

## 2 Racial and right-wing extremist violence in 2007

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He does want to set the record straight on one point, however. While it is true that he told the police that he approved of Hitler's persecution of the Jews, on reflection that is not entirely correct. He does not approve of it, but he does understand Hitler's drive. Because he did it for his country.

The person being referred to is a twenty-year-old Almere resident who was on trial for arson in 2007. The arson was clearly based on racist and right-wing extremist motives. People wondered where this violence has come from so suddenly. Apparently the local authorities had been completely oblivious to the activities of the group of young people to which the perpetrator belonged, as well as to other information about right-wing extremist violence in the region.

Since the mid-1990s, systematic attempts have been made to learn more about the problem of racial and right-wing extremist violence, especially via the *Racism & Extremism Monitor* research project.<sup>1</sup> The last general report – the seventh, published in December 2006 – investigated the violent incidents that occurred in 2005. Then in 2007 a digital publication appeared with the violence statistics for 2006.<sup>2</sup> In the current report, the eighth, the focus moves on to racial and right-wing extremist violence from the year 2007. It will present an overview of statistics and trends based on the collected data.

### 2.1 Definition and scope

Producing statistical data on racial and right-wing extremist violence is a process of making choices. Many of these choices have to do with definitions and scope, and they are rarely simple. When it comes to answering the question what constitutes racial violence, and what constitutes right-wing extremist violence, opinions differ sharply. For this reason, addressing racial and right-wing extremist violence often involves problems of definition and scope, since violent incidents have so many different discernible aspects. Thus one person may see a case of racist graffiti as a threat, while another prefers to see it as a form of vandalism. And someone else may be of the opinion that the incident in question is not even worth reporting. The question is: Who decides how the incident is to be defined and interpreted? Since in many cases the perpetrators remain unknown and information about an incident is minimal, it is difficult to evaluate their motives and background. In addition, because the perpetrator is unknown, one person may take an incident more seriously than another. It is not unusual to hear people wonder whether a particular incident was really a racist attack or just a mischievous prank.

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<sup>1</sup> See <<http://www.monitorracisme.nl>>

<sup>2</sup> See: J. van Donselaar & W. Wagenaar, *Monitor Racisme & Extremisme; racistisch en extreemrechts geweld in 2006* (Racism & Extremism Monitor: racial and right-wing extremist violence in 2006), Amsterdam: Anne Frank House / Leiden University 2007.  
<<http://www.monitorracisme.nl/content.asp?pid=206&lid=1>> (07 August 2008).

In 2007, the Research and Documentation Centre (Wetenschappelijk Onderzoeks- en Documentatiecentrum; WODC) of the Ministry of Justice published a study of criminal discrimination conducted by the Willem Pompe Institute for Criminal Law.<sup>3</sup> This study attempts to shed light on the nature and extent of general criminal offences (such as violence) aggravated by discriminatory behaviour. The researchers involved looked at the data from the publications of the *Racism & Extremism Monitor*, among other sources, but concluded that they were not suitable for use in their research. They also said that the definitions and terminology we used were not sufficiently in line with the legal definitions, terminology and parameters of racism and violence. It was argued that using legal definitions and terminology in Monitor reports would provide greater clarity. There is plenty to object to in this position. Adopting this suggestion would not solve the problems of definition and scope. Certain forms of violence are punishable under different articles of the criminal code, for example. In those cases, too, choices will have to be made. Our Monitor research includes a category of violence called "confrontation." This refers to fights involving large groups of people that can differ dramatically in size and ferocity. In addition, such confrontations are often characterised by great uncertainty regarding the position of the perpetrators and the victims, the immediate cause and the chronology of events. A confrontation is a well-defined, recognisable and frequently occurring form of violence. In terms of criminal law, however, it could constitute an array of offences, depending on the exact events (threats, assault, overt use of force). In addition, articles of the criminal code are often phrased in general terms, making it difficult to clarify important differences. A swastika daubed on the wall of a synagogue and a swastika daubed inside a public washroom are both cases of vandalism in the context of criminal law. But because of the context, the perception of the two actions is entirely different. In our violence statistics, one example is included (as targeted graffiti) and the other is not.

Because of such diverse perspectives – known in sociological jargon as the different "definitions of the situation" – we believe that a broad working definition of racial violence is recommended.<sup>4</sup>

In this regard, violence is understood as:<sup>5</sup>

behaviour in which one party deliberately harms another party, or threatens to do so, and in which this behaviour is mainly aimed at physical damage to objects and/or persons.

Following on this, racial violence can be understood as:<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> C. Brants, R. Kool & A. Ringnalda, *Strafbare discriminatie* (Criminal discrimination). Utrecht: Willem Pompe Instituut voor Strafrechtswetenschappen Universiteit Utrecht 2007, pp. 149-151.

<sup>4</sup> For a more detailed treatment see F.J. Buijs and J. van Donselaar, *Extreem rechts: aanhang, geweld en onderzoek* (The extreme right: adherents, violence and research). Leiden: LISWO 1994, pp. 55-64.

<sup>5</sup> F.J. Buijs and J. van Donselaar, *Extreem rechts: aanhang, geweld en onderzoek*, p. 57.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

that form of violence in which the victims or targets are chosen on the basis of their ethnic, racial, ethnic-religious, cultural or national origins.

Racial violence can have diverse interethnic dimensions:

- native Dutch versus ethnic minority, or "white against black;"
- the opposite: ethnic minority versus native Dutch, or "black against white;"
- ethnic minority versus ethnic minority from another ethnic group, such as a confrontation between a group of Antilleans and a group of Moroccans.

