

Police crack down on anti-genocide protest in Paris as Amsterdam “pogrom” lies unravel

Alex Lantier

14 November 2024

In the run-up to today’s explosive France-Israel football match in Saint Denis, several thousand people demonstrated in Paris last night against the “Israel is Forever” gala that was to feature far-right Israeli Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich. Anger across Europe is mounting at the Gaza genocide, even as official lies about a “pogrom” in Amsterdam against football hooligans of the Maccabi Tel Aviv club continue to unravel.

The holding of the gala exposed the hypocritical support for the genocide of the French government and its European allies. The French Foreign Ministry has repeatedly “condemned” statements made by Smotrich, including his calls to starve and exterminate the population of Gaza, as a “violation of international law.” But Paris police prefect Laurent Nunez defended the gala, claiming that an event attended by an advocate of genocide did not present an “important” threat to public order.

The protest expressed the opposition among broad layers of workers and youth at the Gaza genocide and the complicity of the entire NATO alliance, even as Trump comes to power in the United States and threatens to escalate the bloodshed in the Middle East.

Thousands marched in Paris near the suspected location of the gala, which had not initially been announced, denouncing a “Gala of Shame.” Holding signs saying “No to Perpetrators of Genocide in Paris” or “All Eyes on the Gaza Genocide,” they chanted slogans like: “Smotrich murderer, Macron accomplice,” “Free Palestine,” and “Israel, get out of there, Palestine does not belong to you.”

Police cracked down on protesters when they tried to march on the gala, once its location was announced, charging protesters and firing tear gas at them.

The gala was held by Israel is Forever, a Zionist association founded by far-right ideologue Jacques Kupfer, who opposed voting rights for Palestinians and called them “enemies of the state.” His daughter, lawyer Nili Kupfer-Naouri, has endorsed the Gaza genocide and the Israel’s targeting of Gaza’s entire civilian population, declaring: “There is no innocent civilian population in Gaza.”

Smotrich cancelled his in-person participation in the gala and joined only by video call after the International Human Rights League (LIDH) filed a lawsuit against him at the office of the Paris prosecutor for crimes against humanity. The LIDH suit accused Smotrich of complicity in torture and war crimes over Israeli policy in Gaza and the West Bank. It asked the French judicial system to immediately arrest Smotrich so he could be brought to trial.

The LIDH issued a press release appealing to President Emmanuel Macron’s government to support their lawsuit against Smotrich, writing: “The French authorities must reinforce their engagement to support human rights by supporting these judicial proceedings.”

In reality, what these events show, as did concocted media hysteria denouncing Amsterdam workers for a supposed “pogrom” of Israeli football hooligans, is the imperviousness of European authorities to appeals to halt the genocide. There have been repeated calls to mobilize workers to strike and halt weapons shipments to Israel. But workers can only mobilize to halt the Gaza genocide in opposition to capitalist governments like those of Macron in France or neo-fascist Geert Wilders in Holland.

This is underscored by the explosive events today around the Israel-France football match in Saint Denis, a largely Muslim, working class suburb of Paris. At least 2,500 heavily-armed riot police are cordoning off large parts of Saint Denis, shutting down shops around the area, and establishing a security perimeter around the Stade de France stadium where the match will take place. A further 1,500 riot police are deployed for crackdowns throughout Paris.

Other riot police units have been placed on standby alert across the region, and the French national police’s elite RAID commando unit will be deployed inside the stadium.

Football fans are largely boycotting the match, and less than 15,000 tickets out of the 80,000 seats in the stadium have been sold. Israeli football players are reportedly to stay closeted inside their hotel until the game, under close guard of French military police and Israel’s Shin Bet intelligence agency.

While Israeli authorities have asked Israeli football fans not to march in Paris, Yonathan Arfi, the president of Representative Council of Jewish Institutions of France (CRIF) called on people to “go see the match,” which he called “an almost political symbol of affirmation.”

The French ruling elite is treating the match as a political gesture of solidarity with Israel’s genocide in Gaza, justified based on fraudulent invocations of a struggle against antisemitism.

Macron, Prime Minister Michel Barnier, and Interior Minister Bruno Retailleau all decided to attend the match in person at the empty Stade de France, even though officials have stressed that it is a “high risk” event after Israeli football hooligans provoked clashes in Amsterdam. Retailleau claimed French authorities would not cancel the match because he refused to “abdicate in the face of violence and antisemitism.”

Recent events have again shown how far-right figures like the neo-fascist Wilders or the monarchist Retailleau use false allegations of “antisemitism” to justify crackdowns on working people and their own support for genocide in Gaza. Governments denounce “left antisemitism” or allege mass popular antisemitism. These are crude maneuvers to criminalize opposition to genocide, based on outright falsification of events by the European and Israeli governments and media.

The collapse of allegations of a “pogrom” of Jews last week in Amsterdam starkly exposes how they organize such political provocations. Millions have now seen videos of Israeli football hooligans tearing down Palestinian flags, assaulting inhabitants of Amsterdam, bashing taxis, and chanting pro-genocide slogans. The central role played by hooligans of the Maccabi Tel Aviv club was confirmed even by the Amsterdam chief of police, Mark Holla.

Now, reports have emerged that Amsterdam police detained 281 protesters at a banned protest against the Gaza genocide on Wednesday, drove them to western Amsterdam in buses, released them, but then savagely assaulted them. Amsterdam police did not deny the reports, but blandly stated on X/Twitter: “Images of police acting with force are always disturbing to see and will be weighed and judged.”

Dutch photographer Annet De Graaf, whose videos were extensively used by media outlets in initial reporting of the clashes in Amsterdam, publicly attacked them for having falsified her videos. While official media claimed they showed inhabitants of Amsterdam attacking Jews, in reality they showed Maccabi Tel Aviv hooligans assaulting local residents.

The fact that media coverage was a pack of lies is now grudgingly admitted even by capitalist media. German state broadcaster Deutsche Welle (DW) posted an article titled

“Fact Check: Video does not show attack on Israeli fans,” that admitted:

Maccabi supporters had also rioted and provoked people beforehand. Among other things, they burned a Palestinian flag.

To illustrate this, the video by Dutch photographer Annet De Graaf, which shows the violent acts of Israeli fans, was used several times. However, it was misclassified by many major media outlets in their reporting.

The posts with the false claims were shared by many users and spread further. Media outlets such as Tagesschau, BILD, Wall Street Journal, Channel 4, FAZ, and BBC showed either parts of the video or screenshots of it.

Claim: “Israeli fans were chased and beaten in what Israeli and Dutch politicians called an anti-Semitic attack,” headlines the Wall Street Journal.

The *Bild* newspaper also uses a screenshot from the video with the caption: “‘The hunt for Jews has broken out again’: Arab mob chases football fans in Amsterdam.”

DW fact check: False.

These falsifications were not a political accident, but were driven by the agenda of a rotten European capitalist establishment. Desperate to suppress working class opposition to its agenda of genocide and war abroad, and austerity and attacks on jobs at home, it blamed racist violence on the Arab immigrant population of the Netherlands. In reality, the principal purveyors of political racism are the genocidal Zionist regime and its backers in the NATO imperialist governments.



To contact the WSWs and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact