

Summary of the Sixth Report on Racism, Anti-Semitism, and Right-Wing Extremist Violence in the Netherlands in 2016

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1. Introduction

This summary of the Sixth Report on Anti-Semitism, Racism, and Right-Wing Extremist Violence in the Netherlands presents an overview of the incidents that occurred in the year 2016 and compares the developments to the previous years. The report was commissioned by the Anne Frank House. The Anne Frank House is responsible for the house where Anne Frank went into hiding, and uses her life story to draw attention to the risks of anti-Semitism, racism, and discrimination, and the importance of freedom, equal rights, and democracy. The aims of the Anne Frank House include providing information on and organising educational activities about discrimination and human rights, in order to promote the proper functioning of an open, pluriform, democratic society.

2. Racism and anti-Semitism in the Netherlands in 2016

This chapter opens with a survey of the incidents retrieved from police databases. For every topic (anti-Semitism, anti-Semitic verbal abuse, racism, and racist verbal abuse) we will quote the number of incidents in 2016 and compare these numbers to previous years. In addition, we will focus on the regional distribution of the incidents and the types of offences involving anti-Semitism and racism.

2.1 Incidents by category

In total, we retrieved 4,038 incidents of an anti-Semitic or racist nature that occurred in 2016 from the police databases. Table 1 illustrates how these incidents were distributed over the categories. Some incidents were retrieved through more than one query and may therefore figure more than once in the table. Table 1 shows the trends in the numbers of incidents throughout the years.

Table 1. Incidents by category for 2013-2016

	2013	2014	2015	2016
Intentional anti-Semitism	61	76	57	35
Anti-Semitic verbal abuse	872	710	424	761
Racism	(2,189) ^a	(2,764)	2,732	2,247
- of which discrimination against Muslims	35	142	466	364
Racist verbal abuse	1,346	825	842	945
- of which verbal abuse against Muslims	115	88	222	34
Total ^b	4,283	4,092	4,165	4,038

a. Due to a change in our data collection method concerning racist incidents incorporated in 2015, we have to be careful when comparing the trend to years before 2015. This is why the numbers for the previous years are given between brackets.

b. Since incidents may be listed under more than one category, the total number of incidents is lower than the sum of the incidents by category.

Just as for the year 2015, the police did a manual screening of all incidents from 2016, which resulted in a more careful selection.

A large part of the anti-Semitic incidents seems to have been untargeted, in the sense that they were not aimed against the Jewish religion or specific Jewish people. Verbal abuse in which the word 'Jew' was used as a term of abuse, was included in the report (see the section on anti-Semitic verbal abuse), but incidents in which, for instance, a swastika was daubed on a random object without a clear link to possible addressees, have not been elaborated on or identified, other than by stating that we found 838 such incidents for 2016. Compared to 2015, the number of incidents of anti-Semitic verbal abuse rose significantly in 2016. It is, however in line with the numbers from 2013 and 2014. We have not been able to find a clear explanation for the sudden drop in 2015.

As in 2015, the number of incidents of intentional anti-Semitism decreased further: to 35 incidents in 2016. The number of incidents with racist characteristics decreased as well, but the reason for this decrease is unclear.

The number of incidents of discrimination against Muslims also decreased in 2016. In 2015, we noticed a significant increase in the number of incidents involving discrimination against Muslims, which in our previous report (Tierolf et al., 2016) we attributed to the increased social tensions caused by terrorist attacks and the arrival of large groups of refugees in the Netherlands. The anticipated flows of refugees got going in 2015 and sparked many reactions. However, we noticed a decrease in the number of incidents over 2016. In March 2016, an agreement was concluded between the European Union and Turkey with the aim of reducing the number of illegal crossings from Turkey to the Greek islands. As a result, the flow of refugees to Europe seemed to subside, but the discussions continued until mid-2016. Further analysis of the dates of the incidents of discrimination against Muslims shows that the larger part (56%) took place in the first six months of 2016, peaking in February (11.4%). Our data seem to indicate a (slight) decline in the second half of 2016. Although the terrorist attacks in Europe continue, we may be witnessing a certain habituation to the attacks, with fewer incidents occurring and cropping up in the police databases.

