

= Geert Wilders =

Geert Wilders (Dutch pronunciation : [ʒeːrt ˈvɪldərs] , born 6 September 1963) is a Dutch politician and the founder and leader of the Dutch Party for Freedom (Partij voor de Vrijheid ? PVV) . Wilders is the Parliamentary group leader of his party in the Dutch House of Representatives . In the formation in 2010 of the Rutte cabinet , a minority cabinet of VVD and CDA , he actively participated in the negotiations , resulting in a " support agreement " (gedoogakkoord) between the PVV and these parties , but withdrew his support in April 2012 , citing disagreements with the cabinet on proposed budget cuts . Wilders is best known for his criticism of Islam ; his views have made him a controversial figure in the Netherlands and abroad , and since 2004 he receives permanent personal protection by armed bodyguards .

Raised a Roman Catholic , Wilders left the church at his coming of age . His travels to Israel as a young adult , as well as to neighbouring Arab countries , helped form his political views . Wilders worked as a speechwriter for the conservative @-@ liberal People 's Party for Freedom and Democracy (Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie ? VVD) , and later served as parliamentary assistant to party leader Frits Bolkestein from 1990 to 1998 . He was elected to the Utrecht city council in 1996 , and later to the House of Representatives . Citing irreconcilable differences over the party 's position on the accession of Turkey to the European Union , he left the VVD in 2004 to form his own party , the Party for Freedom .

Wilders has campaigned to stop what he views as the " Islamisation of the Netherlands " . He has compared the Quran to Mein Kampf and has campaigned to have the book banned in the Netherlands . He advocates ending immigration from Muslim countries , and supports banning the construction of new mosques . Wilders was a speaker at the Facing Jihad Conference held in Jerusalem in 2008 , which discussed the dangers of jihad , and has called for a hard line against what he called the " street terror " exerted by minorities in Dutch cities . His controversial 2008 film about his views on Islam , Fitna , received international attention . He has been described in the media as populist and labeled far @-@ right , although this is disputed by other observers . Wilders , who long refused to align himself with European far @-@ right leaders such as Jean @-@ Marie Le Pen and Jörg Haider and expressed concern of being " linked with the wrong rightist fascist groups " , views himself as a right @-@ wing liberal . More recently , however , Wilders worked together with the French National Front 's Marine Le Pen in a failed attempt to form a parliamentary group in the European Parliament which would also have included Austria 's Freedom Party , Italy 's Northern League , and Belgium 's Flemish Interest . On 18 March 2016 , his trial began on the accusation of inciting " discrimination and hatred " against Moroccans living in the Netherlands .

= = Early life and career = =

Wilders was born in the city of Venlo , in the southeast Netherlands . He is the youngest of four children , and was raised Catholic . He was born to a Dutch father and a mother born in colonial Indonesia , whose ancestors were Dutch Indonesian . His father worked as a manager for the printing and copying manufacturing company Océ , and had remained hidden from the Germans during the Second World War ; an experience so traumatizing that he refused to physically enter Germany even forty years later .

Wilders received his secondary education at the Mavo and Havo middle school and high school in Venlo . Reflecting passions that came to the fore later in his career , Wilders took a course in health insurance at the Stichting Opleiding Sociale Verzekeringen in Amsterdam and earned several law certificates at the Dutch Open University .

Wilders ' goal after he graduated from secondary school was to see the world . Because he did not have enough money to travel to Australia , his preferred destination , he went to Israel instead . For several years he volunteered in a moshav and worked for several firms , becoming in his own words " a true friend of Israel " . With the money he saved , he travelled to the neighbouring Arab countries , and was moved by the lack of democracy in the region . When he returned to the Netherlands , he retained Israeli ideas about counter @-@ terrorism and a " special feeling of solidarity " for the

country .

Living in Utrecht , Wilders initially worked in the health insurance industry . His interest in the subject led him into politics as a speech @-@ writer for the Netherlands ' People 's Party for Freedom and Democracy . He started his formal political career as a parliamentary assistant to the party leader Frits Bolkestein , specialising in foreign policy . He held this job from 1990 to 1998 . During this time Geert Wilders travelled extensively , visiting countries all across the Middle East , including Iran , Syria , Jordan , Egypt and Israel . Bolkestein was the first Dutch politician to address the consequences of mass immigration for Dutch society , including a sharp criticism of Muslim immigrants . He set an example for Wilders not only in his ideas but also in his confrontational speaking style . Political analyst Anno Bunnik later described Wilders as a " sorcerer 's apprentice " to Bolkestein .