In recent years the picture has become more differentiated: when we speak of racial violence we should no longer think of native Dutch perpetrators alone but also of ethnic minority perpetrators, while the victim can be either ethnic minority or native Dutch.

Right-wing extremist violence can be racist by nature, but not necessarily. Right-wing extremist groups traditionally maintain a two-pronged enemy stereotype as a rule.<sup>7</sup> There is opposition to elements that are either "alien" or "hostile to the nation," to use right-wing extremist jargon. In National Socialism from before and during the Second World War, Jews and "gypsies" were regarded as "alien to the nation." Since 1945, "alien to the nation" has been extended in right-wing extremist ideology to include ethnic minorities in general. "Hostile to the nation" – from the right-wing extremist perspective – refers to the political opponents of the extreme right. These may be anti-fascistic activists and demonstrators, but they may also be politicians and government officials who have taken action against the extreme right or in favour of ethnic minorities. In short, right-wing extremist violence may be racist, but it may also be aimed at people regarded as opponents.

Another important point in addition to these problems of definition and scope has to do with the sufficiency of data. The statistical data on racial and right-wing extremist violence, insofar as these are available, often give rise to discussions because of the problem of "underreporting:" many incidents are not reported to the police (or anywhere else) and are known only within a small circle, sometimes no larger than the perpetrator and the victim only. Just a small portion of the phenomenon is visible while a larger part remains hidden.

The study of discrimination experiences that was carried out in conjunction with the *2005 Racial Discrimination Monitor* provides us with a few results that are of interest here.<sup>8</sup> A survey conducted among 348 respondents gave us a picture of discrimination experiences that occurred in 2004 and 2005 among Turks, Moroccans, Antilleans and Surinamers. According to the results, between 7% and 10% of the respondents had had an experience of racial violence during this period. Extrapolating this to the entire population group would result in tens of thousands of experiences of racial violence. Extrapolation should be used with caution because it is based on the presumption that

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<sup>7</sup> See chapter 3, "Right-wing extremist groups," for a more detailed discussion of right-wing extremist ideology.

<sup>8</sup> See J. van Donselaar, "Racistisch en extreemrechts geweld" (Racial violence and right-wing extremist violence), in: Igor Boog et al. (eds.), *Monitor Rassendiscriminatie 2005* (2005 Racial Discrimination Monitor). Rotterdam: Landelijk Bureau ter Bestrijding van Rassendiscriminatie [etc.] 2006, p. 128.

the research is representative and on statements made by the respondents. The percentages found, however, as well as their extrapolations, are indications of the proverbial tip of the iceberg and of the iceberg itself. The inventory approach (registration) to estimating the scale of racial violence has resulted in numbers that run into the hundreds, while research indicates in reality the numbers run into the *thousands*.

## 2.2 Brief historical sketch

In the period after the Second World War, racial and right-wing extremist violence in the Netherlands was an incidental phenomenon for decades. In the early 1970s the pattern changed. Fights broke out between Dutch people and ethnic minorities. There were race riots in Rotterdam (1972) and Schiedam (1976). In 1977 the first fatality occurred: a Turkish man was deliberately thrown into a canal, and he drowned because he could not swim. In the early 1980s the number of violent incidents increased, and there were also indications that attitudes were becoming more callous. This was manifested in threats, racist graffiti, vandalism, arson, confrontations, assaults and bombings. Here and there, evidence could be seen of obvious right-wing extremist involvement.

In the early 1990s there was a sharp increase in racial and right-wing extremist violence.<sup>9</sup> The year 1992 in particular stands out as a year in which people became aware of the increasing violence, similar to what happened in Germany decades before. At the beginning of that year, The Hague was the scene of a series of violent incidents: bombings, arson, bomb scares, vandalism and assaults. An attack on a mosque in Amersfoort was the first of twenty violent actions aimed at mosques.

The increase in racial and right-wing extremist violence continued through the mid-1990s, as can be seen in the first *Racism & Extremism Monitors*.<sup>10</sup> During the same period we also saw mounting protest against the establishment of asylum seeker centres in various parts of the country. Some of this protest went hand in hand with violent incidents, as in the Frisian village of Kollum. In the years 1999 and 2000, the period covered by the fourth Monitor, the significance of anti-Semitic violence increased noticeably. In a number of cases a connection could be made with the *Intifada* (Uprising), or to be more precise: between a series of anti-Semitic incidents and protests against Israel in response to the conflict in the Middle East between Israelis and Palestinians. During some of these protest actions, and in response to them, expressions of anti-Israel sentiment flared into anti-Semitic incidents. The fact that anti-Israel sentiments can lead to manifestations of anti-Semitism is not new in itself, but the scale and intensity with which it occurred in 1999 and 2000 in the Netherlands – and in surrounding countries – was unprecedented.

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<sup>9</sup> See F.J. Buijs & J. van Donselaar, *Extreemrechts: aanhang, geweld en onderzoek* (The extreme right: adherents, violence and research).

<sup>10</sup> J. van Donselaar, *Monitor racisme en extreem-rechts; derde rapportage* (Monitoring racism and the extreme right: third report). Leiden: Department of Public Administration, Leiden University 2000. J. van Donselaar & P. R. Rodrigues, *Monitor racisme en extreem-rechts; vierde rapportage* (Monitoring racism and the extreme right: fourth report). Amsterdam: Anne Frank House / Leiden University 2001. For these and all other reports, see: <[www.monitorracisme.nl](http://www.monitorracisme.nl)> (7 August 2008).

