



General Intelligence and
Security Service
*Ministry of the Interior and
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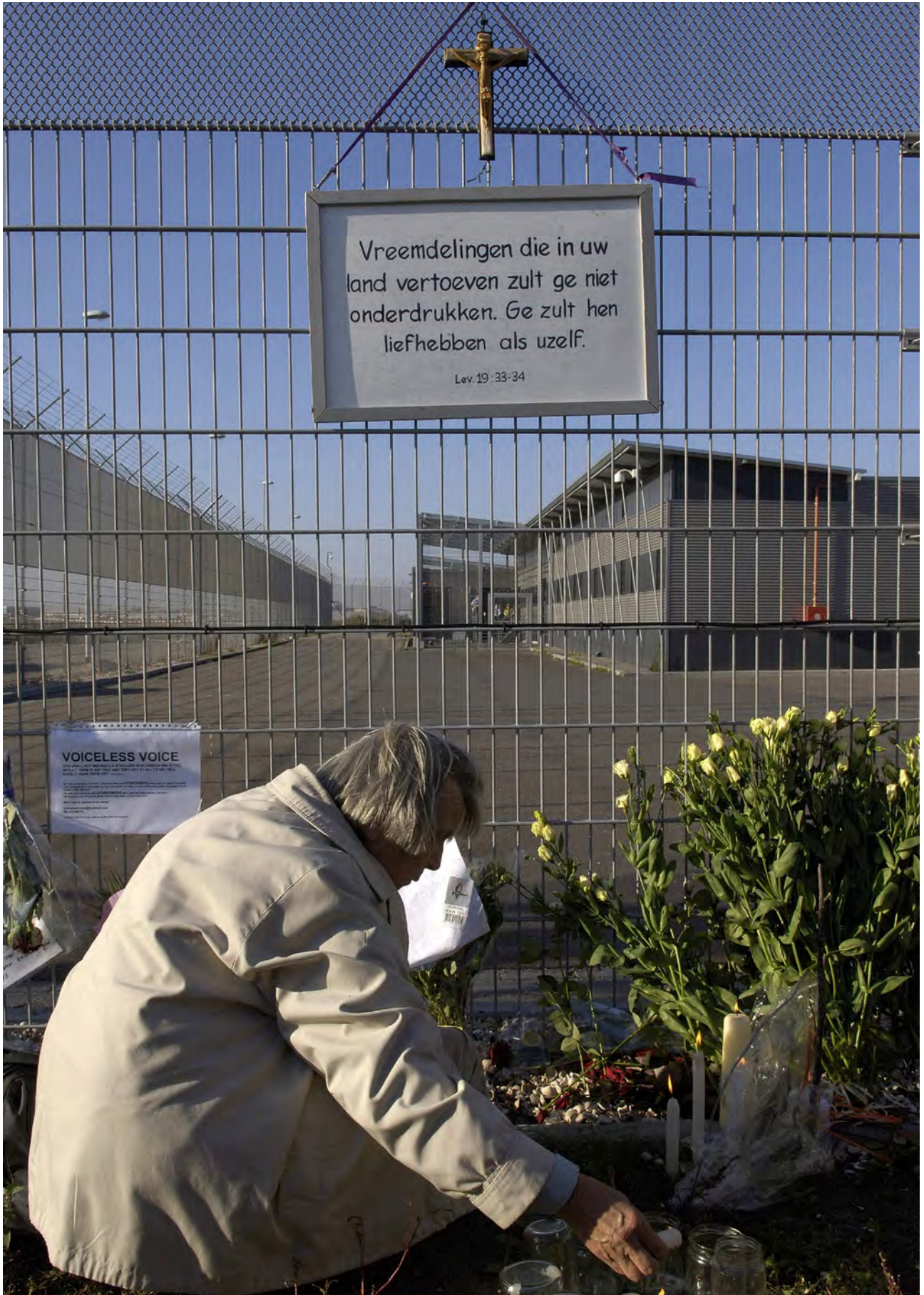
The flames of resistance

Growing opposition to Dutch immigration and
asylum policy



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Vreemdelingen die in uw
land vertoeven zult ge niet
onderdrukken. Ge zult hen
liefhebben als uzelf.

