Vitesse FC: 'Hamas, Hamas, Jews to the Gas'

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AFTER "HAMAS, HAMAS, JEWS TO THE GAS" CHANTS, DUTCH CHIEF RABBI AND MAYOR OF ARNHEM SET FOR FRANK, DIFFICULT BUT NECESSARY TOWN HALL MEETING WITH VITESSE FANS

After supporters of Arnhem based Vitesse football club were heard chanting "Hamas, Hamas, Jews to the gas" ahead of a game against Amsterdam side Ajax last weekend, Dutch Chief Rabbi and European Jewish Association Chairman of the organisation's committee for combatting anti-semitism Binyomin Jacobs and the Muslim Mayor of Arnhem Ahmed Marcouch are to hold a "town hall" meeting with Vitesse fans with the full support of the football club's hierarchy.

The town hall meeting - whose date in coming days and details are being finalised - was arranged after Rabbi Jacobs got in touch with the Mayor immediately after the incident. Both agreed that words of condemnation were not enough, but that a constructive approach of engaging and holding a dialogue with supporters was needed.

Mayor Marcouch then contacted the Vitesse hierarchy to arrange a meeting with the supporters group.

Speaking today, Rabbi Jacobs said,

"Clearly the chants are abhorrent and disgusting. They are ignorant and a twin attack on Jews: on Israel and on the Holocaust. The natural reaction is to condemn in the strongest possible terms. We, of course, do so.

"But that on its own is not enough. We must be constructive, we must engage, we must educate so that those who chant what they think are throw-away lines in the spirit of rivalry, are fully aware of the weight of their words, of the damage and hurt that they cause.

The mayor and I, a Jew and a Muslim are fully aware of the dangers of ignorant prejudice. And we are also fully aware that boxing people in with condemnation can just entrench positions into "them and us". This serves nobody's interest. Our town hall meeting for which I am grateful to the Mayor for initiating, will be a frank, and we imagine difficult, exchange of views. But an entirely necessary one."

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