3. Anti-Semitism

This chapter will provide information on the numbers and substance of the anti-Semitic incidents in the Netherlands in 2016. We will start with a breakdown of the incidents involving anti-Semitism. We will then go on to discuss the incidents of intentional anti-Semitism in more detail. For these incidents, it was determined with some certainty that the anti-Semitism was directed against people or objects with a (perceived) Jewish background. In addition, we will cover incidents of anti-Semitic verbal abuse.

3.1 Incidents with anti-Semitic characteristics in 2016

We retrieved 35 incidents of intentional anti-Semitism from the National Law Enforcement Database of the National Police (*Basisvoorziening Handhaving* BVH) for the year 2016. This number is significantly lower than in previous years (see Table 2). The exact reason for this decrease is unclear. It seems fair to assume that the high number of incidents in 2014 could largely be explained by the escalating Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the summer of 2014. In

2015 and 2016, there were no further violent escalations on that same scale, which may account for the decreased number of incidents.

As in previous years, incidents involving intentional anti-Semitism were most prolific in the Amsterdam region.

Table 2 Incidents with anti-Semitic characteristics between 2012-2016

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Intentional anti-Semitism	58	61	76	57	35
Anti-Semitic verbal abuse	931	872	710	424	761

In addition, we found 761 incidents of anti-Semitic verbal abuse in the BVH for 2016. This is a marked increase compared to 2015. As discussed in paragraph 3.3 below, this is mainly caused by a marked increase in the number of anti-Semitic verbal abuse incidents in the regions of The Hague and Rotterdam. As a result, the downward trend in the number of incidents of anti-Semitic verbal abuse that started in 2012 was reversed.

3.2 Description of incidents of intentional anti-Semitism

This paragraph covers the substance of intentionally anti-Semitic incidents. These incidents are likely motivated by the offender's anti-Semitism. This is to say that the offender insults, threatens, or daubs graffiti with anti-Semitic intentions and that these manifestations are directed against Jewish people or locations.

The 35 incidents of intentional anti-Semitism can roughly be divided into three categories, according to their targets:

- Incidents directed against people. This concerns insults, threats, or assaults directed against Jews, in cases in which it is likely that the offender is aware of the (perceived) Jewish background of the victim, and in which the action is motivated by the victim's (perceived) Jewish background.
- Incidents directed against objects. This category covers graffiti and the scratching of anti-Semitic symbols or expressions, or vandalism at (perceived) Jewish locations, such as a Jewish cemetery or a Jewish school, or at locations that are associated with the Second World War.
- Incidents without victims. This concerns provocations of an anti-Semitic nature that are not aimed at specific Jewish people.

Table 3 shows the number of incidents of intentional anti-Semitism retrieved from the BVH, both for 2015 and for 2016. Compared to 2015, the number of incidents in which people were targeted dropped in 2016, while the number of victimless incidents increased.

Table 3 Number of incidents of intentional anti-Semitism by target for 2015 and 2016

Targets of intentional anti-Semitism	2015	2016
Incidents targeting people ^a	37	14
- on social media	9	1
Incidents targeting objects	10	2
Incidents targeting objects	10	19
- on social media	2	9
Total	57	35

a Hate speech (insults) differs from hate crimes (threats and assaults). Here, they are covered together because this table focuses on the targets of the incidents. In these incidents, the victims are people, in the incidents below, the targets are objects.

3.3 Anti-Semitic verbal abuse

For the year 2016, we found 761 incidents of anti-Semitic verbal abuse in the BVH; this is an increase of nearly 80% compared to 2015. The downward trend from previous reports was reversed. The increase in the number of incidents of anti-Semitic verbal abuse was caused almost exclusively by the increase in the regions of The Hague and Rotterdam. In these regions, the number of incidents of anti-Semitic verbal abuse more than doubled.

Anti-Semitic verbal abuse directed against people in public office

A common type of anti-Semitic verbal abuse is the verbal abuse directed against police officers, for instance by calling them ‘fucking Jews’ (or *kankerjoden*, ‘jews with cancer’, in Dutch). The perpetrators are often alleged offenders, who tend to use many other terms of verbal abuse in addition to the anti-Semitic slurs. Of all incidents involving anti-Semitic verbal abuse retrieved from the BVH for 2016, 70% (or 535 incidents) was directed against public officials. In the region of The Hague, this was even 85%.

