

# Nigerian Community Police Dialogue

Held Friday, 3 November 2023 – Kazerne Reigersbos

## Brief Evaluation Report

### Introduction

The recent Nigerian Community Police Dialogue which took place on Friday, 3 November 2023 was a follow-up on the maiden event which took place in April 2023.

This was a much-anticipated event within the Nigerian community, since the maiden one was partially treated as a “watch and see” event by a section of the general Nigerian community.

### In attendance

At the event was a crop of notable Nigerian community elders, chiefs and title holders from the Igbo, Edo and Yoruba tribes (among others).

The Police were represented by Fatima Tougha, Marten Bouma and Gregory van Geene. Notably, but unavoidable absent, however, were the chairlady of Southeast district, Tanja Jadnanansing as well as other functionaries from the Amsterdam municipality. Earlier on, we had received a firm assurance of her attendance,

A headcount of attendees was in the region of between 50-60 persons. We noticed also that there were people who showed up for the first time, and this gave the impression that awareness about the dialogue was beginning to permeate among this target group.

Unlike, before there was only one pre-dialogue deliberation round with a group of Nigerian community leaders. It was also aimed at generating their support and endorsement for the dialogue proper. It was hoped that such a meeting would have had a positive rub-on effect on the main event. With hindsight, it may be concluded that, that meeting probably had little or a negligible impact on the actual attendance of the main dialogue event.

The Nigerian community is beginning to gradually accept that fact that the dialogue with the Police and the municipality has come to stay.

### Theme

The agreed theme for this dialogue was two-prong; **(1) issues concerning the undocumented**, and **(2) challenges of Nigerian Entrepreneurs in Amsterdam ZO**.

The above two topics possibly generated a good level of interest in this dialogue, as there were already simmering issues playing out within the community, bordering on those topics. So, there was much anticipation that those issues were going to be addressed.

### Publicity

We gave publicity to the event largely via WhatsApp messaging, Facebook, printed flyers and by one-on-one contacts and networking.

### Welcome & Dinner

The evening started at 18.00 hrs with dinner served in a buffet setting, while the DJ played popular Nigerian hip-hop tunes. On the menu was the staple Nigerian *jollof* and fried rice, *waakye* and *egusi soup with griesmeel “swallow”* to go with it.

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At about 19.00hrs the session started with both Dutch and Nigerian national anthems, after which the M.C. Elder Uyi Olaye conducted an introduction round. Then, the hostess Archbishop HelenRith Dorkenoo briefly welcomed everyone and introduced the main issues to the house.

From this point on it was questions and answers until the end.

A review of the main points are presented at the end of this report. Also, a photo gallery below gives some impression of who the event went.

Below are some photographs of the event, more photos available at: [Photos - Nigerian Community & Police dialogue Nov. '23](#)

There is also a [YouTube](#) video record for playback.



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**What was the yield of this event?**

Core issues that came out of this second dialogue may be summarized as follows:

1. The event hostess wasted no time in launching the core issues to be discussed; issues affecting the undocumented and recent closure of Nigerian businesses.
2. An early question that came up was: when a general immigration pardon was going to be issued again, since the last one was more than 15 years ago?
3. In response Mr. van Geene answered that his division of the police unit was not responsible for immigration matters, and that it was the jurisdiction of the Immigration and Naturalisation Service (IND), and these were also not available in the meeting. At that, an immediate request was made for an official from the IND to be provided at the next event, so they can provide the clarity and correct answers to immigration questions. Mr. van Geene also hinted that the issue of a general pardon may also be a political one, and he asked that the house could try to get our political representatives to bring up this matter for discussion at the governmental level.
4. The above answers clearly did not appear to be satisfactory, as they triggered further questions and a debate. At this stage a feeling of dissatisfaction began to pervade throughout the meeting, because it felt as though our police allies had not adequately prepared for the evening by making available the needed resource persons to provide satisfactory answers.
5. A couple more appeals were made for the IND to be represented at the next dialogue.



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6. The other much anticipated and dominant issue that evening had to do with the closure of two Nigerian businesses; one, EetCafe in the Bijlmerplein and Unic Multiservices on the Bijlmerdreef. The later had to do with housing corporation Rochdale, in a case which had dragged on legally for several years already. According to the facts already generally known, Rochdale had been pressing to evict the shop owner, who runs a money transfer business as well as the sale of prepaid telephone cards. Rochdale allegedly claims the shop's activities no longer fit within the business zoning definition of that area. There had been a lot of back and forth on the case, but eventually, it appears that Rochdale finally had its way to evict the shop owner. Mr. Kenneth Ehigiene (the shop owner) feels very unfairly treated because he was never indebted to Rochdale. All his appeals for intervention and help from the municipality, as well as the district government fell on deaf ears. Now, he is stranded without a business and an income. He had eagerly hoped for this evening to find out from Ms. Jadnanansing why he was not supported in anyway throughout this ordeal. He was not even offered an alternative shop, having run this business in that location for over 20 years. The community was eagerly waiting to hear the response of the local government.
7. At this point our police allies only had to apologise again for the lastminute absence of Tanja. They admitted that this case was well-know, but they as the police they were not in a position give the right answers.
8. Then there was a question about the sharing of accommodation (so-called a subletting arrangement). Why is that when the police are tipped off about a case, they would come and eject everyone, and the accommodation is usually taken away from the current owner and all its former occupants become homeless, without any consideration whatsoever?
9. The answer given was quite straightforward. Subletting of social houses is strictly prohibited by law, and that is why offenders are made to face the penalty of eviction. Homes under mortgage are not so treated since they are privately owned. When the police show up along with an eviction squad, they are merely doing their job as it were, and cannot do otherwise.
10. Given that the police could not give very authoritative answers to the pertinent questions of the evening, the meeting rounded off with a vote of thanks by Dr. Francis Ogbuli, a Nigerian GP in Southeast.

**What could be better/different next time?**

This dialogue was loaded with a lot of anticipation, bur, that was disappointed in two ways; firstly, with the absence of IND officials (or any qualified official) to satisfactorily answer immigration questions. Secondly, the absence of Ms. Jadnanansing was clearly felt, as her input was badly needed about closed Nigerian businesses.

It is paramount importance that the request and expectations of the people be respected, in order to maintain the momentum of this dialogue. Any deviations from what is expected or has been promised should be promptly addressed or communicated across.

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