= = = Personal life = = =

On 10 November 2004 , two suspected attackers were captured after an hour @-@ long siege of a building in The Hague . They were in possession of three grenades and were accused of planning to murder Wilders as well as a fellow MP , Ayaan Hirsi Ali . The suspects were presumed to be members of what the Dutch intelligence agency , the General Intelligence and Security Service , has termed the Hofstadgroep . Since this incident Wilders has been under constant security protection because of frequent threats to his life . In September 2007 , a Dutch woman was sentenced to a one @-@ year prison term for sending more than 100 threatening emails to Wilders . In 2009 , a rapper from Rotterdam was sentenced to 80 hours community service and a two @-@ month suspended jail term for threatening Wilders in a rap song . Wilders was listed as the most threatened politician in the Netherlands in 2008 .

Wilders is said to have been " deprived ... of a personal life for his ... hatred of Islam " . He is constantly accompanied by a permanent security detail of about six plainclothes police officers , and does not receive visitors unless they are cleared in advance , thoroughly searched , and escorted at all times . He lives in a state @-@ provided safe house which is outfitted to be bulletproof , is heavily guarded by police , and has a panic room . He is driven from his home to his offices in parliament in an armored police vehicle , and wears a bulletproof vest . His office is located in the most isolated corner of the Dutch Parliament building , and was chosen because potential terrorists can get to it through only one corridor , making it easier for his bodyguards to repel an attack . He is married to Krisztina Wilders (née Marfai) , a former diplomat of Hungarian origin , with whom he can only meet about once every week due to security concerns . The restrictions on his life because of this , he said , are " a situation that I wouldn 't wish on my worst enemy " .

In January 2010 , Karen Geurtsen , a Dutch journalist from the magazine HP @-@ De Tijd , revealed a painful breach of security . She spent four months working undercover , posing as an intern , for the PVV party . She claimed that she had had unchecked access to Wilders . " I could have killed him " , were the first words of the article that she published about this operation . According to her , she had " dozens " of opportunities to take his life . In July 2010 , after Wilders complained that his security was inadequate , the Special Security Assignments Brigade , a special unit of Dutch military police , made four attempts to smuggle a firearm into the heavily @-@ guarded offices of Wilders ' Freedom Party , two of which were successful . Following these breaches , security at the offices was increased .

Wilders has acquired nicknames such as " Mozart " and " Captain Peroxide " because of his flamboyant platinum blond hairstyle . Radio Netherlands calls him " the most famous bleach @-@ blond since Marilyn Monroe " .

Wilders is an agnostic , but he has stated that he thinks Dutch Christians " are my allies " and that they fundamentally should want the same thing .

In June 2011 , disclosure of Wilder 's personal finances indicated that Wilders had founded a self @-@ administered company one year earlier without reporting this via the public records of the House of Representatives , which he , as a parliamentarian , should have done .

= = Political career = =

In 1997, Wilders was elected for the People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD) to the municipal council of Utrecht, the fourth largest city of the Netherlands. He lived in Kanaleneiland, a suburb with cheap social housing and high apartment blocks, which has a relatively high number of immigrants. While a city councilor, Wilders was mugged in his own neighbourhood; some have speculated that this may have catalysed his political transformation. He was not rewarded for his time on the municipal council of Utrecht, for in the following elections he would score well below the national average in the University city.

A year later, he was elected to the Netherlands' national parliament, but his first four years in parliament drew little attention. However, his appointment in 2002 as a public spokesman for the VVD led Wilders to become more well known for his outspoken criticism of Islamic extremism. Tensions immediately developed within the party, as Wilders found himself to be to the right of most members, and challenged the party line in his public statements. He was expelled from the VVD parliamentary party, and in September 2004, Wilders left the VVD, having been a member since 1989, to form his own political party, Groep Wilders, later renamed the Party for Freedom. The crunch issue with the VVD party line was about his refusal to endorse the party's position that European Union accession negotiations must be started with Turkey.

The Party for Freedom's political platform often overlaps those of the assassinated Rotterdam politician Pim Fortuyn and his Pim Fortuyn List. After his death, Fortuyn's impact remained, as more and more politicians sought to gain political mileage by directly confronting topics such as a ban on immigration that were, from a politically correct point of view, considered unmentionable in the Netherlands until Fortuyn came on the scene and upended the Dutch tradition of consensus politics with an anti-immigration stance. Wilders would position himself to inherit Fortuyn's constituency. The Party for Freedom called for a 16 billion tax reduction, a far stricter policy toward recreational drug use, investing more in roads and other infrastructure, building nuclear power plants and including animal rights in the Dutch constitution. In the 2006 Dutch parliamentary election, their first parliamentary election, the Party for Freedom won 9 out of the 150 open seats.

In March 2009, in a party meeting in Venlo, Wilders said "I want to be prime minister", believing the PVV will eventually become the Netherlands' biggest party. "At some point it's going to happen and then it will be a big honour to fulfil the post of prime minister".