Lev. 19: 33-34

VOICELESS VOICE

VOICELESS VOICE is a non-profit organization that provides support and advocacy for the voiceless. We are currently seeking volunteers to help with our work. If you are interested, please contact us at 020 487 1111.

1. Introduction

"One day – you don't know when and I don't know when – the flames will erupt. I shall warm myself on that liberating fire as it destroys the detention centres being built for people without papers. A liberating fire for the offices of the immigration service! A liberating ribbon of flames spreading to the seats and buildings of government, reaching walls and closed doors, exploding between locks and hinges. Balkenende and Beatrix, Albayrak and Hirsch Ballin, Middelkoop and Bos – let them all see with scorched faces what true liberation looks like... Let the flames serve the resistance, not tyranny."

These words, written by a well-known activist in May 2009, provide a good impression of what some campaigners regard as legitimate forms of resistance against current Dutch immigration and asylum policy. And they are words which, in a way, would prove as prophetic as they are provocative, given the events of 23 August 2009. On that date a fire was set in the on-site offices of the consortium building the new detention centre at Rotterdam Airport.

Opposition to European immigration and asylum policy, and to the Dutch approach in particular, has long been a major theme amongst left-wing activists in the Netherlands. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the group Revolutionary Anti-Racist Action (Revolutionaire Anti Racistische Actie, RaRa) conducted a campaign of violence in the form of arson and bomb attacks, most notably bombing the home of the State Secretary for Justice, Aad Kosto. Especially after the end of apartheid in South Africa, RaRa shifted its focus to this more domestic issue. For the group itself, the move was a logical one; in its view, after all, immigrants in the Netherlands also suffered a form of apartheid – what it called "institutional or state racism". The final RaRa attack, targeting the Ministry of Social Affairs, took place on 1 July 1993. Not long afterwards, riven by internal conflict, the group ceased to exist. The flame of resistance to Dutch immigration and asylum policy

was subsequently taken up by other, more peaceful activists, although they lacked any real form of organisation.

In the past few years, however, some structure has returned to the movement. Moreover, the activists involved have become more and more radical. This has been reflected in an increasing number of arson attacks and so-called "home visits", as well as the "naming and shaming" of policymakers and officials by publishing their names, addresses and other details. Once popular among extreme-left anti-imperialists and anti-militarists, these methods have in recent years been refined by animal rights extremists. And just as in that struggle, the opposition to immigration and asylum policy has become characterised by a close-knit combination of legal and illegal activities. Nonetheless, for the most part the two campaigns remain separate. There are only a few known cases of "dual" activism, where one person is involved in both movements.

By highlighting these activities, the AIVD hopes to foster awareness where it is needed. In other words, the service's aim is to make those at risk of attack conscious of the potential threat against them.



2. Activism, extremism or terrorism?

The landscape of radical activism is constantly evolving, a fact which has in recent years led to a change in the terms used to describe it. The more or less violent activism of the past is now defined by many countries, including the Netherlands, as "extremism". Some nations, such as the United States, even use the word "terrorism" to describe certain forms of environmental, animal rights and other activism. On the other hand it is striking that in the United Kingdom, which was the birthplace of the modern form of radical direct action against animal suffering and has responded by imposing heavy judicial penalties upon those involved, the term "domestic extremism" is still preferred.

In the Netherlands, the AIVD now uses the term "extremism" rather than "violent activism". This is done in order to distinguish clearly between those individuals and organisations operating within the law and those, which go beyond it. In the case of opposition to immigration and asylum policy, a number of degrees of activity can be observed.