Anti-Semitic verbal abuse is also more common in the context of football matches, especially when Ajax is playing. It is not known exactly how many of the incidents of anti-Semitic verbal abuse in 2016 took place in this context. Although we know that the anti-Semitic verbal abuse in The Hague and Rotterdam often takes place outside the context of actual football matches, it seems likely that this type of abuse mainly occurs in the two cities displaying the fiercest animosity when it comes to Amsterdam and Ajax.

4. Racism

In this chapter, we will outline the racist incidents reported in 2016. In short, it concerns criminal offences motivated by racism. As in previous years, the incidents inspired by racism include incidents involving discrimination against Muslims. One of the reasons is that the discrimination against Muslims is often coupled with racist motives and manifestations.

4.1 Incidents with racist characteristics in 2016

Over the year 2016, we retrieved a total of 2,247 incidents with racist characteristics from the BVH. Compared to 2015, the number of incidents with racist characteristics decreased in 2016 (See Table 4). The reason for this decrease is unclear.

Table 4. Incidents with racist characteristics between 2012-2016 (including discrimination against Muslims)

2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
(2,077) ^a	(2,189)	(2,764)	2,732	2,247

a Due to a change in our data collection method concerning racist incidents in 2015, we have to be careful when comparing the trend to previous years. This is why the numbers for the previous years are given between brackets.

As in previous years, we carried out a separate query to retrieve incidents of racist verbal abuse from the BVH. For 2016, we found a total number of 945 incidents of racist verbal abuse. Most of these were also found with other queries for racist incidents. Compared to

2015, the number of incidents of racist verbal abuse retrieved from the BVH rose slightly. In 2016, 205 (or 9%) of the incidents involved racist verbal abuse directed against people in public office, such as police officers or people working in public transport.

4.2 Discrimination against Muslims

Part of the incidents inspired by racism that were retrieved from the BVH involved discrimination against Muslims. Discrimination against Muslims includes insulting, hatemongering, or discriminating against people or groups because of their religion, Islam. The systematic unequal treatment or exclusion of Muslims and the violence used against Muslims because of their religion are also considered discrimination against Muslims. This is, therefore, discrimination against people or groups of people (Muslims), rather than verbal abuse of the religion (Islam).

For the year 2016, we found 364 incidents of discrimination against Muslims in the BVH; compared to 2015, this is a slight decrease. The number of incidents of discrimination against Muslims in 2015 was 466, a threefold increase compared to the number of incidents in 2014 (142 incidents). In our report from 2015, we attributed this substantial increase to growing social tensions, especially because of the terrorist attacks that were carried out in 2015 throughout Europe, and the turmoil surrounding the large groups of refugees who, for the most part, came from Islamic countries.

In 2016, there were more terrorist attacks that were claimed by the Islamic State terrorist movement. The attacks were carried out, among other places, at Zaventem Airport and in a metro station in Brussels on the 22nd of March, in Nice on the 14th of July, and in Berlin on the 19th of December. In this light, the decrease in the number of incidents of discrimination against Muslims in 2016 is remarkable. Even so, the number of incidents was still substantially higher than in 2014. The year 2015 may have been a peak year.

Alternatively, the public may have become 'habituated' to the frequent occurrence of terrorist attacks, which may have resulted in less social unrest. Around one in seven incidents of discrimination against Muslims involved violence. Sixteen of these incidents involved physical abuse. Over half (56%) of these incidents took place on the public road. In one incident, a woman wearing a headscarf was followed, verbally abused, and beaten. Twenty-six incidents of discrimination against Muslims involved threats, and 35% of these threats were directed against mosques. Several mosques, for instance, received threatening letters. Almost a quarter (23%) of the threats against Muslims were made through social media.

4.3 Discrimination against Roma and Sinti

As in previous years, the number of incidents directed against Roma and Sinti in the BVH is small. Over the year 2016, we retrieved a total of five incidents. In 2015, there were nine, in 2014, we found five.

5. Right-wing extremist groups and right-wing extremist violence

This chapter focuses on the development of right-wing extremism in the Netherlands in the year 2016.