Polling conducted throughout March 2009 by Maurice de Hond indicated the Party for Freedom was the most popular parliamentary party. The polls predicted that the party would take 21 % of the national vote, winning 32 out of 150 seats in the Dutch parliament. If the polling results were replicated in an election, Wilders would be a major power broker. Under such circumstances, there would also be some likelihood of him becoming Prime Minister of the Netherlands. This has been partially attributed to timely prosecution attempts against him for hate speech and the travel ban imposed on him by the United Kingdom, as well as dissatisfaction with the Dutch government's response to the global financial crisis of 2008-2009.

On 3 March 2010, elections for the local councils were held in the municipalities of The Netherlands. The PVV only contested these local elections in the Dutch towns The Hague and Almere, because of a shortage of good candidates. The big gains that were scored indicated that the party and Wilders might dominate the political scene in the run-up to the parliamentary elections scheduled on 9 June 2010. The PVV won in Almere and came second to the Dutch Labour party in The Hague. In Almere, the PVV won 21 percent of the vote to Labour's 18 percent, preliminary results showed. In The Hague, the PVV had 8 seats, second to Labour with 10 seats.

On 8 March 2010, Wilders announced that he would take a seat on the Hague city council, after it became clear he won 13,000 preference votes. Earlier he had said he would not take up a seat if he won. In the parliamentary elections on 9 June 2010, the PVV increased its number of seats from 9 to 24 (out of 150), getting 15.5 % of the vote. This made the PVV the third party in size. With a fragmented parliament, at least three parties were required for an absolute majority. A coalition of VVD and Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA) was negotiated with

parliamentary support by the PVV . The PVV did not become part of the government formed by VVD and CDA but actively participated in the negotiations and thus policy decisions and ? as part of the outcome agreed that they would not support any motion to dismiss ministers concerning topics listed in a so @-@ called " support agreement " ? much like the Danish model where the Danish People 's Party plays a similar role . The very fact of the participation of Wilder 's party in these negotiations caused fierce discussions in political circles .

On 21 April 2012 , Wilders withdrew his support from the Rutte cabinet because of new austerity measures that were about to be taken . Commenting on his withdrawal Wilders blamed the " European dictates " pointing to the 3 % rule on budget deficit for European countries although his party had supported these rules earlier on . The cabinet blamed Wilders for what they call his " lack of political will " and " political cowardice " in regards to addressing the economic woes of the Netherlands . Wilders ' withdrawal from the negotiations led to new elections in September . Wilders and the PVV ran on a campaign to have the Netherlands withdraw from the European Union and for a return to the guilder . The PVV won 10 @.@ 1 % of the vote and 15 seats in parliament , a loss of 9 seats .

In the March 2014 local elections , Wilders ' Party for Freedom only took part in two municipalities , The Hague and Almere , and suffered minor losses in both . Nevertheless , international news coverage of the elections was dominated by Wilders after he led his supporters in a provocative chant (calling for " fewer , fewer ... Moroccans ") at an election night party rally .

In the May 2014 elections for the European Parliament , the Party for Freedom received 17 @.@ 0 % of the vote and four seats , a slight gain compared to the 13 @.@ 3 % of the vote the party had received in the previous parliamentary elections . In the run @-@ up to and aftermath of those European elections , Wilders worked with the French Front National 's Marine Le Pen to try to form a new parliamentary group in the European Parliament . They first announced their collaboration during a joint press conference in November 2013 , where Wilders vowed that " today is the beginning of the liberation from the European elite , the monster in Brussels " . Wilders visited the Sweden Democrats party and spoke with the Austrian Freedom party 's leader Heinz @-@ Christian Strache to help bring about the alliance , even while rejecting Hungary 's Jobbik and Germany 's NPD because he wanted to exclude " right @-@ wing extremist and racist " parties . Three days after the elections finished , Le Pen and Wilders presented another press conference , this time with Matteo Salvini of Italy 's Northern League , Harald Vilimsky of Austria 's Freedom party and Gerolf Annemans of Belgium 's Flemish Interest party , to promise that the parliamentary group would be formed . Eventually , however , the effort failed because it could only unite parties from six EU member states , one fewer than is required by parliamentary rules . This was in part due to a refusal to include the Greek Golden Dawn or Poland 's Congress of the New Right , and in part because parties like the Danish People 's party and the True Finns refused to join .

In the March 2015 provincial elections , the Party for Freedom received 11 @.@ 7 % of the vote nationally , slipping slightly from the 12 @.@ 4 % of the vote it had gotten in the 2011 provincial elections .