Activism

A general term for the phenomenon whereby individuals or groups seek to improve the rights of immigrants and asylum seekers, including those whose claims have failed, through extraparliamentary activities, but in so doing remain within the law.

Extremism

The phenomenon whereby, in their struggle for particular rights, individuals or groups deliberately overstep the bounds of the law to commit illegal, sometimes violent, acts.

Terrorism

Ideologically motivated violence or other destructive acts whether actual, planned or threatened against persons, property or the fabric of society, committed with the aim of bringing about social change, causing serious public disquiet or influencing the political decision-making process.

Left-wing extremists are prepared to commit crimes in pursuit of their aims. And in some cases those offences can be serious. Damage to property is a frequent occurrence, and on occasion grave personal threats have been made. There are no indications, however, that the ultimate purpose is to frighten the public or to disrupt society to such an extent that these activities force change or influence political decision-making.



3. The situation now

The current landscape of active opposition to Dutch immigration and asylum policy can be described as combining relatively moderate civil disobedience with more radical expressions of dissatisfaction. And, although difficult to quantify, this movement appears to enjoy a certain level of support among sections of the wider public. The campaign *Van Harte Pardon* (Pardon from the Heart), for example, brings together several hundred local and regional public initiatives, political groups and action committees. At some public demonstrations, such as blockades, a core group of a few dozen activist-extremists can count upon the backing of a much larger number of supporters, who are more moderate but still prepared to commit acts of civil disobedience. On several occasions, such as when attempts were made to occupy a prison barge, dozens of people have been mobilised within a very short time.

Although there is an international dimension, in general the resistance to current policy is a domestic affair. The campaigners have identified numerous targets, details of which they have especially in the past year been disseminating widely online and through other channels. As well as being a means of communication, the internet is also used to gather information about potential targets.

The various types of activism and the composition of the groups involved are described in more detail below.

3.1 Activists

Van Harte Pardon was long the most moderate exponent of resistance to immigration and asylum policy. Operating as an umbrella organisation, those it represents include many peaceful campaign groups as well as a number of initiatives dedicated to providing support for failed asylum seekers who have exhausted all legal means to stay in the Netherlands.

Among these are the Amsterdam Solidarity Committee for Refugees (*Amsterdams Solidariteits Komitee Vluchtelingen, ASKV*) and Participating Refugees In Multicultural Europe, PRIME, which is based in The Hague. Both of these organisations have for decades helped refugees who are in difficulties.

On the website www.vertrokkengezichten.net (*distorted faces*), events like the 2005 Schiphol fire, are described and interpreted. Dutch groups active in the international arena (see 4.2) are also generally characterised by a moderate approach. Certainly when those involved in local and regional initiatives are included in the count, the total number of activists on immigration and asylum issues in the Netherlands runs into the thousands.

