

Amsterdam provocation used as pretext to assault Dutch workers' democratic rights

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As the hysterical international press campaign accusing Amsterdammers of orchestrating pogroms against Jews begins to crumble, the plans of the Dutch government are coming more to light. The far-right Dutch government, led by Prime Minister and former Intelligence and Security Service (AIVD) boss Dick Schoof and neo-fascist Geert Wilders, is working closely with the fascist regime in Tel Aviv, using “antisemitism” as a pretext for unprecedented attacks on democratic rights.

There were no “Jew hunts,” “pogroms,” or “Kristallnacht” in Amsterdam on November 8. There was no mass murder of Jews by heavily-armed fascist gangs backed by capitalist state authorities, like Kristallnacht in Nazi Germany in 1938. Deeply-rooted democratic sentiments opposed to genocide and political racism remain in the working class of the city. Instead, there was a deliberate attempt to provoke and criminalise opponents of NATO and Netanyahu’s Nazi-style “final solution” to the Palestinian question.

In fact, in terms of the political plans of the authorities, last week’s events more closely resembled the January 30, 1933 Reichstag fire in Germany than Kristallnacht. The Nazis used the Reichstag fire to launch a well-prepared and unprecedented persecution of workers, youth and intellectuals and establish the Nazi regime. The Dutch ruling class, for its part, is trying to strengthen Schoof’s right-wing government and grant it authoritarian powers to attack growing working class anger.

On November 8, Amsterdam mayor Femke Halsema issued an “Emergency Ordinance” declaring the city a “high-risk security area.” This grants the police full power to conduct preventive searches of Amsterdam residents and prohibit all demonstrations within the city. Initially declared to be a weekend ban, it was swiftly extended to November 14.

On November 10, during his press conference following a ministerial meeting, Schoof called for an even more heavy-handed response to those responsible for “antisemitic violence.” The Schoof government, following its German counterparts, has begun drafting “a comprehensive strategy”

to combat “antisemitism.”

After crackdowns on protests over the weekend, police arrested 281 protesters at a banned demonstration on Wednesday evening. Videos circulating on social media show riot police shouting at protesters and beating them with batons.

Schoof is threatening to revoke the Dutch passports of individuals with dual nationality accused of “antisemitic violence,” which would lead to their expulsion or deportation from the country. *The European Conservative* reported that Schoof “shared Wilders’ sentiments” and, after a meeting with Jewish community leaders, said, “there is a group of people with a migration background that has turned its back on society, and does not share its Western values.”

There are an estimated 1.3 million citizens (out of 18 million) holding dual citizenship in the Netherlands, one-quarter with a Moroccan passport, while another quarter Turkish. They make up a significant contingent of the anti-Gaza war protesters. Wilders’ anti-Muslim Freedom Party (PVV) called for revoking these passports while the provocations in Amsterdam were underway.

Last Friday, Wilders tweeted: “Looks like a Jew hunt in the streets of Amsterdam. Arrest and deport the multicultural scum that attacked the Maccabi Tel Aviv supporters on our streets. Ashamed that this can happen in The Netherlands. Totally unacceptable.”

Jimmy Dijk, the leader of the ex-Maoist Socialist Party (SP) joined in, tweeting: “Horrible images from last night in Amsterdam. Violence and hatred against people because of their religion or their descent or where they are from is unacceptable and not to be allowed in our society. Not in Amsterdam, not in the Netherlands. The perpetrators should be dealt with harshly.”

In full alignment with Wilders and Schoof, People’s Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD) leader Dilan Yesilgöz told the press: “as far as the VVD is concerned, we withdraw a residence permit even faster if someone commits a criminal offence. If we also take away Dutch nationality more quickly after a crime, we ensure that the cabinet

follows the German proposal to deny Dutch nationality entirely if convicted of antisemitism.”

Similarly the VVD Minister of Justice and Security, David van Weel, announced that the Dutch government will roll out its “antisemitic strategy” as swiftly as possible.

The far-right Dutch government also announced on Monday its plans to introduce land border controls by early December to tackle “illegal immigration,” following a similar move by Germany in September. This falls in line with what was spelled out in the government agenda published in May, calling to tighten immigration controls and limit asylum seekers.

While whipping up a hysterical campaign against opposition to the Gaza genocide on the fraudulent basis of opposing “antisemitism,” the entire Dutch political establishment is advancing a far-right agenda aligned with NATO policy on Gaza and the Ukraine war. It is drawing on anti-democratic, colonialist traditions in the face of a new wave of protests and strikes in the working class in the Netherlands and across Europe.

The two main Dutch trade union confederations, the FNV and CNV jointly declared a strike on Tuesday, November 12, with a total of 12,000 pharmacy workers nationwide mounting a one-day strike for a pay increase of 6 percent, a minimum hourly wage of €16, and for improved working conditions. This strike followed the first-ever strike of pharmacy workers in September.

As a result of years of betrayals by union bureaucracies and their policy of subordinating the interests of the working class to the profit motives of pharmacy owners, working conditions for pharmacy workers in the Netherlands are among the worst of all healthcare professionals. Wages are hardly ever adjusted to account for inflation and newly proposed tax hikes, though the Netherlands has one of the highest inflation rates in the eurozone.

Parallel to the pharmacy workers’ strike, following the breakdown of official negotiations between the FNV trade union and the government-owned ProRail, railway traffic control, railroad network maintenance workers and engineers have declared strikes on November 11, 13, 15, 18, 20 and 22, demanding higher wages. The FNV, notorious for its record in segmenting, isolating and betraying strikes, has defused the current strike of thousands of ProRail workers over six different days on six separate routes, with a break of a day or two in between with each strike day limited to just three hours.

Moreover, what was to be the largest one-day protest ever by university staff and students against a planned €1 billion in budget cuts in higher education, together with €1 billion in social cuts, was called off at the last minute. The cancellation of demonstrations planned for Thursday in

Utrecht again underscores the treachery of the union bureaucracies, which function as safety valves, protecting the interests of the bourgeoisie and big business by deflecting mounting social anger.

On Wednesday, the city mayor of Utrecht, Sharon A.M. Dijkema declared in a letter that she had “recently received concrete information from outside the city, which shows that a pro-Palestine organization intends to hijack the demonstration.” The unions in the education sector, AOb and FNV capitulated, declaring themselves in full agreement with this reactionary ban.

Far from “hijacking” and instigating “violence,” the Dutch Scholars for Palestine (DSP)—a network of academic and cultural workers—issued a statement in full support of the demonstration. It stated, “the Dutch government has announced far-reaching budget cuts on education. These cuts are not a response to government deficit, but part of a far-right political agenda prioritizing military spending, weapons purchases, and tax breaks for the ultra-rich. These cuts undermine our universities as sites of critical thought and limit our ability to imagine a future.”

Underneath the official lies, the political cause of the cancellation of the Utrecht demonstration is the Dutch ruling class’s fear of the growing political mobilisation of workers against its agenda of genocide, imperialist war, social austerity and far-right attacks on democratic rights. As Karl Liebknecht, the great socialist and German revolutionary so powerfully stated, “the main enemy is at home.”

Only the full mobilisation of the industrial power of the working class, in the Netherlands and across Europe, can halt the bourgeoisie’s plunge into extreme social counterrevolution. This mobilisation cannot unfold under the grip of the union bureaucracies and middle class parties like the SP. It requires the construction of independent, rank-and-file organizations of struggle in the working class, fighting to unify Dutch workers with their class brothers and sisters internationally in a common struggle against fascism, imperialist war, genocide and austerity.



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