= = Public reception = =

Wilders has become a controversial figure with polarized opinions on him from the world news media . Regarding his reputation in the Netherlands , Wilders stated in 2009 , " Half of Holland loves me and half of Holland hates me . There is no in @-@ between . " In 2005 , the Dutch public expressed mixed reactions to Wilders ' general agenda , with 53 % calling it " implausible " and 47 % more supportive . He has been described as populist , labelled as both " extreme right " and far @-@ right , and defended by others as a mainstream politician with legitimate concerns saying that such labels are shallow smear attempts . Wilders himself rejects the labels and has called such descriptions " scandalous " . He has been accused of building his popularity on fear and resentment and vociferously defended for having the courage to talk openly about the problems unfettered immigration brings with it and the incompatibility of fundamentalist Islam with western values .

On 15 December 2007 , Wilders was declared " Politician of the Year " by NOS @-@ radio , a

mainstream Dutch radio station . The parliamentary press praised his ability to dominate political discussion and to attract the debate and to get into publicity with his well @-@ timed one @-@ liners . The editors eventually gave the title to Wilders because he was the only one who scored high amongst both the press and the general public .

In December 2009 , Wilders came in second in two polls in the Netherlands for Politician of the Year . A panel of Dutch television viewers praised him as " the second best " politician this year (after his outspoken critic Alexander Pechtold) , while his colleagues in parliament named him " the second worst " (after Rita Verdonk) .

Some Muslim critics of Wilders accuse him of using Quranic verses out of context . Because of Wilders ' positions on Islam and calls for discrimination against Dutch citizens of minority ethnic descent , the Dutch ? Moroccan rapper Appa , when interviewed about Wilders for a newspaper , said " if someone were to put a bullet in his head , I wouldn 't mind " . Wilders ' views on Islam prompted the Mayor of Rotterdam , Ahmed Aboutaleb , to reprimand him .

Editorials by AlterNet , The Montreal Gazette , The Wall Street Journal , The Guardian , and The New York Times have accused Wilders of hypocrisy given that , in their view , Wilders has called for the ban of the sale of the Quran while simultaneously arguing for his own personal freedom of speech . In a speech during a Dutch parliamentary debate , Wilders elaborated that he calls for the consistent application of Dutch laws restricting any act of expression that incites violence . Ideally , he would prefer to see nearly all such laws abolished . As such , he supports a European @-@ wide constitutional protection of freedom of speech like that which exists in the United States .

Wilders has also been compared to the assassinated fellow critic of Islam and filmmaker Theo van Gogh , but he does not see himself as taking on van Gogh 's mantle . Wilders has stated that he supports the free speech rights of his critics , saying that " An Imam who wants a politician dead is ? however reprehensible ? allowed to say so " . He has responded to critics ' comments of racism and Islamophobia by stating , " I don 't hate Muslims . I hate their book and their ideology " .

In February 2010 , the trailer of a newly published online satirical video on the website of the Dutch radio station FunX , which targets a young urban audience , spoofed a murder attempt on Wilders .

In July 2010 , the magazine Inspire announced that Wilders , as well as Ayaan Hirsi Ali , Kurt Westergaard and Salman Rushdie , were mentioned on a " death list " of an international Islamist terrorist network .

Shortly before this publication it was revealed in The Hague that Dutch law enforcement officers succeeded twice in smuggling a firearm into the parliament buildings and into the guarded headquarters of Wilders ' party . This check was carried out by the Special Security Assignments Brigade BSB , a special unit of the Dutch Military Police . The test was carried out following a complaint from Wilders about his security being inadequate .

On 11 September 2010 , 2 @,@ 000 people gathered close by the site of a planned Muslim community center near the site of the World Trade Center attacks , on 11 September 2001 , where they were addressed by Wilders who flew from The Netherlands to urge the crowd : " This is where we have (to) draw the line . We must never give a free hand to those who want to subjugate us , " Wilders added . " Draw this line so that New York ... will never become New Mecca . "

Wilders was extensively discussed in American diplomatic cables , released by WikiLeaks in December 2010 . In a briefing to President Barack Obama , he was described as " no friend of the US : he opposes Dutch military involvement in Afghanistan ; he believes development assistance is money wasted ; he opposes NATO missions outside ' allied ' territory ; he is against most EU initiatives ; and , most troubling , he foments fear and hatred of immigrants . "

In July 2011 , Anders Behring Breivik , the man who carried out the 2011 Norway attacks , expressed admiration for Geert Wilders and the Party for Freedom . Wilders immediately distanced himself strongly from Breivik .

