

## **Table of Contents**

- ***Dutch Compromise on Ritual Slaughter***
  - ***Geert Wilders verdict does not advance freedom of Expression***
  - ***Dutch lawmaker back in court for hate speech case***
- 

## **Dutch Compromise on Ritual Slaughter**

OnIslam (26.12.11) / HRWF (18.01.12) - Seeking to satisfy Muslims, Jews and animal rights activists, the Dutch government is planning to appoint a commission to study the new rules for ritual slaughter, the Jewish Tribune reported.

"This decision is a clear victory for common sense, tolerance and freedom of religion," said Rabbi Arye Goldberg, deputy director of the Rabbinical Centre of Europe (RCE), an organization representing more than 700 rabbis and Jewish communities throughout Europe.

"We are grateful to those Dutch politicians who helped us defeat a very problematic bill that could have had a very significant effect on traditional Jewish life in the Netherlands."

A proposed compromise was presented by Henk Bleker, Dutch deputy agriculture and environment minister, to ease the furor on ritual slaughter in the Netherlands.

It calls for agreements with slaughterhouses and the Islamic and Jewish communities over permissible slaughter practices.

The appointed commission will draw up standards on how animals can remain conscious and on educating slaughterers. It will also include registration and quality requirements for slaughterhouses.

Last June, the Dutch parliament voted in favor of banning the ritual slaughter of animals, to the anger of Muslim and Jewish minorities in the European country.

Though the amended legislation, submitted by a pro-animal party the Party for Animals (PvdD), passed the parliamentary vote, members of the Dutch Senate have announced that they would vote against the bill.

A few days before the Senate vote, PvdD leader Marriane Thieme pulled the bill after a majority of members of the Dutch Senate decided to withdraw their support for the ban on ritual slaughter.

According to the Islamic and Jewish ritual, the animal is slaughtered by a sharp blade. Of the 500 million animals slaughtered annually for food in the Netherlands, only 1.2 million animals are slaughtered according to Muslim or Jewish traditions, Dutch statistics show.

Muslim scholars agree that Shari`ah provides a divine law of mercy that should be applied on all Allah's creations, including animals.

Islam also provides details about avoiding any unnecessary pain.

Muslims make up one million of the Netherlands's 16 million population, mostly from Turkish and Moroccan origin.

Dutch Jews number around 50,000.

---

## **Geert Wilders verdict does not advance freedom of Expression**

Dutch politician Geert Wilders had been brought before a Dutch court for his aggressive, offensive, and abusive language against Islam. On June 23, the judge called his language aggressive, but not in violation of Dutch law. The Dutch Daily Trouw argued that this verdict further reduces the limits to freedom of expression in The Netherlands. Of course, this is the exact opposite of what Wilders' opponents had hoped to achieve. In fact, some of his opponents, fearing these results, were opposed to bringing him to court in the first place, saying that Wilders should be confronted in public discussions and debates rather than in the courts.

Freedom of expression goes very far in The Netherlands. However, it only makes sense if discussions are rational. Distorting one's faith with offensive language ends the possibility of rational discussions and serves no good purpose.

I will provide here some examples of Geert Wilders' statements, as discussed in court.

Statement 1: "The core of the problem is the fascist Islam, the sick ideology of Allah and Muhammad as written in the Islamic Mein Kampf: the Qur'an. The texts in the Qur'an leave little to imagination."

Statement 2: "The tsunami of a strange culture to us that becomes more dominant here. This should be put to a halt."

Statement 3: "The demographic composition of the population is the largest problem of The Netherlands. I am referring to all who come to the Netherlands and reproduce here. If you look at the figures and the development of these...Muslims will move from the large cities to the countryside. We have to stop this tsunami of Islamization. This hits us in our heart, in our identity, in our culture. If we do not resist then all other points of my program will be in vain."

The court ruled that these statements were completely legal, since any critique of religion is protected under Dutch law. In the court's estimation, these were not calls for hatred against any one group of people, but simply critiques of the religion of Islam. The court also stated that while Wilders' language was rude, rudeness lies within the limits of freedom of expression.