3.2 Activist-extremists

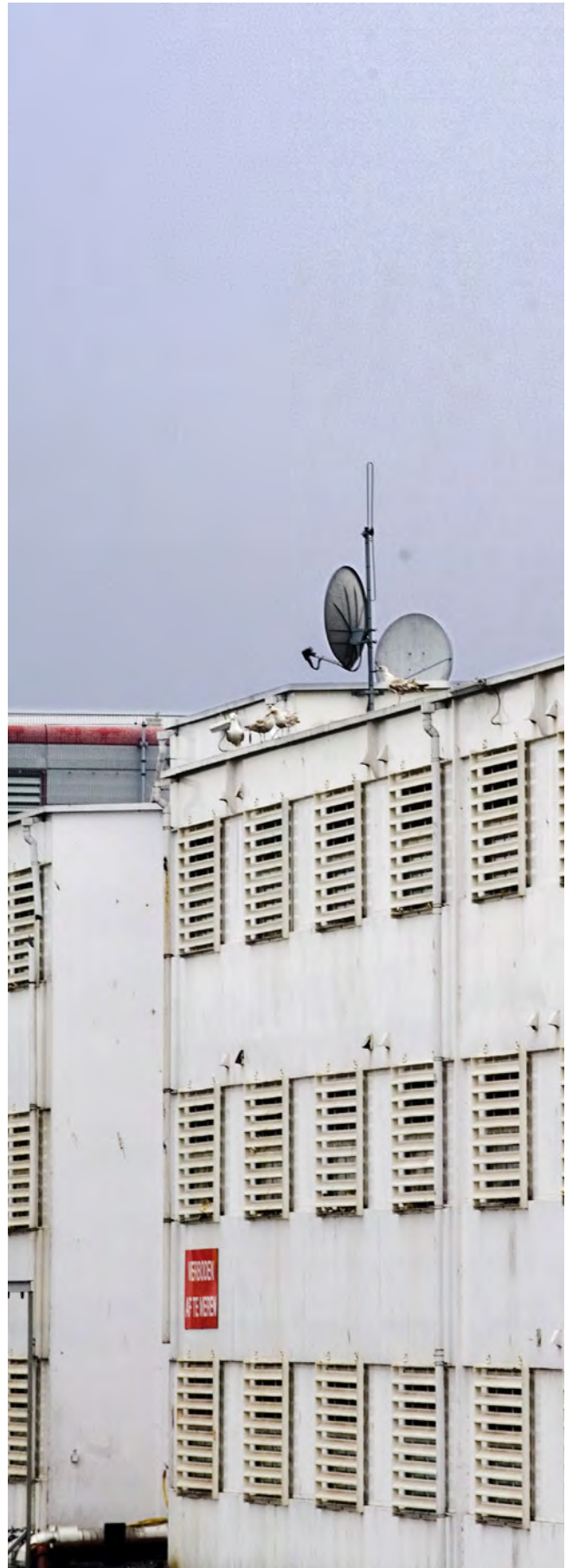
For some years now, unlawful resistance to immigration and asylum policy has been dominated by two groups based in the city and province of Utrecht: the Stop Deportations Working Group (*Werkgroep Stop Deportaties*) and the Utrecht Anarchist Anti-Deportation Group (*Anarchistische Anti-deportatie Groep Utrecht, AAGU*). Both are probably involved in a combination of legal and illegal activities, and both seem to have a varying membership, including several persons who can be characterised as “professional activists”.

In their public manifestations, these two groups test the boundaries of the law. Tactics used to draw attention to the situation of refugees include pickets, blockades and attempted occupations, such as that of the council chamber in Soest in October 2008. On occasions, though, they also resort to direct or indirect intimidation. For example, both have produced publications containing the names and addresses of persons they consider responsible for implementing current government immigration

and asylum policy.¹ See section 4.1 for more details on these activities. This category comprises a core group of a few dozen “regular” activists, plus several dozen sympathisers who turn up in varying force to take part in particular actions.

3.3 Extremists

As in the animal rights movement, the AIVD observes a close-knit combination of legal and illegal activities within the opposition to immigration and asylum policy. Responsibility for unlawful acts, which range from daubing slogans to criminal damage and attempted arson, is generally claimed using one-off cover names like “Grenzen Weg” (*Borders Away*), “Geen Bloed aan Mijn Handen” (*No Blood on My Hands*), “Refugees Free”, “Migranten Welkom” (*Migrants Welcome*), “Geen Wapens Geen Cellen” (*No Weapons, No Cells*), “Nachtschade” (*Damage at night*), “Gebroken Gla(n)s” (*Broken Glass/Broken Splendour*) and, most recently, “Anarchist Fire”. The acts committed under these names are the work of extremists. Moreover, it is quite plausible that members of the groups named in the previous section are responsible for these clandestine crimes against property; in all likelihood, extremist activities are directed by persons within those groups. Identifying the actual perpetrators is difficult, though: the actions are prepared in great secrecy and carried out at night by a handful of people operating in tight cells with an ever-changing structure.