On 2 October 2011 Radio Netherlands Worldwide reported that a retired Dutch politician of the People 's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD) Frits Bolkestein , who is sometime called the ' mentor ' of Geert Wilders , " does not share his views " . He reportedly said that " Wilders says things that are just not right and I think he totally exaggerates . " While giving his opinion on burqa ban Mr Bolkestein said that he " disagrees with the recent introduction of a burqa ban , an idea

championed by Geert Wilders . " The Netherlands , he said , is the third European country to introduce such a ban after France and Belgium . " A ban makes martyrs of the few burqa wearers there are in the Netherlands " , he said .

In March 2014 and during a meeting for his party on the evening of local elections , he sparked widespread controversy when he asked his attending supporters " Do you want , in this city (The Hague) , and in the Netherlands , more or less Moroccans ? " , after which they chanted " Less ! Less ! " . Wilders ' response was " Then we 'll fix it ! " . This action led several PVV representatives to resign , among whom two of the party 's members of Parliament (Roland van Vliet and Joram van Klaveren) , the party 's leader in the European Parliament (Laurence Stassen) , and a number of its provincial legislators and municipal councillors . Many politicians denounced what happened . In a response , young Moroccans launched a social media campaign called ' Born here ' , in which they posted pictures of themselves alongside their Dutch passports as a sign of challenge .

= = Political views = =

= = = Political principles = = =

Wilders generally considers himself to be a right @-@ wing liberal , with a specific mix of positions independent of the European political spectrum and particular to iconoclastic Dutch society . He has stated that " My allies are not Le Pen or Haider We 'll never join up with the fascists and Mussolinis of Italy . I 'm very afraid of being linked with the wrong rightist fascist groups " , saying instead his drive is issues such as freedom of expression and Dutch iconoclasm . Wilders views British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher as his greatest political role model . People 's Party for Freedom and Democracy figure Frits Bolkestein also heavily influenced his beliefs .

Wilders strongly opposes the Dutch political system in general . He believes that there is a ruling elite of parliamentarians who only care about their own personal careers and disregard the will of the people . He also blames the Dutch system of multi @-@ party coalition governments for a lack of clear and effective policies . In his view , Dutch society advocates rule by consensus and cultural relativism , while he believes that this should change so as to " not tolerate the intolerant " .

On foreign relations , Wilders has largely supported Israel and has criticized countries he perceives as enemies of Israel . Furthermore , he has made some proposals in the Dutch Parliament inspired by Israeli policies . For example , he supports implementing Israel 's administrative detention in the Netherlands , a practice heavily criticized by human rights groups , which he calls " common sense " .

Wilders often mentions Henk and Ingrid in his speeches , fictitious common Dutch subjects who he claims to work for . Henk and Ingrid represent the Average Joe in Dutch political parlance , as the " heart and backbone of Dutch society " . They were compared to Joe the Plumber in Dutch media , although he is a real person . They live in a Vinex neighbourhood , have two school attending children , a median income and both work . They used to vote PvdA but now vote PVV .

Furthermore , Wilders has revived the ancient idea of reuniting Flanders and the Netherlands .

Wilders published the version of his political manifesto called Klare Wijn (" Clear Wine ") in March 2006 . The program proposed ten key points to be implemented :

Considerable reduction of taxes and state regulations .

Replacement of the present Article 1 of the Dutch constitution , guaranteeing equality under the law , by a clause stating the cultural dominance of the Christian , Jewish and humanist traditions .

Reduction of the influence of the European Union , which may no longer be expanded with new member states , especially Turkey ; the European Parliament will be abolished . Dutch financial contributions to the European Union should be reduced by billions of euros .

A five @-@ year moratorium on the immigration of non @-@ Western foreigners who intend to stay in the Netherlands . Foreign residents will no longer have the right to vote in municipal elections .

A five @-@ year moratorium on the founding of new mosques and Islamic schools ; a permanent ban on preaching in any language other than Dutch . Foreign imams will not be allowed to preach .

Radical mosques will be closed and radical Muslims will be expelled .

Restoration of educational standards , with an emphasis on the educational value of the family .

Introduction of binding referenda and elected mayors , chiefs of police and prime ministers .

Introduction of minimum penalties , and higher maximum penalties ; introduction of administrative detention for terrorist suspects . Street terrorism will be punished by boot camps and denaturalisation and deportation of immigrant offenders .

Restoration of respect and better rewards for teachers , policemen , health care workers and military personnel .

Instead of complicated reorganisation , a more accessible and humane health care system , especially for elderly citizens .

= = = Views on Islam = = =

Wilders is best known for his criticism of Islam , summing up his views by saying , " I don 't hate Muslims , I hate Islam " . Although identifying Islamic extremists as 5 ? 15 % of Muslims , he argues that " there is no such thing as ' moderate Islam ' " and that the " Koran also states that Muslims who believe in only part of the Koran are in fact apostates " . He suggests that Muslims should " tear out half of the Koran if they wished to stay in the Netherlands " because it contains " terrible things " and that Muhammad would " ... in these days be hunted down as a terrorist " .

