

Historic Church Burns as 'Unprecedented' New Year's Eve Violence Grips City

A historic church on the edge of Amsterdam's iconic Vondelpark was engulfed in flames early Thursday morning, leaving its tower in ruins and raising alarms across the neighborhood.

Meanwhile, emergency responders across the country were pelted with dangerous devices, including fireworks and even gasoline bombs.

According to the U.K.'s Telegraph, the Vondelkerk fire, which ignited shortly after midnight, quickly escalated into a full-blown emergency, prompting Amsterdam authorities to declare a regional crisis.

Residents in the immediate vicinity were forced to evacuate, with several dozen homes cleared as a precaution.

Streets surrounding the Vondelkerk church, a 154-year-old landmark, remained cordoned off while firefighters continued to battle the blaze.

Het moment dat de toren instortte

– AT5 (@AT5) January 1, 2026

Dramatic footage shared on social media captures the moment the church's spire was consumed by roaring flames, a visual testament to the ferocity of the fire:

Eyewitnesses described scenes of thick smoke and embers raining down across nearby streets, heightening concern for both residents and other historic structures in the area.

Officials from the Amsterdam-Amstelland Safety Region issued a grim assessment of the damage. A spokesperson warned that the church was beyond saving, noting that “the entire structure may collapse” as crews worked to contain the fire and prevent it from spreading further.

“[It’s a] terribly bad and dramatic start to the new year,” one official said, according to The Telegraph.

“This is a very intense and terrible fire in this monumental church,” Amsterdam Mayor Femke Halsema further noted. “Our first concern and priority now is the well-being and homes of the immediate residents.”

The Vondelkerk, built in the late 19th century, has long been a fixture of the park’s skyline and a hub for local community events. Its loss represents both a cultural and architectural blow, leaving residents and visitors mourning a site that has stood for over a century and a half.

Authorities were investigating the cause of the fire, while emergency crews focused on ensuring the safety of the surrounding neighborhood.

Meanwhile, the dramatic images of the burning church have sparked a flood of reactions online, with many sharing both shock and sorrow at the destruction of one of Amsterdam’s historic treasures.

New Year’s celebrations in the Netherlands took a violent turn this year, according to the BBC, as police officers faced an unprecedented level of attacks while trying to maintain order across the country.

Fireworks, explosives, and even petrol bombs were reportedly hurled at law enforcement, leaving officers shaken and prompting warnings about public safety.

Nine Kooiman, head of the Dutch Police Union, described the

night as unlike any she had experienced, saying she personally came under fire while on duty in Amsterdam.

The unrest coincided with the dramatic blaze that destroyed Amsterdam's Vondelkerk church. Although authorities have not yet confirmed the cause of the fire, the timing amid nationwide chaos has intensified public concern and added a layer of tragedy to the New Year's celebrations.

Violence against first responders was widespread. In the southern city of Breda, police reported petrol bombs being thrown during New Year's festivities. Rotterdam's eye hospital treated 14 patients – including 10 children – for eye injuries, two of whom required surgery.

Authorities described the incidents as extraordinary in both scope and intensity, highlighting a growing challenge for maintaining public safety during celebratory events.

Tragically, the night's recklessness extended beyond confrontations with authorities. Elsewhere in the Netherlands, a 17-year-old and a 38-year-old died in fireworks-related incidents, underscoring the lethal potential of illegal or poorly handled explosives.

Across the border in Bielefeld, Germany, police reported that two 18-year-olds were killed while setting off homemade fireworks.

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