¹ *Aan de schandpaal* (In the Pillory, September 2008), *Aan de schandpaal 2* (April 2009), *Stop DC16* (February 2009).

4. Current activities

Since the opposition to Dutch immigration and asylum policy has begun to take on more radical forms, the focus of the extremists has sharpened. As in the animal rights movement, long lists of potential targets have appeared. In addition, an intensification of international contacts has been observed.

4.1 Targets

Roughly speaking, the targets selected are those considered responsible for formulating and implementing immigration and asylum policy, in both the public and the private sectors. As is apparent from the range of categories described below, however, the definition of responsibility for implementation is very wide-ranging and includes “secondary” and even “tertiary” targets. A number of those named in various publications have already had to endure acts of vandalism, criminal damage, arson attempts and in one case an actual fire. A director of a firm of architects has actually been the subject of a so-called “home visit”. The activists categorise their targets as follows.

4.1.1 Government and the judiciary

Named Ministry of Justice targets include the Immigration Policy Department and its Monitoring, Repatriation and Naturalisation Unit. There is also a particular interest in premises of the Immigration and Naturalisation Service (IND), the Repatriation and Departure Service (DT&V), the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), the National Agency of Correctional Institutions (DJI) and the Royal military constabulary (*Koninklijke marechaussee, KMar*).

4.1.2 Designers and builders

This group includes named building contractors and subcontractors, as well as financial institutions involved in construction or renovation work at the Schiphol Detention and Deportation Centre, prison barges in Rotterdam, Dordrecht and Zaanstad, the detention centres in Zeist and Alphen aan den Rijn and the Zestienhoven Deportation Centre.

4.1.3 Suppliers and service providers

This category comprises a whole range of individuals and businesses: printers, photographers, documentation managers, journalists, communication consultants and suppliers of everything from photocopiers to office supplies, plastic bags and toilet paper. The airline KLM is also named as participating in forced deportations. Other potential targets listed include the developers of the IND website, a supplier of Christmas boxes, a television rental firm and companies supplying private security guards and even medical services.

Two published booklets, *Aan de schandpaal – 2* (“In the Pillory 2”) and especially *Stop DC16*, identify every company and organisation in any way known to be associated with the construction of the new detention centre at Rotterdam Airport. *Stop DC16* also focuses upon the role of the Internal Assistance Team (*Interne Bijstandsteam, IBT*), a control and restraint unit which, the authors claim, boasts of its forceful tactics and can be extremely violent towards detainees, allegedly using balaclavas to prevent recognition. As mentioned, *Stop DC16* explicitly names firms participating in the consortium establishing the centre.

4.2 Internationalisation

There has been little or no international collaboration by opponents of immigration and asylum policy over the past fifteen years, and certainly not at the extremist end of the spectrum. However, certain individuals are to some extent involved in international initiatives such as the campaign against Frontex.² There has been a particular focus upon this agency within the Amsterdam-based organisation “All Included”. Other individuals are associated with “Noborder Network”, which campaigns on migration-related issues at the international level. Several Dutch activists participate in so-called No Border Camps. Overall, there is a degree of international solidarity between immigration and asylum activists: when any country takes measures they do not like, its diplomatic missions abroad are likely to become the target of graffiti writers and small-scale acts of vandalism. The letter claiming responsibility for the fire at Rotterdam Airport in August 2009 included an attack on European policy. And activist media abroad cover actions in the Netherlands.