On 8 August 2007 , Wilders opined in an open letter to the Dutch newspaper De Volkskrant that the Koran , which he called a " fascist book " , should be outlawed in the Netherlands , like Adolf Hitler 's Mein Kampf . He has stated that " The book incites hatred and killing and therefore has no place in our legal order " . He has also referred to Mohammed as " the devil " . In September 2009 Wilders proposed to put a tax on Hijab wearing by Muslim women . He suggested women could purchase a license at a cost of ? 1000 and that the money raised could be used in projects beneficial to women 's emancipation .

He believes that all Muslim immigration to the Netherlands should be halted and all settled immigrants should be paid to leave . Referring to the increased population of Muslims in the Netherlands , he has said :

Take a walk down the street and see where this is going . You no longer feel like you are living in your own country . There is a battle going on and we have to defend ourselves . Before you know it there will be more mosques than churches !

In a speech before the Dutch Parliament , he stated :

Islam is the Trojan Horse in Europe . If we do not stop Islamification now , Eurabia and Netherabia will just be a matter of time . One century ago , there were approximately 50 Muslims in the Netherlands . Today , there are about 1 million Muslims in this country . Where will it end ? We are heading for the end of European and Dutch civilisation as we know it . Where is our Prime Minister in all this ?

In reply to my questions in the House he said , without batting an eyelid , that there is no question of our country being Islamified . Now , this reply constituted a historical error as soon as it was uttered . Very many Dutch citizens , Madam Speaker , experience the presence of Islam around them . And I can report that they have had enough of burkas , headscarves , the ritual slaughter of animals , so ? called honour revenge , blaring minarets , female circumcision , hymen restoration operations , abuse of homosexuals , Turkish and Arabic on the buses and trains as well as on town hall leaflets , halal meat at grocery shops and department stores , Sharia exams , the Finance Minister 's Sharia mortgages , and the enormous overrepresentation of Muslims in the area of crime , including Moroccan street terrorists .

Nonetheless , Wilders has traveled widely in the Arab world and Der Spiegel has stated that Wilders will " wax poetic " over those " magnificent countries " . Wilders has also said that " It 's a real shame that these places are so chaotic . "

Wilders argues that Islam is not a religion , but rather a totalitarian political ideology such as communism and fascism .

After the Dutch parliament turned down his request for an exhibition of cartoons depicting Prophet

Muhammad be shown in parliament , Wilders vowed to show cartoons depicting him on television during time reserved for political parties .

On 28 July 2015 , Vienna 's prosecutors ' office launched the probe and lodged calls for criminal proceedings against Geert Wilders for allegedly comparing the Quran to Mein Kampf , after Tarafa Baghajati had accused them of hate speech and denigrating religious teachings .

After the November 2015 Paris attacks , Wilders in an article on The New York Times , argued for a national referendum in Netherlands to decide about the refugee crisis .

= = = Wilders and Israel = = =

Wilders lived in Israel for two years during his youth and has visited the country 40 times in the last 25 years .

Wilders stated about Israel : " I have visited many interesting countries in the Middle East ? from Syria to Egypt , from Tunisia to Turkey , from Cyprus to Iran ? but nowhere did I have the special feeling of solidarity that I always get when I land at Ben Gurion International Airport . " Dutch public TV channel Nederland 2 's daily news programme Netwerk reported that numerous American supporters of Israel financially supported Wilders ' Party for Freedom (PVV) and openly approved of his message towards Islam and Islamic terrorism . Wilders told an audience during the report that " We [in the West] are all Israel " . He has also said " Israel is the West 's first line of defence " against what he perceives to be a threat posed by Islam .

Following the Dutch general election , 2010 , in which the PVV was the third biggest party , Wilders said Jordan should be renamed Palestine . The Jordanian government responded saying Wilders ' speech was reminiscent of the Israeli right wing . His speech said " Jordan is Palestine . Changing its name to Palestine will end the conflict in the Middle East and provide the Palestinians with an alternate homeland . " He also said Israel deserves a special status in the Dutch government because it was fighting for " Jerusalem " in its name .

" If Jerusalem falls into the hands of the Muslims , Athens and Rome will be next . Thus , Jerusalem is the main front protecting the West . It is not a conflict over territory but rather an ideological battle , between the mentality of the liberated West and the ideology of Islamic barbarism . There has been an independent Palestinian state since 1946 , and it is the kingdom of Jordan . "

He called on the Dutch government to refer to Jordan as Palestine and move its embassy to Jerusalem .