5.1 The following of right-wing extremist groups

The year 2016 can be split into two parts. The first six months of the year were characterised by continuous social protest against the arrival and resettlement of refugees in the Netherlands. The data on 2016 is too ambiguous to provide one solid estimate for the active following of right-wing extremist organisations for the whole year. We have therefore included a count from the middle of 2016 and another from the end of 2016. Halfway through the year, the following of right-wing extremist groups was at its height, although some organisations showed some decrease in the numbers of active followers even then. Table 5 lists the numbers of active followers for these two moments in 2016.

Table 5 Estimated number of active members of right-wing extremist groups 2011-2016

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016 (summer)	2016 (December)
Total	90	100	120	100	245	420	250

In the first six months of 2016, the growth in the number of activists manifested across the board of right-wing extremist groups, but especially in the groups that joined in local protests against the reception of refugees, or groups that were formed as a result of these protests. By the autumn of 2016, it became clear that the organisations that had experienced growth as a result of their active participation in protests against the arrival of refugees were only moderately successful in retaining their new following. Some of the organisations that arose in this period disappeared, or all but disappeared, in the course of 2016. By the end of 2016, the number of active followers had dropped to the level of 2015.

5.2 Right-wing extremist public events

Right-wing extremist public events can be divided into non-violent and violent events. Non-violent events include marches, public protest meetings, or the handing out of pamphlets in the street. Violent events could refer to assault, vandalism, or threats.

5.2.1 Right-wing extremist violence

From the context of 45 violent incidents from 2016 (Table 6), we have concluded that they were inspired by right-wing extremism. Given the limited number of incidents, this is a rather small increase in absolute numbers. However, it can be observed that the increase in the number of right-wing extremist violent incidents that manifested in 2014, was continued in 2016.

Table 6. Right-wing extremist violence by category 2011-2016

Category	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Targeted graffiti ^a	1	6	11	16	8
Threat	8	5	13	8	16
Confrontation	2	4	7	8	7
Vandalism	1	1	4	4	7
Arson	0	0	0	0	2
Assault	2	1	7	2	5
Total	13	17	42	38	45

^a In order to distinguish between the very common, but non-targeted types of graffiti and those directed against specific people or objects, which therefore are more threatening, we have only included targeted graffiti: graffiti applied in specific places that have a direct relationship with the message.

By categorising these incidents according to their substance, it becomes clear that many of these incidents can be linked to polarising topics. In 2016, 26 out of 45 violent incidents (or 58%) were linked to the reception of asylum seekers or holders of residence permits, and ten incidents (or 22%) were linked to the heated social debate about the alleged racist nature of ‘Black Pete’ in the Dutch Saint Nicholas festival. This link with the polarisation in society becomes even more apparent if we consider the incidents by month. In the first three months of 2016, there were 21 incidents of right-wing extremist violence (or 41% of the total). At the end of March 2016, the European Union concluded a treaty with Turkey, which resulted in a drop in the number of refugees arriving in Europe. This seems to have had a direct influence on the number of incidents motivated by right-wing extremism, which dropped from April onwards.

The downward trend was briefly reversed in November, which traditionally is the month in which Saint Nicholas makes his entry, and the debate about Black Pete flares up. There were seven incidents of right-wing extremist violence that month, five of which were linked to the topic of Black Pete.

Another trend that could be observed before is a shift in the targets of right-wing extremist violence. In the recent past, many of these incidents were directed against people or buildings because of their ethnic or religious background. From 2014 onwards, we have noticed a rapid increase in the number of incidents targeting - mainly left-wing - politicians, left-wing (extremist) activists, and, for instance, proponents of the reception of refugees. In 2016, 26 incidents of right-wing extremist violence targeted representatives from these groups, compared to 23 incidents in 2015, 17 in 2014, and 8 in 2013.

5.2.2 Non-violent events

The best-known form of non-violent political events is the protest rally. The number of right-wing extremist marches increased very strongly in 2016. After several years with a stable number of marches (14, 13, and 15 in the period from 2013-2015 respectively), right-wing extremist organisation staged 42 protest marches in 2016 (see Table 7). Approximately half of these were directed against the arrival of refugees, another dozen against the Islam.