The fifth Monitor covered racial and right-wing extremist violence in the year 2001, the year of the terrorist attacks of 11 September in the US.<sup>11</sup> These attacks were followed immediately in the Netherlands by a series of anti-Islamic incidents, some of them violent. Another series of incidents took place – in response to 9/11 – in "reverse" order: ethnic minorities against native Dutch. There were a number of serious acts of violence with a (presumed) anti-native basis – or anti-Christian, if you will. In a few places churches were set on fire or attempts were made to vandalise them. The series of violent incidents that took place shortly after 9/11 had subsided for the most part by early December 2001. The anti-Islamic reactions to the attacks of 9/11 were of considerable statistical significance for the entire year: approximately 60% of the total number of violent incidents that we reviewed in 2001 took place after 11 September.

Nonetheless, the total number of incidents covered by our review for 2001 turned out to be lower than in the previous year, and this decrease continued into the year 2002.<sup>12</sup> One important incident that year was the assassination of Pim Fortuyn on 6 May 2002. This serious act of violence was immediately followed by a large number of hostile incidents, especially threats. Initially – in the first hours after the murder – these were mainly of a racist nature. When it became clear that the perpetrator was a native Dutchman, with roots in the world of political activism, the hostilities turned more towards left-wing political parties and their representatives, members of the government, the environmental movement, left-wing action groups and the squatters' movement. The number of threats was exceptionally large by Dutch standards.

In 2003, the period covered by the sixth Monitor, the total number of violent incidents was about the same as in 2002.<sup>13</sup> One striking feature, however, was the sharp increase in the number of confrontations. This could be seen as a reflection of the problem of the so-called *Lonsdale youth*. The involvement of the extreme right in any form in acts of violence in 2003 was double that of the previous year (10% and 5% of the total respectively).

Most striking for 2004 was the wave of violence in November following the assassination of Theo van Gogh.<sup>14</sup> The series of violent incidents that occurred immediately after the murder on 2 November was reminiscent of those after the terrorist attacks in the US on 11 September 2001. The number of incidents was approximately the same, but they took place within a more concentrated period after Van Gogh's death. Most of the incidents had to do with violence against Muslims and Islamic property. Just as in 2001

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<sup>11</sup> See J. van Donselaar & P. R. Rodrigues, *Monitor racism en extreem-rechts; vijfde rapportage* (Monitoring racism and the extreme right: fifth report). Amsterdam: Anne Frank House / Leiden University 2002.

<sup>12</sup> J. van Donselaar & P. R. Rodrigues, *Monitor Racisme & Extremisme; racistisch en extreemrechts geweld in 2002* (Racism & extremism monitor: Racial violence and right-wing extremist violence in 2002). Amsterdam: Anne Frank House / Leiden University 2003.

<sup>13</sup> J. van Donselaar & P. R. Rodrigues, *Monitor Racisme & Extremisme; zesde rapportage* (Racism & extremism monitor: sixth report). Amsterdam: Anne Frank House / Leiden University 2004.

<sup>14</sup> J. van Donselaar & P. R. Rodrigues, *Monitor Racisme & Extremisme; zesde rapportage. Annex: Over ontwikkelingen na de moord op Van Gogh* (Racism & extremism monitor: sixth report. Annex: On developments after the murder of Van Gogh). Amsterdam: Anne Frank House / Leiden University 2004.

the incidence of arson was strikingly high. There were a strikingly large number of cases of arson. Due to insufficient data for the year 2004, comparisons with earlier years could not be made.

The series of violent reactions to the murder of Van Gogh continued for a time into 2005, resulting in an increase in the number of violent incidents.<sup>15</sup>

After this series had come to an end, the number of incidents dropped from 296 in 2005 to 265 in 2006. Against this background, it was curious that two trends from the previous years persisted: the proportion of right-wing extremist perpetrators kept on growing and the number of confrontations did as well. The growth in the proportion of right-wing extremist perpetrators is a striking feature of the past years. In 2002 there were only 12 incidents involving right-wing extremism. In 2005 that was 38 incidents, and in 2006 the number had grown to 67.<sup>16</sup>

### 2.3 Data collection

Collecting data on racial violence is not regarded as a primary responsibility of the government in the Netherlands, as it is in many other countries. Consequently, there is no central government database of racial violence in the Netherlands. The data on which this chapter is based are taken from several complementary sources and differ considerably in form and quality. In order to explain how we work with this material, we need first to discuss our approach to data collection and analysis.

Our data come from three different data providers. The most important provider is the National Police Services Agency (Korps Landelijke Politiediensten; KLPD), in particular the National Information Hub (Nationaal Informatie Knooppunt; NIK) of the National Criminal Intelligence Service (Dienst Nationale Recherche Informatie; DNRI). Data are also obtained from the annual reports of the National Federation of Anti-Discrimination Agencies and Hotlines (Landelijke Vereniging van Anti-Discriminatie Bureaus en Meldpunten; LVADB – now part of Art. 1, the national association against discrimination on all grounds) and the Kafka Anti-Fascist Research Group (Antifascistische Onderzoeksgroep Kafka). This broad approach provides a more comprehensive picture than data from the police registries alone. These police data constitute about 55% of the incident registrations known to us.

