Amsterdam Pogrom, Protests Coordinated With ‘Extremist’ Network Linked to Former UNRWA Employee, Research Group Finds

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The violence against Israeli soccer fans in Amsterdam last week was a premeditated and coordinated attack orchestrated with extremist networks linked to a former employee of the controversial [United Nations agency for Palestinian refugees](https://www.algemeiner.com/2024/11/04/israel-officially-informs-un-end-relations-palestinian-relief-agency-hamas-ties/) (UNRWA), a group tracking online disinformation told *The Algemeiner*on Monday.

The Network Contagion Research Institute’s analysis of open-source intelligence and social media also ‘revealed that protests around the Maccabi Tel Aviv game in Amsterdam was not isolated but part of a broader, coordinated effort,’ said the group’s co-founder, Joel Finkelstein.

Amsterdam resident Ayman Nejmeh, who identified himself on social media as a former UNRWA employee, ‘has emerged as a key organizer, coordinating protest actions against Jewish targets,’ Finkelstein added.

Hundreds of Maccabi Tel Aviv soccer fans, who were visiting the Dutch capital for a game against the local Ajax team, were [attacked by Arab and Muslim mobs](https://www.algemeiner.com/2024/11/08/netanyahu-dispatches-airplanes-rescue-israeli-soccer-fans-against-violent-pogrom-attacks-amsterdam/) on Thursday night, landing several in the hospital. It marked the largest mass-scale antisemitic incident in the Netherlands since the Holocaust, with attackers throwing firecrackers and stun grenades, calling for a ‘Jew hunt,’ and forcing Israelis to say ‘Free Palestine’ before beating them up.

Earlier, Maccabi Tel Aviv fans were recorded chanting anti-Arab slogans and removing a Palestinian flag, prompting some news outlets to frame the ensuing violence as a response. But Israel had issued a warning to Dutch security services ahead of the game that violence was likely to unfold after Islamic groups appeared to be coordinating a multifront attack on social media.

According to Finkelstein, the phone number of the Syrian-born Nejmeh was listed as an admin for one WhatsApp group utilized by the Palestinian diaspora group, PGNL. Nejmeh took over the group from Palestinian-Dutch national Amin Abou Rashed, who was arrested last year on suspicion of funneling funds to the Palestinian terrorist group Hamas.

PGNL had in the past hosted the late Hamas chief Ismail Haniyeh, who was killed in Tehran earlier this year, in an online event. The group, whose name in Dutch stands for the ‘Palestinian Community in the Netherlands,’ was also involved in [organizing an anti-Israel protest](https://www.algemeiner.com/2024/11/10/dozens-arrested-at-illegal-anti-israel-protest-in-amsterdam/) in Dam Square on Sunday, defying a temporary ban imposed after Thursday night’s violence and resulting in dozens of arrests.

The Network Contagion Research Institute (NCRI), whose research spans issues from social media bans to online antisemitism, has collaborated with legislative bodies, including the British government and US Congress, on content moderation and combating hate-based misinformation. The group said that its own findings aligned with that of the European Leadership Network, pointing to a transnational network that is [actively stoking anti-Jewish sentiments](https://www.algemeiner.com/2024/09/30/unrwa-admits-it-employed-hamas-leader-lebanon-killed-israeli-airstrike/).

The coordination behind these events reflects a well-honed strategy by radical groups to use public gatherings to incite and escalate violence, Finkelstein said, warning that organized hate was far outpacing authorities’ ability to respond.

‘The ‘pogrom contagion’ spreading across Europe is no accident — terror-linked actors are deliberately weaponizing gatherings and social media to accelerate the spread of violence against Jewish communities,’ Finkelstein told *The Algemeiner*. ‘This infrastructure of hate is evolving faster than democratic defenses and, left unchecked, these threats multiply across both borders and ethnicities.’

Nejmeh’s Facebook profile, which contained at least one post extolling a Hamas operative for the terrorist group’s Al Qassam military wing, was in recent days purged of any mention of his ties to UNRWA.

‘If Nejmeh is scrubbing his social media of these past affiliations, it does raise significant questions about why,’ Finkelstein said.

Last month, Israel’s parliament passed legislation banning UNRWA from operating in Israel and stopping Israeli authorities from cooperating with the organization, citing the UN agency’s ties to Hamas and what critics described as its [‘poisonous influence’ in the Middle East](https://www.algemeiner.com/2024/10/29/israelis-defend-unrwa-ban-amid-us-rebuke-say-school-kids-better-off-without-agencys-poisonous-influence/).

Marcus Sheff, head of IMPACT-se, a research institute monitoring UNRWA, said the findings were further evidence of the refugee agency’s corruption.

‘It’s shocking that the organizer of this brutal assault is yet another former UNRWA teacher, funded by American taxpayers for years,’ Sheff told *The Algemeiner*.

The Israeli government and research organizations have publicized findings showing numerous UNRWA-employed teachers were [directly involved in Hamas’s massacre](https://www.algemeiner.com/2024/08/06/unwra-fires-9-employees-alleged-participation-hamas-oct-7-attack-israel/) across southern Israel last Oct. 7, while many others openly celebrated it.

*The Algemeiner*could not independently verify whether Nejmeh, who moved to the Netherlands from Syria in 2018, held a teaching role at UNRWA or served in another capacity.

‘Time and again, we have seen UNRWA staff, including school principals, exposed as active terrorists. If there were any lingering doubts after Oct. 7, this serves as another stark proof of a deep-seated rot within UNRWA’s organizational culture,’ Sheff added.