Table 7. Number of right-wing extremist marches held in the Netherlands (2012-2016)

2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
5	14	13	15	42

Participation in marches staged by others

Right-wing extremist activists not only marched in their own rallies in 2016 but frequently joined the marches organised by other groups as well, where they made themselves known through banners or pamphlets. In 23 cases, they joined civil protests against a new refugee centre. In 2015, this had occurred only 12 times. Moreover, in 2015, local protesters had declared the interference of right-wing extremist groups unwelcome on several occasions. In 2016, this was less visible and in some cases, local protesters even welcomed right-wing extremist involvement.

In the month of November, the Netherlands saw another round of discussions about Black Pete. Anti-Black-Pete protests were held at a number of Saint Nicholas parades. In two cases,

this resulted in pro-Black-Pete rallies organised by right-wing extremist groups. In other places, however, right-wing extremists did not stage their own rallies, but mingled with the parade crowd in order to set larger groups of people against the anti-Black-Pete activists. The latter actions have not been included in our counts, as they did not constitute independent rallies.

6. Judicial process

This chapter covers the number of incidents with anti-Semitic or racist characteristics from 2016 that were retrieved from police databases and handled by the Public Prosecution Service (PPS).

Compared to the previous year, we found no major differences in the judicial settlement of incidents with racist or anti-Semitic characteristics. If we take the type and categorisation of the PPS approach under consideration, there seems to be little difference with 2015. Circa 65% of the incidents involving racism, anti-Semitic verbal abuse, or racist verbal abuse were taken to court. The sections of the law applied by the PPS were similar to those used in 2015. Incidents with anti-Semitic or racist characteristics were primarily handled as assault (43% of the cases handled by the PPS), insult (43%) or threat (23%).

And the court decisions were similar to 2015 as well. In more than 80% of the cases, sentences were passed, and fewer than 10% of the cases were acquitted. The types of sentences that were passed, however, did differ. In 2016, racist and racist verbal abuse cases were more often settled with community service instead of a fine. In 2015, it was the other way around. Furthermore, in 2016 the PPS relatively often charged the offenders with insult and less often with assault. Only rarely, in four percent of the criminal cases, were sections from the Criminal Code dealing with discrimination applied, either in 2015 or 2016. As an alternative to charging an offender with discrimination, the PPS can demand a heavier sentence for any offence if it is racially motivated. If we include the criminal cases in which racial motivation was added to the charge, we find that sections on discrimination or the discriminatory aspect were applied in seven percent of the criminal cases.

7. Conclusion

The year 2016 was a year with two faces. In the spring of 2016, heated debates were held about the arrival of refugees in the Netherlands and Europe. After the treaty with Turkey had been concluded in March, the number of refugees decreased significantly, and the fiercest discussions died down. The treaty is clearly reflected in the data on racism and right-wing extremism in the Netherlands. We noticed in 2015 that the unrest and debate on the refugee issue as well as the continued Muslim terrorist attacks resulted in an increase in the number of cases of discrimination against Muslims. This increase continued in the first months of 2016. In addition, the increase in the right-wing extremist activities from 2015 continued in the first months of 2016. When the discussions about the refugees died down after March 2016, the number of incidents of discrimination against Muslims decreased as well. This may also have contributed to the observed decrease in the number of racist

incidents and in the decrease in the following of right-wing extremist organisations and in right-wing extremist activism.

We conclude that fierce social discussions apparently coincide with a marked increase in the following and activism of right-wing extremist groups. This does not necessarily mean that these organisations and their ideas gain in social relevance in these periods. Alongside these developments, we noticed a decrease in the number of incidents involving intentional anti-Semitism; a trend that is observed outside of the Netherlands as well. The number of anti-Semitic incidents usually runs parallel to the level of large-scale violence in Israel. Since 2016 did not witness this kind of violence, the decrease in the number of anti-Semitic incidents in the Netherlands is not surprising.

Criminal law is an important means to set the standards in the fight against racism and anti-Semitism. Although our data on investigation and prosecution in this report show that sentence is passed in eighty percent of the criminal cases, both the sections on discrimination from the criminal code and the discriminatory aspect from other criminal offences are rarely applied in incidents involving anti-Semitism or racism.