Until two years ago we also made use of data on anti-Semitic violence from the Centre for Information and Documentation on Israel (Centrum Informatie en Documentatie Israël; CIDI). But since 2007 the publication of the CIDI statistics has been held up, so they can no longer be included in our research. This may affect of the number of violent incidents with an anti-Semitic character registered in the context of this Monitor report.

When the Monitor project was developed in the mid-1990s, these data were provided by the National Intelligence Service (Binnenlandse Veiligheidsdienst; BVD), now the

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<sup>15</sup> J. van Donselaar & P. R. Rodrigues, *Monitor Racisme & Extremisme; zevende rapportage* (Racism & extremism monitor: seventh report). Amsterdam: Anne Frank House / Leiden University 2006.

<sup>16</sup> J. van Donselaar & W. Wagenaar, *Monitor Racisme & Extremisme; racistisch en extreemrechts geweld in 2006* (Racism & extremism monitor: racial and right-wing extremist violence in 2006).

General Intelligence and Security Service (Algemene Inlichtingen- en Veiligheidsdienst; AIVD). The AIVD asked the 25 police regions to gather data on racial and right-wing extremist violence based on a particular framework. The AIVD stored these data in a central database. The *format* of this database was developed as part of the *Racism & Extremism Monitor* project. Then the data were processed and analysed. A few years ago, the AIVD indicated its desire to terminate its role in the incident inventory. The agency had decided that working on the inventory was not a high enough priority; the fact that the inventory itself did not function very well also contributed to its decision. The *Racism & Extremism Monitor* project urged that the AIVD continue its involvement until another agency could be found to take up the task. An unavoidable result of this problem was that no data on violent incidents registered by the police were provided for 2004. Finally the transfer was made and since November 2004 the task has been carried out by the KLPD (National Police Services Agency).

The KLPD gathers the data from the various police systems. This involves data searches using a number of relevant keywords. The raw data are then handed over. After an initial inventory and selection of incidents for the Monitor study, details are obtained of relevant incidents (insofar as they are known). In most cases this provides a clear picture of the incidents. Almost exactly the same process takes place with data from other providers. Selections are made on the basis of raw data, and additional information is retrieved where necessary.

After this selection, all available data are processed in a database. During the processing, each incident is coded based on the available information. These codes have to do with the type of incident, the location and details about perpetrators and victims. It should be noted that one event can comprise several incidents. If a synagogue is smeared with graffiti and then set on fire, we register this as one case of targeted graffiti and one case of arson. Or if windows are smashed in the same mosque on two different days, we regard this as two cases of vandalism. Selection, assessment and classification is done by us, Monitor project researchers – that is, without the involvement of the data providers.

Data processing involves using data that are highly varied in terms of volume and quality. In addition, assessing the perpetrator's motives is open to a great deal of discussion, since in most cases the perpetrators are unknown. In our classifications we take a conservative approach. When there is doubt about the racist or right-wing extremist motives behind a particular incident, the incident is not included, even if it was delivered to us as such. The dataset thus assembled is checked for duplications and overlaps to prevent any distortion of the overall picture. The result is an integrated database for the year in question. Based on this database, a wide range of operations can be carried out and annual statistics can be obtained.

We now know from experience that data from several different sources have relatively few overlaps. This "proves" the value and desirability of an integrated database that is based on several sources and not exclusively on data from the government. It follows that a file based only on police data, which is the practice in many other countries, would be highly incomplete. There have been some frowns of disapproval from the European

Union regarding the absence of official statistics on racial violence in the Netherlands – statistical material generated by the government. We cannot agree on this point; we find that an integrated database based on several sources is better than a government dataset based only on government sources. In any case, we note once again that any database based on inventories involving underreporting is an inaccurate representation of reality.

## 2.4 Nature and scope of incidents in 2007

In 2007 a total of 223 violent incidents of a racist or right-wing extremist character were registered. In table 2.1 these incidents are divided into various categories of violence. The statistics from 2007 are placed alongside the figures from the preceding five years. As noted earlier, we could not compile statistics for 2004.

Since 2005 we have also been registering incidents involving illegal possession of firearms. In our two previous publications on racial and right-wing extremist violence we included those statistics in the table of violent incidents.<sup>17</sup>

This choice was criticised in the aforementioned study by the Willem Pompe Institute for Criminal Law.<sup>18</sup> They claimed that, according our own definition, possession of firearms should not be regarded as violence. There is much to be said in response to this criticism. But since possession of firearms by right-wing extremists is an important and relevant fact, we will turn our attention to it later on in the chapter.

**Table 2.1 Racial and extreme right-wing violence, by category, 2002–2007<sup>19</sup>**

Category	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Targeted graffiti	41	52	-	54	59	32
Threats	83	73	-	73	56	49
Bomb scares	7	1	-	2	0	3
Confrontations	10	28	-	37	41	36
Vandalism	38	35	-	42	31	34
Arson	10	10	-	13	11	11
Assault	75	60	-	70	60	57
Bombings	0	1	-	0	0	0
Manslaughter	0	0	-	0	1	1
Total	264	260	-	291	259	223

<sup>17</sup> See: J. van Donselaar & P. R. Rodrigues, *Monitor Racisme & Extremisme; zesde rapportage* (Racism & extremism monitor: sixth report). J. van Donselaar & W. Wagenaar, *Monitor Racisme & Extremisme; racistisch en extreemrechts geweld in 2006* (Racism & extremism monitor: racial and right-wing extremist violence in 2006).

<sup>18</sup> C. Brants, R. Kool & A. Ringnalda, *Strafbare discriminatie* (Criminal discrimination). Utrecht: Willem Pompe Instituut voor Strafrechtswetenschappen Universiteit Utrecht 2007, p. 150, note 27.