= = Fitna = =

Fitna is a 2008 short film written and commissioned by Wilders that explores Koranic @-@ inspired motivations for terrorism , Islamic universalism , and Islam in the Netherlands . Its title comes from the Arabic word fitna , which describes " disagreement and division among people " or a " test of faith in times of trial " .

It is the subject of an international controversy and debate on free speech . Despite the legal troubles surrounding the film , Wilders insists that before he released it , he consulted numerous lawyers in the field , who found nothing worth prosecution . Jordan has summoned Wilders to court , with the film deemed to " incite hatred " . Militant Sunni Islamist group Al @-@ Qaeda issued a call to murder Wilders after its release .

In the spring of 2009 , Wilders launched the " Facing Jihad World Tour " , a series of screenings of Fitna to public officials and influential organizations around the globe , starting in Rome . In the United States , Wilders showed the film to the United States Congress on 26 February having been invited by Arizona Republican Senator Jon Kyl . Around 40 people attended the screening . American Muslims protested , but the groups said that they supported his right of free speech while still condemning his opinions . Wilders spoke at the Conservative Political Action Conference on 28 February . He appeared before the National Press Club and the Republican Jewish Coalition that week as well . Similar attempts in Britain led to a travel ban , and legislative blocks have prevented an appearance in Denmark .

= = Call for beheading by Feiz Mohammad = =

In September 2010 , in an internet chat room , Australian Islamic fundamentalist preacher Feiz Mohammad urged his followers to behead Wilders . His rationale was his accusation that Wilders had " denigrat [ed] " Islam , and that that anyone who " mocks , laughs or degrades Islam " as Wilders had must be killed " by chopping off his head . " The Dutch newspaper De Telegraaf released an excerpt of the talk , after Dutch intelligence officials received a tip about the threat .

After the 2013 Boston Marathon bombing , Wilders wrote :

I am threatened for the simple reason that I am an Islam critic . But , make no mistake , I am not the only one who is in danger . The Tsarnaev brothers drew inspiration from Feiz Mohammed 's internet rants and decided to kill innocent onlookers at a marathon . Everyone is in danger .

= = = Al @-@ Qaeda hit list = = =

In 2010 Anwar al @-@ Awlaki published a hit list in his Inspire magazine , including Wilders , Ayaan Hirsi Ali and Salman Rushdie along with cartoonists Lars Vilks and three Jyllands @-@ Posten staff members : Kurt Westergaard , Carsten Juste , and Flemming Rose . The list was later expanded to include Stéphane " Charb " Charbonnier , who was murdered in a terror attack on Charlie Hebdo in Paris , along with 11 other people . After the attack , Al @-@ Qaeda called for more killings .

= = = Death wish by Labour politician = = =

One local politician from the Labour Party in the Netherlands wished for the death of Wilders .

= = In the United Kingdom = =

= = = Ban on entering the United Kingdom = = =

Lord Pearson of Rannoch and Baroness Cox , members of the House of Lords (the upper chamber of the British Parliament) , invited Wilders to a show of 12 February 2009 viewing of Fitna in the Palace of Westminster . Two days before the showing , Home Secretary Jacqui Smith banned Wilders from entering the United Kingdom , labeling him an " undesirable person " . Entry was denied under EU law , and reportedly supported under regulation 19 of the Immigration (European Economic Area) Regulations 2006 , an EU law which allows a member state to refuse entry to individuals if they are regarded as constituting a threat to public policy , security or health . A Home Office spokesperson elaborated that " The Government opposes extremism in all its forms ... and that was the driving force behind tighter rules on exclusions for unacceptable behaviour that the Home Secretary announced in October last year "

Wilders defied the ban and took a British Midland Airways flight from Amsterdam to London Heathrow Airport on 12 February , accompanied by television crews . Upon arrival , he was quickly detained by UK Border Agency officials , and deported on one of the next flights to the Netherlands . He called Prime Minister Gordon Brown " the biggest coward in Europe " and remarked , " Of course I will come back " . Wilders had visited the United Kingdom in December 2008 without any problem . In response to the ban , both Pearson and Cox accused the government of " appeasing " militant Islam .

The International Herald Tribune stated that the ban was broadly condemned in the British news media . The Dutch Foreign Secretary , Maxime Verhagen , called the decision " highly regrettable " and complained to his British counterpart . Dutch Prime Minister Jan Peter Balkenende complained to Gordon Brown about the " disappointing " decision . The Quilliam Foundation , a British think tank , criticised the ban , as did National Secular Society president Terry Sanderson . The Muslim Labour peer Lord Ahmed expressed support for Smith 's ban on Wilders entering the country ; the

Ramadhan Foundation and the Muslim Council of Britain also did so , the council labeling Wilders " an open and relentless preacher of hate " .