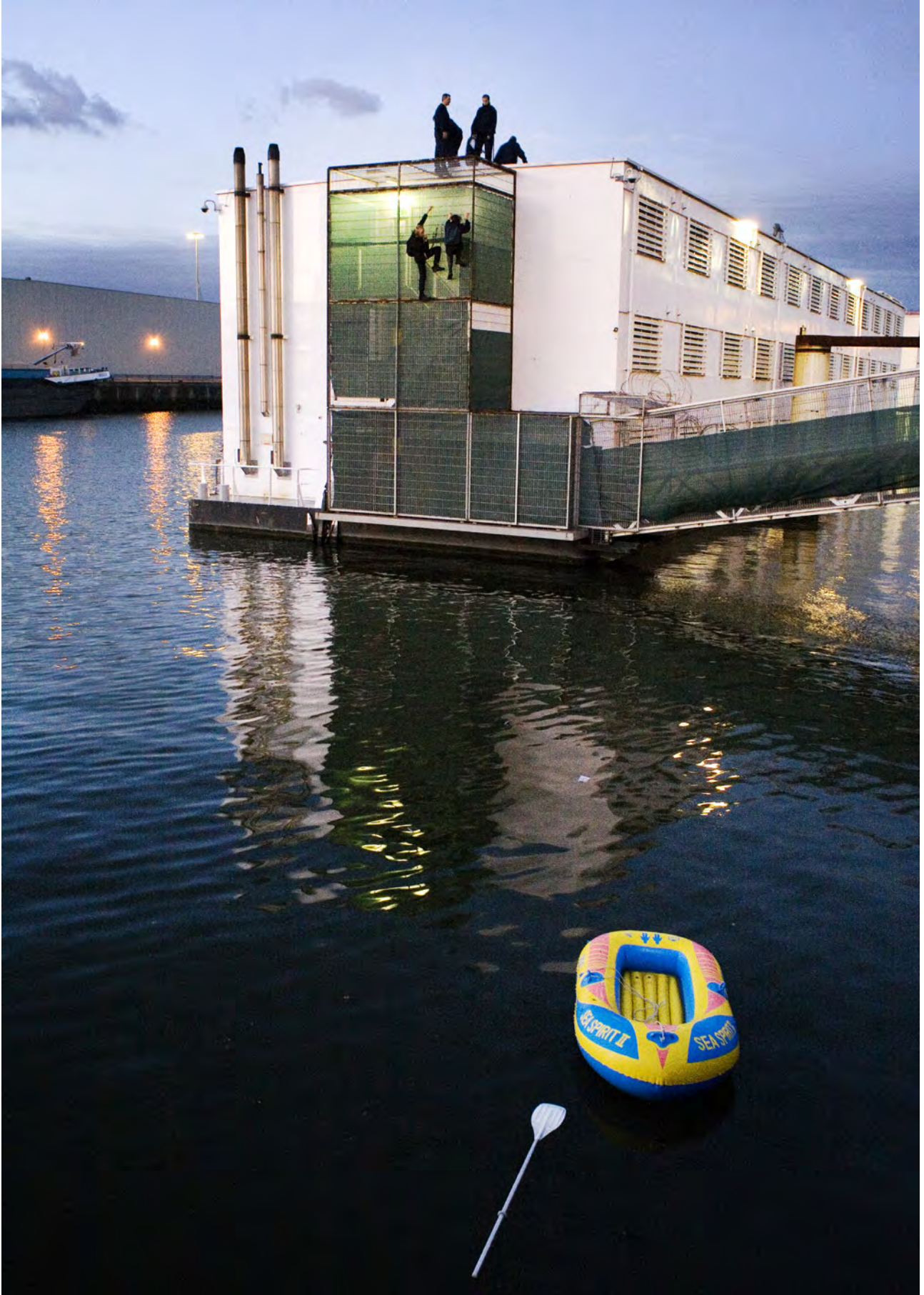
² Frontex is the European Union agency established to coordinate operational collaboration between member states in the field of European external border security. As well as assisting in the management of the EU’s external frontiers, Frontex also supports states in organising joint return operations.