<sup>19</sup> The totals from 2005 and 2006 differ from the totals in the previous Monitor reports. This is because possession of firearms was included in those reports and is not any longer.

### *Targeted graffiti*

Targeted graffiti is vandalism directed towards an object. It can involve anything from drawing a swastika on the wall of a public washroom with a felt-tip pen to large-scale racist graffiti on a war monument. Graffiti, especially in the form of minor vandalism, is an expression of violence that is relatively common. In this study only the more serious cases will be discussed: "targeted graffiti." These include acts with an explicit target and large-scale graffiti.<sup>20</sup>

In 2007, 32 cases of targeted graffiti were registered. This is a sharp drop from the 59 registered cases of targeted graffiti in 2006. Here are a few examples:

- In Elburg during the afternoon before the commemoration of Remembrance Day, swastikas were painted on trees around the war monument. Later that evening the flags and wreaths on the monument were stolen.
- In Nieuwe Pekela, a house for asylum seekers was smeared with racist slogans.
- In Haarlem, two mosques were smeared with racist slogans and swastikas.

### *Threats*

Threats are a common form of racist and extremist violence. After a sharp increase in the number of registered threats following 2001, a decline has occurred since 2005. The 49 registered threats in 2007 are a continuation of this trend. It may be that the strict prosecution policy with regard to threats that has been carried out by prominent politicians has had a preventive effect.

A few examples:

- A "gabber" was accosted in the street by a Moroccan youth because of his outfit: garments bearing the "Lonsdale" label. The Moroccan youth told him that wearing such clothing was forbidden. The gabber walked away, whereupon the Moroccan youth stood right in front of him and let him see the barrel of a pistol hidden in his sleeve. He said, "What are you wearing those clothes for? You want me to shoot you? I have a gun and I'm not afraid to use it."
- A man wrote on the website of Amsterdam alderman Lodewijk Asscher of the PvdA (Labour Party), "I think the filthy bloodsucking Amsterdam Jew Asscher should be beheaded. Come on down to Rotterdam, you dog."
- In March a group of Moroccan youths from Rotterdam went to Morocco to build a butterfly garden. After Geert Wilders and the Liveable Rotterdam party criticised this trip, the organisers were threatened by telephone calls and e-mail.

### *Bomb scares*

A bomb scare is a specific form of threat with varying degrees of gravity. The possible preventive effect of criminal law that we suggested may have been responsible for the decrease in the number of threats did not extend to bomb scares.

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<sup>20</sup> The Supreme Court of the Netherlands also regards such targeted graffiti as "violence." See Supreme Court 16 September 1996, E.R. van Eck et al., (eds.), *Rechtspraak rassendiscriminatie 1995-2000* (Case law on racial discrimination 1995-2000). Rotterdam: Landelijk Bureau ter bestrijding van Rassendiscriminatie, no. 408. This had to do with large-scale targeted graffiti in a military cemetery.

- A man called in a bomb scare on behalf of Osama bin Laden during a visit by the English queen. The police suspect a right-wing extremist.
- An Islamic primary school in Eindhoven received a bomb scare.
- A bomb scare was called in to the Central Railway Station in Leiden with the words "Bomb Leiden Central. Bomb Leiden Central. Dirty, filthy Jews."

### *Confrontations*

A confrontation is often spontaneous, but sometimes it consists of organised street violence of a more or less racist or right-wing extremist character. These can often be described as "race riots." Several parties are involved, often young people who get into fights at school or during an evening out. It is often difficult to tell the difference between the perpetrators and the victims. In recent years there has been a steady increase in the number of confrontations we have registered. In 2007 there was a decline, the first in years. The 36 confrontations reported are five less than in 2006.

- In Almere a black youth was assaulted by a group who shouted "White Power" as they beat him. Friends of the victim responded by beating up one of the perpetrators and his girlfriend.  
This led to various confrontations between the two groups in which they threatened each other with clubs. There were also serious back-and-forth threats to individual members.
- In Rotterdam, the right-wing extremist party the National Alliance (Nationale Alliantie; NA) organised a demonstration. A neo-Nazi organisation, Youth Storm Netherlands (Jeugdstorm Nederland), whose members despise the NA, descended on the demonstration with the intention of using force on the demonstrators. The police who were present prevented this and sent the group away. A little while later the same group from Youth Storm encountered a group of Feyenoord football supporters who were planning on taking action against the presence of right-wing extremists in their city. This resulted in a brief but fierce fight in which at least one person was wounded. Afterwards the Youth Stormers were arrested.
- A young man in Utrecht was assaulted after he had gone public with his right-wing extremist ideas and had made the Nazi salute. In response he drummed up a group of friends to get even with the perpetrators. When several groups of youths gathered, the police came and managed to prevent further escalation.

### *Vandalism*

Vandalism is the deliberate infliction of damage with a racist or right-wing extremist motive. In 2007 we registered 34 cases of vandalism, a slight increase.

- In Utrecht a window in a mosque was smashed. The perpetrator said he hated Moroccans.
- A group of drunken neo-Nazis were walking through the city of Brummen. A witness later reported that when they passed a Jewish monument they pulled it from its pedestal. The group were then arrested. The perpetrator said it was an accident and that he did not know it was a Jewish monument. The other members of the group said they had not noticed the vandalism at all.

