

Attacks on Jewish institutions

SHORT

Three more Iranian footballers return home

Once again, three Iranian female footballers have left Australia. They have withdrawn their hard-fought asylum applications and returned to Iran on Saturday evening.

Of the original seven Iranian asylum seekers, three remained in Australia after Sunday. The fate of the seven members of the Iranian national football team has dominated the news in Australia for a week.

Activists managed to get the government to grant a humanitarian visa, allowing them to stay. But four of the seven would ultimately return to their country. The activists who helped the footballers fear that their families in Iran have been intimidated. This has also happened in previous cases of fleeing athletes.

Michel Maas

Damage reports after Drenthe earthquake

The number of damage reports after the earthquakes near Geelbroek in Drenthe has risen to 132, reports the Mining Damage Commission. The hamlet near the Drenthe gas field Eleveld was hit by a quake with a magnitude of 3.0 in the night from Friday to Saturday. A few hours later, there was an aftershock with a strength of 1.3. Both quakes occurred at a depth of 3 kilometers. This means the first shock was clearly felt. The second was too weak for that. Most damage reports come from the municipality of Assen, namely 99. There were also eighteen reports of damage from the municipality of Aa en Hunze, where Geelbroek is located, and ten damage reports from neighboring municipality Midden-Drenthe. The remaining four reports came from further away.

ANP

Parties want stricter approach to wolf

Political parties in municipalities where the wolf often appears, want the protected predator to be managed more quickly and strictly. Most parties, in the run-up to next week's municipal elections, believe that measures such as shooting and scaring off should be made possible more quickly, for example if a wolf approaches people or frequently attacks livestock. Parties differ on how strict the intervention around the wolf should be. 'For us, that means setting a quota and shooting the rest,' said VVD leader Peter Oosterhof recently during an election debate in the municipality of Heerde. Other parties advocate for wolf-free zones where the predator is actively kept out. The Party for the Animals in the Utrechtse Heuvelrug, on the other hand, argues that areas should be designated where the wolf is left alone.

ANP

Tonie Mudde Amsterdam

Cheider is already one of the best-secured schools in the Netherlands, but on Sunday there is even more security. In Buitenveldert, a district in Amsterdam South, men with scarves pulled up over their noses stand guard at the door of the Jewish school. Private security guards, with earpieces. The reporter's questions are met with no answers, some only shake their heads 'no'. A little further on, five military police officers stand next to their car. High walls topped with steel spikes block the view of the school, and dozens of cameras are mounted on poles.

The contrast is huge compared to the average school building in the Netherlands, such as Mundus, 450 meters away. That school has a typical green bar fence, the gate is open, a boy with an orange football at his feet walks through it towards the playground equipment.

But for the children of Cheider, such a fence would be naïve. In the night from Friday to Saturday, at 03:45, local residents were awakened by an explosive at the outer wall of the school. Emergency services arrived quickly. The damage to the school was limited, but the wave of outrage and condemnation spread far beyond the country's borders.

'I understand the anger and fear and will quickly speak with the Jewish community,' quotes the French newspaper Le Monde from Prime Minister Rob Jetten. American CNN quotes Mayor Femke Halsema: 'This is a cowardly act of aggression against the Jewish community.'

Isaac Herzog, the Israeli president, calls it on X 'completely unacceptable that the historic Jewish community in the Netherlands, which was destroyed by the Holocaust and is today a thriving center of Jewish life, still has to deal with violent antisemitism.'

The orthodox Jewish school Cheider started in 1974 in an apartment with five students. Now there are about 120 students, the girls separated from the boys. After October 7, 2023, Cheider temporarily switched to online lessons because it said it could not guarantee the safety of the students. Last year, the school received an email in which someone threatened to shoot children.

Third explosion

The explosion this weekend at the outer wall of the school follows explosions at synagogues in Liège and Rotterdam - police arrested four suspects there. Two suspects of the explosion in Amsterdam are still at large. In all attacks, videos with similar captions and music appeared in Telegram groups of Iran-backed militant groups. However, it is still unclear who is behind the attacks and to what extent they are connected.

In the vicinity of the Amsterdam school, few passersby want to talk to the press. 'No need, I don't feel like a representative of the community,' says a shopkeeper behind the counter at Mouwes Kosher Delicatessen. Dionne, a local resident who works at Amsterdam UMC and prefers not to be mentioned by her last name, points to the situation in the Middle East: 'The people who live here have nothing to do with what



A private security guard keeps an eye on the Cheider school in Amsterdam.

REPORT JEWISH SCHOOL

Chief Rabbi: 'Antisemitism is the new normal'

Within two days, explosives were detonated at a synagogue in Rotterdam and at a Jewish school in Amsterdam. 'The general feeling in the Jewish community is: the floodgates are open.'

happens there. And certainly not children.' Next to her walks marketer Nienke, who was awakened by the explosion on Saturday night: 'I know a number of Jewish girls from my old part-time job at a restaurant. When you hear about all the security they get. That it's necessary, in a free country.'

'The general feeling in the Jewish community is: the floodgates are open

dam,' says Eddo Verdoner, National Coordinator for Combating Antisemitism (NCAB), on the phone. 'This goes so much further than just Cheider,' says Chief Rabbi Binyomin Jacobs in response. He is chairman of the advisory board of Cheider and was on the board for many years. His daughter teaches there, his great-grandchildren attend the school. 'Antise-

BINYOMIN JACOBS chief rabbi





Photos Guus Dubbelman / de Volkskrant

Attacks on Jewish buildings claimed by Ashab Al Yamin. What is known about that group?