5. Future expectations

Given the composition of the principal groups named in this report, it can reasonably be assumed that their activities will continue for the foreseeable future. Already, a number of individuals have effectively made a career out of opposing current immigration and asylum policy. With the Dutch government planning to build up its deportation programme over the next few years, literally as well as figuratively, more actions directed specifically against that aspect can be expected. It seems likely that companies and institutions named in the various activist publications will be subjected to noise protests, blockades, attempts at occupation and even demonstrations targeting personnel in their home environment. Extremist behaviour of the latter kind, in particular, constitute a serious and threatening form of intimidation.

The AIVD believes that an increase in illegal and intimidatory activities can be expected. As in the campaigns conducted by animal rights extremists, there will probably be even more actions targeting individuals. However, it should also be pointed out that there are no indications of any intention to direct physical violence against people. Meanwhile, the international aspect merits closer monitoring.



6. The role of the AIVD

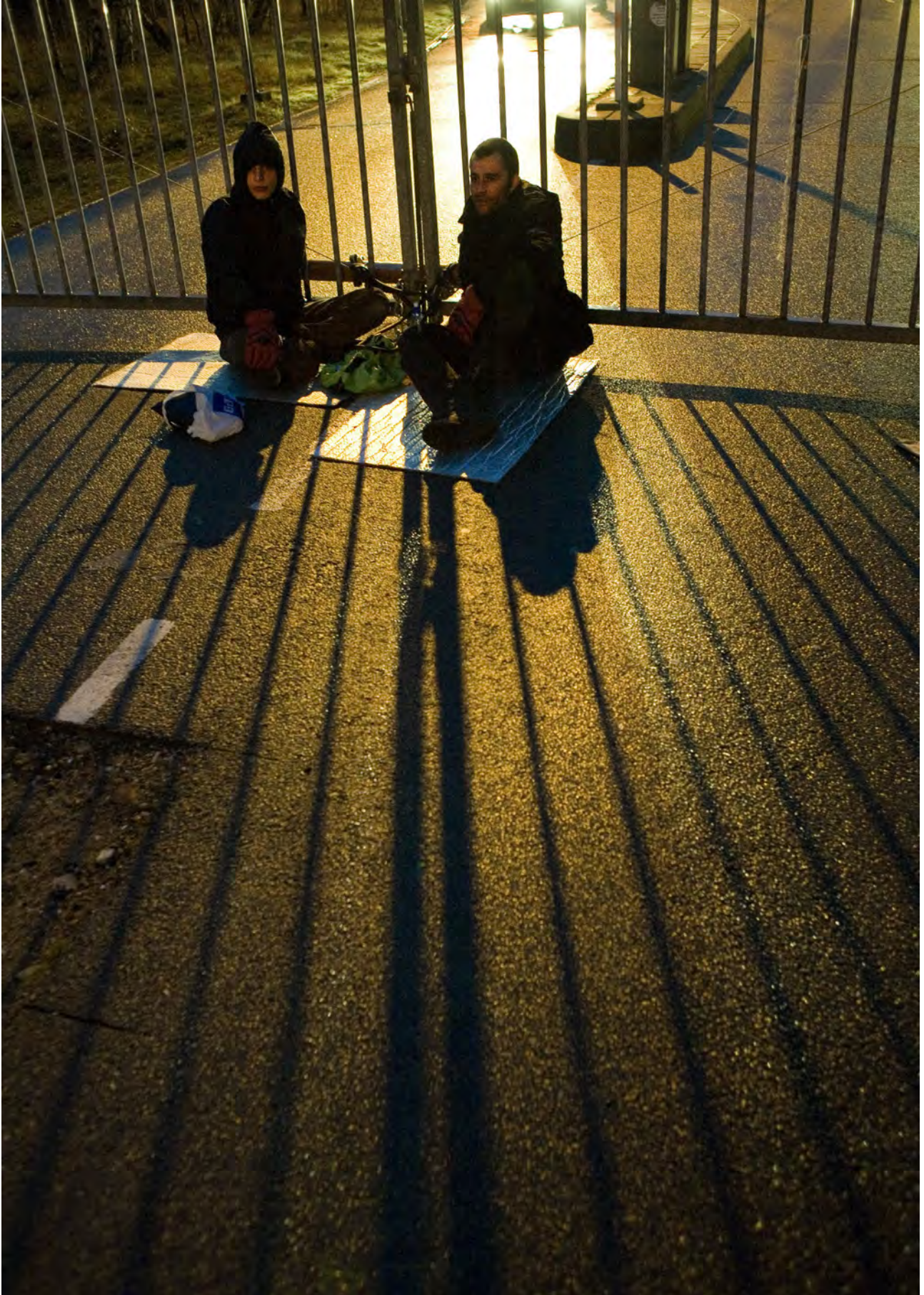
The AIVD investigates people and organisations which, by virtue of their aims or methods, give rise to a reasonable suspicion that they pose a serious danger to the democratic legal order.³ It is in this context that the service monitors the activities of radical opponents of Dutch immigration and asylum policy. With the emergence of the AAGU and Stop Deportations, coupled with the associated radicalisation apparent from the increase in nocturnal attacks on property, it has intensified its work in this area.