- In Grijpskerk the hedge around the house of a Lebanese family was vandalised. The police later arrested four perpetrators, who were given a HALT punishment (out-of-court settlement offered by the Public Prosecution Service to juvenile offenders involving community service or training order). The family had long been the target of harassment in the village.

### *Arson*

Arson is a special form of vandalism. The number of registered cases of arson in 2007 was 11, the same as the number of registrations in 2006.

- The Moroccan mosque in Edam was set on fire by a few Lonsdale youth using a Molotov cocktail.
- A group of right-wing extremists burst into a squat in Almere. They chased the residents out of the building and set the building on fire. The building burned to the ground.
- During the celebration of the Islamic festival of sacrifice at a school, one of the pupils, who was known for his right-wing extremist ideas, started a fire in the washrooms.

### *Assault*

In 2007, 57 cases of assault of a racist or right-wing extremist character were reported, a slight drop from 2006.

- A few right-wing extremist skinheads in Naaldwijk were waiting in front of the school of a friend. There they began to quarrel with an ethnic minority pupil after having made racist insults about him. The tension gradually mounted and one of the skinheads followed the victim into the school. There the skinhead picked up a pair of scissors and began stabbing the youth wildly until others pulled him away. The perpetrator was later arrested and finally sentenced to prison plus detention under a hospital order.
- In Noord-Holland, three youths were verbally abused ("f\*\*\* Muslims") and then badly beaten and kicked. The three unknown perpetrators looked like Lonsdale youth.
- Three teenagers at a bus shelter insulted a woman wearing a headscarf. They all got on the same bus and followed the woman after she left the bus. They made racist remarks, grabbed her, pushed her against a wall and twisted her arm and hand.

### *Bombings*

By "bombing" we do not mean throwing heavy fireworks or Molotov cocktails, but using explosives in order to cause a serious explosion. Bombings with racist or right-wing extremist motives are rare in the Netherlands. One such incident occurred in 2003. In 2004 there were two bombings after the murder of Van Gogh and another that was prevented by the police. Since 2005 we have registered no bombings.

### *Manslaughter*

Racist or right-wing extremist violence with fatal results is so far a rare phenomenon in the Netherlands. In 2007 there was one incident that we believe should be placed in this category.

- In early June 2007 in Rotterdam a quarrel arose over a stolen bicycle. A small group of Turkish youth accused a Surinamese youth of bicycle theft. After the Surinamese youth gave back the bicycle, however, the quarrel continued. Finally one of the Turkish youths was stabbed, with fatal results.

During the incident, the perpetrator was called a "f\*\*\* nigger" by the group of attackers and was told never to think that a Surinamese could get away with stealing a bicycle from a Turk without being punished for it.

In this case the incident was one of interethnic confrontation in which the perpetrator of the stabbing had been harassed with racist insults. Since the provocation and the question of perpetrator and victim constitute a grey area, the incident qualifies as a confrontation. Because the fatal results seem to be directly linked to the racist attitude of the fatal victim, it was decided to record this incident as manslaughter with racist motives.

## **2.5 Trends in 2007**

In the section on "trends" included in each Monitor report we take a closer look at the violence statistics to review the most salient developments.

### *2.5.1 Drop in violence*

The most outstanding trend in 2007 was the steep drop in the number of violent incidents with racist or right-wing extremist motives. In 2006 the number of incidents had already dropped by 10%, and that trend continued into 2007. The number of incidents decreased from 259 to 223. This brings us to the lowest number of violent incidents in the last ten years.

This drop in the number of incidents occurs in all our violence categories. Only the number of assaults and bomb scares rose slightly. The most striking decline is the number of cases of targeted graffiti, from 59 to 32. We have no immediate explanation for this.

### *2.5.2 Confrontations*

The significant rise in the number of confrontations in past years (from 10 in 2002 to 41 incidents in 2006) did not continue into 2007. For the first time since 2002 the number of confrontations dropped slightly to 36 incidents.

In the period 2002-2005 we could attribute the increase to the emerging Lonsdale youth phenomenon.<sup>21</sup> Lonsdale youth were involved in many of the confrontations we registered. In 2006 this was no longer the case, despite a rise in the number of

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<sup>21</sup> See chapter 3, "Right-wing extremist groups," section 3.3, for an explanation of the concept of "Lonsdale youth."

confrontations: the registered involvement of Lonsdale youth declined. We gave two possible explanations for this. First, a development was underway in which Lonsdale youth were being further radicalised into "full-fledged" neo-Nazis, thereby leaving their Lonsdale identity behind. That is one possible explanation for the decrease. Second, we noted that the Lonsdale label was undergoing an inflationary process. In the media and among the police and the courts the label was no longer being used in incidents involving Lonsdale youth. That might also explain the decline.

The first explanation was supported by the statistics, at least this year. Of the 36 confrontations in 2007, 14 involved Lonsdale youth. In 2006 that was 13 out of 41. At the same time we saw an increase in the involvement of the extreme right in confrontations. In 2005 there were 3 such incidents, in 2006 there were 13 and in 2007 there were 18. This development has two possible causes. First, it is to be expected that Lonsdale youth who become neo-Nazis will be up to the same tricks. That is, even if they change their identity they will still be active in confrontations. Second, a number of right-wing extremist groups seek confrontations with opponents and with the government as part of a clear-cut strategy. A neo-Nazi organisation like National Socialist Action (Nationaal Socialistische Aktie; NSA) grew out of the Lonsdale scene. This organisation has already made a few attempts to disrupt the activities of political opponents. In addition, the organisation recently voiced its opposition to the government and the police but also acted it out in the form of demonstrations. Activists from the NSA became involved in a confrontation with police at a demonstration in the city of Oss in 2007.