This, then, is a freedom of expression that allows mudslinging. Why else would someone refer to Islam as "fascist" or compare the Qur'an with Mein Kampf? Islam is not fascist and the Qur'an is not similar to Nazi propaganda. These comparisons amount to nothing more than slander. Why is Geert Wilders making these rude comparisons? Why did the American pastor Terry Jones burn the Quran? These are deliberate attempts to offend people of another faith. They have nothing to do with expressing differences in opinion or offering "religious critiques."

Mudslinging does not contribute to a debate about content. On the contrary, it ends all discussions and worse, provokes others to engage in similar actions. Is anyone surprised that this is the case? Many organizations (including MEMRI, and others) are dedicated to continuously highlighting the angry responses of Arab Muslims to that which offends their religious sensitivities. While I cannot justify the violent reactions that sometimes take place, I do not think these organizations should focus on angry Muslim responses without also pointing out the mudslinging and biased policies in the West that provoke these responses.

Christians from Egypt and other predominantly Muslim countries often reference statements by Muslims denigrating Christianity and Christians. Like them, I do not like to see these inflammatory statements. But if we expect Muslims to speak with respect about Christianity, then should not Christians do the same in their conversations about Islam? I therefore agree with Bishop Yuhannā Qultah, who stressed last week the importance of Christians respecting the prophet Muhammad and Islam. This does not imply belief and it does not mean that differences should not be discussed. It simply means that the language used should not be aggressive or offensive.

Now of course I disagree with the violent reactions of Muslims against the Danish cartoons, for example. But unfortunately, people who are insufficiently capable of responding to vicious oral attacks on their faith tend to respond with violence, not knowing how else to show their frustration.

Dr. Hassan Wagieh, an Azhar scholar and my personal friend, argued a few years back that engaging in public polemics about religious differences serves no good purpose, but only creates anger and frustrations. Religious differences should obviously be discussed, but in a rational way and between scholars. The approach needs to remain rational, and not turned into emotional events that stir up negative sentiments.

The Dutch judges ruled that critique on any religion is fully legal, but I do not consider whipping up religious sensitivities and emotions with distorted and false claims to be a valid critique of a religion.

Furthermore, the Dutch judges also refused to look at the way in which Wilders' statements have been received by Muslims, ignoring the significance of religion for a deeply religious people.

I believe in freedom of expression and the freedom to publicly disagree over religious beliefs, but I do not believe in the freedom to abuse and offend. Sadly, the Dutch judges do not recognize this difference. This certainly would have been different only fifty years ago, but Dutch society has since changed, becoming far less religious. With these changes, it now seems permissible for people such as Wilders to hurl abuses at people with deep religious values. Freedom of expression has sadly degraded into freedom to offend the other.

Statements 2 and 3 above show the real fear of Wilders. He sees great and rapid changes in Dutch society that has come with large numbers of people from different cultures entering The Netherlands. Many mosques have been erected and changed the appearance of many Dutch cities. In cities such as Amsterdam, Rotterdam, and Den Haag, Islam and Muslims are very visible. Many people remember the days when the number of Dutch Muslims was only very small. They have witnessed rapid changes and fear traditional Western values (not necessarily Christian) will change. I understand being concerned with this rapid change, but totally disagree with the manner in which Wilders responds to these valid concerns by exploiting existing fears and increasing them with his wildly aggressive claims.

Rapid changes in societies have always led to resistance - this is nothing new. But societies were always able to adapt to changing circumstances. We should learn from these experiences how past migrants have integrated into Dutch society and work towards integrating new migrants, as well.

Integration is, of course, related to numbers as well. If increasingly large amounts of immigrants of a particular mindset tend to flock together in their new country, the integration process will proceed at a slower pace. But offending that group of migrants also slows the process of integration.

We thus don't need people engaging in offensive verbal attacks on others.

Please also read about the freedom of expression:

- Freedom of Expression without boundaries? (1) by Cornelis Hulsman, AWR, 2005, week 43, art. 40.
- Freedom of Expression without boundaries? (2) by Adam Hannestad, AWR, 2005, week 43, art. 41.