ANALYSIS

ASHAB AL YAMIN

The attack at the Jewish school in Amsterdam is claimed by a group called Ashab Al Yamin. Does this have a link to the Iranian regime?

Of the three incidents, besides after the attacks videos on social media with the Ashab Al Yamin logo. De Volkskrant verified the videos, all using the same captions and type of music.

The videos were shared in Telegram groups linked to Iran-supported militant groups. Graig Klein, university lecturer in terrorism and political violence at Leiden University, says there is no hard evidence of direct Iranian involvement in the explosions. He does say that the incidents align with how Iranian networks have operated previously in Europe.

Iran has in the past used criminal networks to carry out attacks on Jewish communities and Iranian dissidents in Europe. For example, the AIVD wrote in its 2024 annual report that there was an attempted liquidation of an Iranian living in the Netherlands, with a pre-existing criminal network also deployed.

'Amateurish approach'

'Sometimes the attacks are carried out by the criminal networks themselves, but more often those networks act as intermediaries,' says Klein. 'They then look for individuals to carry out attacks.' There is a search for perpetrators with a financial motivation who are willing to be recruited without a long training process first

continue. 'The people who commit the violence are often not themselves hardened criminals, which is why you often see a more amateurish approach.'

That is also visible in the videos Klein has shared. Elements appear that are standard in such videos of Islamic terrorist groups, such as the ominous music, the messages and the way the violence is filmed. 'But what stands out is that the violence is very amateurish. It is not as violent or intimidating as we often see in these kinds of videos.'

Also Bart Wallet, professor of Jewish studies at the University of Amsterdam, see a clear link between the incidents of last week and the war in Iran. 'We had never heard of Ashab Al Yamin before this week, they exist

The logo shows similarities with the logos of Iran-affiliated groups

hardly on social media. So we cannot yet say this was orchestrated by Iran. The violence fits into a broader pattern. If the Iranian regime comes under pressure, it shifts the fight by attacking Jewish places in Europe and America.

No own channel

As far as known, the group has no its own communication channels. The videos of the attacks circulate on Telegram networks that are normally used as a means of communication by Iran-aligned militant groups. 'Whether Ashab Al Yamin is coordinated via Iranian networks or not, this shows that these networks at least want to profit from it. It is in their interest to spread intimidation and fear,' says Klein.

Ashab Al Yamin, fully Harakat Ashab Al Yamin Al Islamiyyah, literally translates as 'the people of the right hand', which presumably refers to believers who would go to paradise. The logo shows similarities with the logos of militants groups affiliated with Iran. The globe and the raised arm with a rifle pointing to the right also appear in the logos of Hezbollah in Lebanon and Kataib Hezbollah in Iraq, two Shiite militant organizations.

Last Monday appeared a statement from the group, in which they call for jihad. The text is written in Arabic, not in the official language of Iran, Persian. It is unclear where the statement was first shared.

'The statement is very general in nature and not necessarily Iranian or Shiite. It is not mentioned at all about Jews, synagogues, Israel or Iran,' says Joas Wagemakers, university lecturer in Islam and Arabic at Utrecht University. 'Based on this information it is all very vague and I would not dare draw conclusions.'

The Wever warns

Belgian Prime Minister Bart De Wever warned on Thursday, following the incident in Liège, about the advance of Iran-directed terrorist cells in Europe. Last week in London four men were arrested on suspicion of spying for Iran. They would have mapped Jewish locations such as synagogues and individuals, possibly with the aim of carrying out an attack.

The Dutch government does not yet want to link the incidents in Rotterdam and Amsterdam to Iran. On Friday the police arrested four suspects in Tilburg for the attack on the synagogue in Rotterdam. It concerns two men aged 19, a man aged 18 and a 17-year-old. The police have not yet released information about their backgrounds and motives.

Laurie Treffers



bish for Jew, red.). Well, they don't mean my hat, you know. And if I want to talk with their parents it is: cannot, privacy.

'Mutating virus'

He does not like generalizations, noting that there are also many people who speak to him friendly on the street. And as soon as someone makes a sentence with the combination 'Muslims' and 'antisemitism', he answers: 'In the old days there were no Muslims living here and eighty percent of my family was murdered. Antisemitism is a mutating virus, it keeps reappearing in a new guise, with new groups of people who are most vulnerable to it.'

Education - at home, at schools and in asylum seeker centers for newcomers - is according to the chief rabbi the only way to teach everyone to interact normally with people of another faith. 'Just those basic norms: women are not objects, you may not hate someone because of their gender, skin color or religion. And you must not annihilate Jews.'

Also Verdoner, the National Coordinator for Antisemitism Prevention, points to the role of education. 'It is already the case that Jewish institutions must be extra protected, but of course no one wants to live behind tall walls. The most important thing we can do as a society is to intervene immediately when someone is attacked because of their background, whether at school, on the street, or at the football club.'

antisemitism is the new normal now.'

Jacobs calls himself a bridge builder, but finds it increasingly difficult. 'There must be a quay on the other side to even build a bridge to it. I am almost daily yelled at on the street by children. Free Palestine!, they shout. Or Yahūd (Ara-



The heightened security at the Jewish Museum, after the explosion at the Jewish school.

Photo ANP