### 2.5.3 *Victims and targets*

"Victimhood" is a collective term in which finer distinctions can be useful. So it is relevant to distinguish between violence aimed at things and violence aimed at people.

Violence aimed at things can include government buildings and objects that serve as political symbols, such as monuments and war cemeteries. It can also involve abstract concepts such as "the police" and "the city." "Ethnic minority" objects include houses and commercial property owned or occupied by ethnic minorities, mosques and places of prayer, ethnic minority organisations, and accommodations for asylum seekers and refugees.

Targeting "neutral" objects involves applying racist messages or symbols to "neutral" places such as walls, fences, paved road surfaces, bus shelters or public washrooms. Violence aimed at persons concerns people who are chosen as victims because of their ethnic, "racial," national or religious background. Examples might include residents of foreign origin or native Dutch residents, refugees, Muslims and persons with a Jewish background. Right-wing extremist actions are also sometimes aimed at native "public persons." In this case such persons are chosen as targets because of their function, office, activities or attitude, such as mayors, city councillors and politicians.

**Table 2.2 Violence towards persons and objects, 2006-2007**

	2006	2007
Towards objects	106	74
Towards persons	142	138
Mixed or unspecified	11	11
Total	259	223

For many years, the inventories carried out by the *Racism & Extremism Monitor* kept finding more violence against objects than against persons. Then in 2002 the scale appeared to have tipped and more violence was observed towards persons in absolute numbers than towards objects. This development grew stronger in 2007. Almost the entire decline in violence in 2007 is in violence towards objects. The amount of violence towards persons is virtually unchanged.

**Table 2.3 Racial violence in 2006 and 2007, according to ‘ethnic direction’ and categories of incidents**

Category	Anti-Jewish		Anti-islam		Anti-refugee		Anti-"White"	
	2006	2007	2006	2007	2006	2007	2006	2007
Targeted graffiti	15	13	18	15	0	1	1	0
Threats	8	4	10	16	1	2	1	3
Bomb scares	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0
Confrontations	0	0	7	6	1	2	1	1
Vandalism	8	1	12	17	0	1	0	0
Arson	2	0	6	9	0	0	0	0
Assault	2	2	9	18	1	1	3	3
Bombings	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Manslaughter	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	35	21	62	82	3	7	6	7

It is relevant to ask what the "ethnic direction" of racial violence might be called. Two developments stand out with regard to the "ethnic direction" of racial violence. The first is the steep drop in the number of violent acts with an anti-Semitic motive in the inventory. This trend was already evident in 2006, when anti-Semitic violence had already dropped from 41 to 35 incidents. This year the drop is much greater, however. This undoubtedly has to do with the absence of violence figures from CIDI. For a number of years, CIDI provided us with an overview of violent anti-Semitic incidents, which we processed into our database. Since last year, however, we have no longer received the CIDI figures, which accounts for part of the drop in 2006 and 2007. The drop in 2007 is so large, however, that it would be wrong to attribute it to the absent CIDI figures alone.

The second development that stands out is the continued steep increase in the violence towards Muslims: from 62 to 82 incidents. We had already noted this growth in 2006, but now it is continuing. This is all the more striking in view of the fact that racial violence is undergoing a general decline.

#### 2.5.4 Perpetrators

Writing about the perpetrators of racial violence is a complicated business, since the vast majority of cases of racial and right-wing extremist violence are never solved. This conclusion has repeatedly been drawn in the context of the *Racism & Extremism Monitor* project.

The clear-up rate has been stable for a number of years. In 2003 and 2005 it was 11%, and in 2006 and 2007 it was 12%. The national clear-up rate for all offences was 22% in 2007, and for criminal discrimination prohibitions it was 43%.<sup>22</sup>

This coincides with a more established pattern. Apparently the chance of being caught is extremely low in these kinds of offences. We suspect that the chance of apprehension would be considerably higher if more investigative capacity were made available. Our "well-reasoned" suspicion is based on our own observations, notes and on a number of cases that we have reviewed over the years. We suspect that any specific investigation of individual cases will bear out our conviction that if the police make a serious effort the results will usually be positive.

There is one important comment that must be made at this point. It is our impression that several changes have been made in the investigation of right-wing extremist violence. In 2007 a few major cases were solved that ultimately resulted in stiff sentences. A series of cases of arson by right-wing extremists was solved, for example, and the weapons arsenal of an active neo-Nazi was discovered. Two suppliers of these weapons were also arrested. This suggests that more investigative capacity has been made available for solving crimes of right-wing extremist violence. Possibly this will result in a higher clear-up rate in the future.

The clear-up rate is related to establishing the identity of the perpetrator. Additional information about the offender(s) can be distilled from the registration of an incident. A victim of an assault, for example, will be able to supply a lot of information about the offender without necessarily resulting in such a clear identification that investigation and arrest are possible. So the notion of "known perpetrator" is rather elastic, in a certain sense. This means that even unsolved cases often have a great deal to tell us about the role of the perpetrator.

One urgent question that comes up in the discussion of racial violence is whether the perpetrator had extreme right-wing sympathies that may have played a role.

The total number of violent incidents in 2007 for which right-wing extremist involvement has been established was 53. That is a decrease from the previous year, when right-wing extremist involvement was identified in 64 cases.<sup>23</sup>

This puts an end to the upward trend of right-wing extremist involvement, which had been in evidence since 2002. The relative amount of right-wing extremist involvement is still high, however, with only 12 cases in 2002.