Using the new insights gained from this investigation, the AIVD enables others to respond as necessary. Where possible, the service will endeavour to warn companies and institutions in advance of any planned actions against them. Where they have already been targeted, the AIVD can assist them in mitigating future risks and threats. In addition, the AIVD keeps government and private organisations abreast of trends and developments. By sharing knowledge and information, the service helps such bodies as the DJI, the IND, the Royal military constabulary and local authorities to do their jobs effectively. When actual or potential criminal activities are detected, such as acts of violence against persons or property, the AIVD notifies the National Public Prosecutor so that the appropriate judicial measures can be taken.

In collaboration with the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of the Interior's Polarisation and Radicalisation Project, the AIVD is about to embark upon a programme to raise awareness among firms and institutions. This publication is the first step in that process. Details of specific developments will also be provided to relevant parties, such as government agencies, local authorities and companies. This should enable them to take

appropriate precautions. Anyone can report information about actions to the AIVD.

³ Article 6, Intelligence and Security Services Act 2002.
(Wet op de inlichtingen- en veiligheidsdiensten 2002, Wiv 2002).



7. Conclusions

Radical resistance to government immigration and asylum policy has been back on the activist agenda for some years now. Actions have already been planned and carried out, most of them originating in Utrecht. Increasingly, the activists responsible have been inspired by methods similar to those employed by animal rights extremists: public demonstrations are combined with acts of vandalism, carried out under the cover of darkness and targeting the personal domains of those in some way involved in implementing the policy, be they local or national politicians, civil servants or business people. At least some of these activities, which include daubing slogans and damaging property, are carried out by campaigners who also operate openly. This radical opposition to immigration and asylum policy thus involves a combination of activism and extremism.

By “naming and shaming” those perceived to be responsible for that policy, sympathisers are inspired to act and their targets are easy to find. At first, this was done using a short-lived website listing the names and addresses of individuals and organisations. Later, a number of printed publications appeared containing similar information. These covered not only “key players” Ministry of Justice departments, architects, building contractors and the likes but also included details of sometimes very indirect targets, such as subcontractors, suppliers of goods and personnel, printers and photographers.

The AIVD believes that an increase in illegal and intimidatory activities can be expected. There will probably be even more actions targeting individuals. However, there are no indications of any intention to direct physical violence against people. Although animal rights extremism and opposition to immigration and asylum policy for the most part remain separate movements, there are a few known

cases of “dual” activism where one person is involved in both.

The AIVD and the relevant government ministries will together seek to assist institutions and companies affected by this form of activism, in particular by raising awareness. With the help of information on how to deal with activists and also what security precautions to take, they should be able to increase their own resilience to attack.





Credits

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