Israeli government has advised its citizens to "categorically avoid" Israeli sports and cultural events while abroad - specifically the football match between France and Israel in Paris on Thursday.

Authorities say Thursday's attacks - which caused five people to be hospitalised - were motivated by antisemitism as the fans were sought out across the city.

The violence - which <u>was condemned by leaders in Europe, the US and in Israel</u> - has led to at least 62 arrests.

The outcry was exacerbated by the attacks occurring on the eve of commemorations of the Nazi pogroms against German Jews that took place in November 1938.

Three-quarters of Jewish people in the Netherlands were murdered during the Holocaust in World War Two.

Amsterdam police said there had also been trouble the night before the match. Police chief Peter Holla said there had been incidents "on both sides", including Israeli supporters removing a Palestinian flag from a wall and setting it alight, and attacking a taxi.

The city's Mayor Femke Halsema announced a ban on public assembly on Friday lasting at least until the end of the weekend, deeming the city a "high-risk security area".

But protesters on Sunday argued they should be free to voice their disapproval of Israel's actions in Gaza and the actions of the Maccabi supporters.

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"This protest has nothing to do with antisemitism," Alexander van Stokkum, one of the demonstrators, told the AFP news agency on Sunday. "It is against Israeli hooligans who were destroying our city."

Others told a Reuters journalist: "We refuse to let the charge of antisemitism be weaponised to suppress Palestinian resistance."

The news agency reported that more than 100 people were detained for attending the protest. Police in Amsterdam confirmed there had been arrests, but have yet to say how many.

Following the protest ban, Dutch activist Frank van der Linde applied for an urgent permit so Sunday's demonstration could go ahead.

On X, he said that he wanted to protest what he described as "the genocide in Gaza", adding: "We will not let our right to demonstrate be taken away."

Mr Van der Linde was overruled by Amsterdam's district court, which wrote on Sunday that "the mayor has rightly determined that there is a ban on demonstrating in the city this weekend".

Dutch national newspaper De Telegraaf reports Mr Van der Linde was among those arrested.

The Israeli embassy in the Netherlands earlier warned Israelis in Amsterdam to avoid Dam square, saying the event "may flare up into significant violent incidents".

Israel's National Security Council has told its citizens to avoid public demonstrations "of any kind" and conceal "anything that could identify you as Israeli/Jewish", citing Thursday's attacks.

"Preparations to harm Israelis have been identified in several European cities, including Brussels (Belgium), major cities in the UK, Amsterdam (Netherlands), and Paris," it claimed.

Paris's police chief has pledged that 4,000 officers would be deployed in the stadium and across the French capital for the Nations League match on 14 November.

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