"Right-wing extremist involvement" is a complex phenomenon. That is why we think it is useful to make a few more general, explanatory comments. Many people believe the perpetrators of racial violence can be found in circles of right-wing extremist activists and their organisations. There is evidence of what might be called large-scale "symbolic involvement." This reaction reflects the tendency to look first at those who are known for their racist views. This elementary reaction, which is understandable in itself, is far from consistent with the facts. Because many cases are not solved, we can only speculate on the role of right-wing extremist organisations. One thing is clear, however: in only a

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<sup>22</sup> See chapter 9, "Investigation and prosecution in 2007."

<sup>23</sup> The number deviates somewhat from the amount reported for 2006 (64 instead of 67) in view of the fact that possession of firearms is not included; see next section.

fraction of the cases can a link be made between the committing of racist acts and the extreme right. The demonstrable relationship is usually indirect: while the offence cannot be attributed to any particular organisation, it can be attributed to persons who make up that organisation in a variety of ways. There is no consensus as to what extent right-wing extremist groups are involved in racial violence. It is all a matter of how it is viewed and defined. Are we looking at individual perpetrators? At the motives? At the impact? At ideological ties? At the degree of organisation? Or are we looking at what the victims perceive?

In short, the involvement of right-wing extremist organisations in the phenomenon of racial violence is a complicated affair, and that is not only true of the Netherlands. But the (supposed) involvement of the extreme right is a factor that can make feelings run high. When the extreme right is actually involved in violence, it is striking that in only a few cases is there a clearly demonstrable, direct (organised) relationship with known right-wing extremist groups. As a rule the links are indirect, such as the involvement of adherents.

Racial and right-wing extremist violence can overlap, but not necessarily. A distinction can be made between racial violence with right-wing extremist motives and right-wing extremist violence that is not racist. As far as the latter is concerned, 36 such cases were registered in 2007, a sharp increase from the 15 incidents in 2006.

These might be threats to an anti-racist organisation, vandalism to a building occupied by a left-wing party or threats made to a homosexual by a right-wing extremist. With the exception of these cases, the violence in 2007 can be qualified as racist. This brings the number of cases of racial violence in 2007 to 187.

Another important factor in addition to the political background of the perpetrator is his or her ethnicity. Racial violence can be committed by native people as well as by ethnic minorities. In the 2007 inventory, sufficient information was available in 103 cases to narrow the identity of the (presumed) perpetrators down to native Dutch or ethnic minority: in 86 cases the perpetrators were native Dutch and in 17 cases they were ethnic minorities. Last year, native Dutch perpetrators were identified in 93 cases and ethnic minorities in 26. As far as anti-Semitic violence was concerned, we found 3 cases with ethnic minority perpetrators.

#### *2.5.5 Possession of weapons*

Since 2005 we have also been registering possession of weapons in the right-wing extremist context. Initially we included this in our overview of right-wing extremist and racial violence. Because possession of weapons does not have both a perpetrator *and* a victim, however, this category does not fit into our definition of violence and we decided to remove it from our overview.

But because possession of weapons is an important topic among right-wing extremists, with a number of striking cases in recent years, we will continue to focus some attention on it. The importance of doing so is also supported by our statistical material. In 2006 the number of cases of illegal possession of weapons among the extreme right that we registered still showed an increase from 5 to 6. In 2007 we registered 15 cases.

A few examples:

- While searching the house of a right-wing extremist, the police found various air pistols, nunchakus, a ninja star, a cudgel, shuriken, a whip and a crossbow.
- A weapons arsenal was found in the home of a well-known neo-Nazi in Spijkenisse. It included an automatic weapons and homemade nail bombs. During the trial it was also revealed that the perpetrator had tried to buy a bazooka.
- A group of young right-wing extremists descended on a music festival in Enschede. They began harassing the young people in attendance for their left-wing appearance. One well-known right-wing extremists began spraying with pepper spray.

We also registered four cases of weapons possession in cases of racial violence with no right-wing extremist involvement.

## 2.6 Conclusion

In the year 2007 we saw the continuation of a few trends that had had their start in 2006. The most striking of these was the decline in the number of violent racist and right-wing extremist offences.

In 2007 we saw a drop of more than 13%. This decline has been repeated in almost all the other categories of violence. We began noticing this drop in racist and right-wing extremist violence back in 2001. It was interrupted, however, by a wave of racist and right-wing extremist violence following the assassination of Theo van Gogh. But now that the decline has resumed, the wave seems to be over.

As far as the *victims* of racial and right-wing extremist violence are concerned, there has been a sharp rise in the number of incidents with an anti-Muslim character. They increased by one-third in the face of the declining trend.

On the other hand there has been a notable decline in the number of violent anti-Semitic incidents.

When we look at the *perpetrators* of racial and right-wing extremist violence, the most striking feature is the involvement of right-wing extremist perpetrators. The number of incidents in which right-wing extremist perpetrators were probably involved has dropped slightly but remains high in comparison with previous years. What is also striking is the strong shift in direction that the violence has taken. Right-wing extremist violence that is non-racist in character, such as violence against political opponents, police or government, always accounted for a relatively modest number of incidents. The increase in the number of such incidents to 36 in 2007 is very striking, to say the least. This may have to do with the tendency of a number of neo-Nazi groups to take a stronger stand against the government and against their own political opponents.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> See chapter 3, "Right-wing extremist groups."