About Geert Wilders:

- Cornelis Hulsman, Bāhir Dukhān, The use of the Qur'ānic verses Wilders quoted in ten years of Egyptian Arab media, AWR, 2008, week 2, art. 4.
- Hassan Muhammad Wagih, Uncovering and refuting Wilders' 'Fitna' propaganda model, AWR, 2008, week 2, art. 5.
- Hassan Muhammad Wagih, About the Islamophobic (Wilder's) disinformation trap, AWR, 2008, week 2, art. 6.
- Fadel Soliman, "Fitna is greater than killing;" Exposing Wilders' manipulation of the Qur'ān, AWR, 2008, week 2, art. 7.

---

## **Dutch lawmaker back in court for hate speech case**

By Toby Sterling

AP (07.02.2011) / HRWF (21.02.2011) - Website: <http://www.hrwf.org> - Amsterdam, Netherlands - Lawyers for Dutch anti-Islam lawmaker Geert Wilders said Monday that if their client's hate-speech case is not dismissed they want a retrial with new defense witnesses including the country's most notorious convicted terrorist.

Wilders faces charges of inciting hatred against Muslims after he compared Islam to fascism and called for a ban on the Quran.

It is "my right and my duty as a member of parliament to speak the truth about the evil ideology that is called Islam," he told judges in a courtroom speech at the end of Monday's televised hearing.

Wilders is one of the most prominent of the anti-Islam populists gaining influence in Europe, and his case has been seen as a major test of the legitimacy of their ideas. It pits his right to free speech against the right of Muslim immigrants to freedom from insult and discrimination allegedly caused by Wilders' remarks.

A new panel of judges is hearing the long-pending case against Wilders after the previous judges were dismissed in October.

The new panel must decide whether to drop the charges, change the venue from the Amsterdam District Court or begin all over again.

If that happens, Wilders' lawyer Bram Moszkowicz said Wilders wants to call Mohammed Bouyeri, the Muslim radical who is serving a life sentence for the 2004 murder of filmmaker Theo van Gogh.

Following last year's elections Wilders' Freedom Party is the country's third largest. It is now propping up a minority conservative Cabinet. It's platform demands a freeze of immigration from Muslim countries and forcing Muslim immigrants to adopt Dutch cultural values.

Moszkowicz said if Wilders is to be tried for expressing his opinions he must be allowed to cite the experts and evidence that have shaped his thinking.

Wilders has been under constant police protection since Bouyeri threatened him in a note filled with religious ramblings impaled on Van Gogh's corpse.

The legal process so far has proved to be a debacle. Prosecutors at first declined to press charges in response to dozens of complaints from Muslims, saying Wilders' remarks were part of a legitimate political debate.

But an appeals court ordered the prosecutors to bring the case to trial. Prosecutors did so, but then told trial judges the evidence was too weak for a conviction. Before the trial judges could rule, they were themselves dismissed. Allegations emerged that one of the appeals judges who had ordered the case attended a dinner party with a witness, leaving an impression of possible bias.

When trial judges declined to have the appeals judge interrogated in court, a review panel ordered an entirely new set of judges to take over.

Prosecutor Birgit van Roessel told the new judges Monday she did not think the case should be dismissed - in essence asking for a clear public ruling on whether remarks such as Wilders' are permissible.

Wilders declined to speak during most of the proceedings, citing his right to silence, but appeared confident of acquittal in his speech Monday.

"I believe with everything that's in me that Islam is an ideology that's primarily distinguished by murder and killing and can only bring forth societies that are retarded and impoverished," he said.

Muslim groups who filed suit against Wilders have asked for a symbolic one-euro penalty. They say Wilders' rhetoric has led to polarization of Dutch society, and increased discrimination against Muslims, who make up about five percent of the Netherlands' population.

The prosecution said it would object to some of Wilders' proposed new defense witnesses.

Co-prosecutor Paul Velleman said the court already has heard enough from three Islam experts, who agreed about the general contents of the Quran. Velleman said trying to define the nature of a religion is beyond the bounds of the case.

New presiding Judge Marcel van Oosten said the court will decide what to do next at a hearing on Feb. 14.

---