= = = Ban overturned = = =

After being declared persona non grata by Jacqui Smith , then the Home Secretary , in February 2009 , Wilders appealed the decision to Britain 's Asylum and Immigration Tribunal . In October 2009 , the tribunal overturned the ban . Wilders subsequently praised the ruling as " a triumph for freedom of speech " and stated that he plans to visit the United Kingdom in the near future .

The ruling was criticized by the British Home Office , which stated that an appeal of the tribunal 's ruling is being considered . A spokesman stated :

" The Government opposes extremism in all its forms . The decision to refuse Wilders admission was taken on the basis that his presence could have inflamed tensions between our communities and have led to inter faith violence . We still maintain this view . "

= = = Visits to the UK = = =

On 16 October 2009 , Wilders arrived in the United Kingdom and was quickly forced to move his press conference due to protests by about forty members of the organization Islam4UK , an organization that was later shut down under the UK 's Terrorism Act 2000 on 14 January 2010 . Though the Home Office had asserted that his entry into the country would not be blocked , a spokesman said his " statements and behaviour during a visit will inevitably impact on any future decisions to admit him . " His visit to the UK met with protest , but Wilders called it " a victory " in a press conference . On his outspoken views on Islam , he said : " I have a problem with the Islamic ideology , the Islamic culture , because I feel that the more Islam that we get in our societies the less freedom we get . " He opened the press conference with a quote from George Orwell 's preface to Animal Farm : " If liberty means anything at all , it means the right to tell people what they don 't want to hear " . Lord Pearson , who had invited him , said his arrival was

" a celebration of the victory of freedom of speech over those who would prevent it in this country , particularly the Islamists , the violent Jihadists who are on the march across the world and in the UK . "

In January 2010 , Wilders was invited again to show his anti Quran movie Fitna in the British House of Lords by Lord Pearson UK Independence Party (UKIP) , and cross bencher Baroness Cox . Wilders accepted the invitation and was present for a showing of the movie in the House of Lords on 5 March . In his speech he quoted ominous words from Winston Churchill 's book The River War from 1899 :

" Mohammedanism is a militant and proselytizing faith . No stronger retrograde force exists in the World . It has already spread throughout Central Africa , raising fearless warriors at every step ... the civilization of modern Europe might fall , as fell the civilization of ancient Rome . "

At the ensuing press conferences , he called the Islamic prophet , Muhammad a " barbarian , a mass murderer , and a pedophile " and referred to Islam as a " fascist ideology " which was " violent , dangerous , and retarded " . Wilders also reportedly called Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan a " total freak " . Dutch Prime Minister Jan Peter Balkenende called these comments " irresponsible " , and Maxime Verhagen , Dutch caretaker Minister of Foreign Affairs , publicly condemned Wilders 's remarks and behaviour :

" He incites discord among people in a distasteful manner . And in the meantime he damages the interests of the Dutch population and the reputation of the Netherlands in the world . "

Bernard Wientjes , the president of the Dutch employers ' organization Confederation of Netherlands Industry and Employers (VNO NCW) , also accused Wilders of " seriously " damaging Dutch interests abroad . He called it outrageous that Wilders had presented himself in London as " the next Dutch prime minister " and then derided Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan . Emphasizing that three quarters of the Dutch GDP comes from revenue earned abroad , according

to Wientjes , Wilders poses " a serious threat to the Netherlands and the Dutch economy " .

= = In Australia = =

In 2012 Wilders was invited by the Q Society of Australia to visit Australia . In August 2012 he applied for a visa to give two speeches in October 2012 . His staff and police protection officers were granted visas within three days , but Wilders was not . On 2 October 2012 Immigration Minister Chris Bowen , while stating that Wilders ' views were offensive , stated that he would not block the visa application . Bowen stated :

" I have decided not to intervene to deny him a visa because I believe that our democracy is strong enough , our multiculturalism robust enough and our commitment to freedom of speech entrenched enough that our society can withstand the visit of a fringe commentator from the other side of the world " .

On the same day , the Q Society put out a press release criticizing the delays in issuing a visa , saying that Chris Bowen 's announcement was " too little , too late " and announcing that Wilders ' visit would be pushed back to February 2013 as there were still no visa documents available .

= = In Germany = =

In March 2010 , Wilders was told he is " not welcome " in the western German tourist resort of Monschau in the Eifel area , after he spent a weekend there , along with several armed bodyguards . Mayor Margareta Ritter (CDU) said she was concerned that his presence tainted her town with the suspicion that it was sympathetic to his views . As a result , Monschau was said to have been unfairly connected with " extremism " in the European press .

" Anyone who pollutes the integration debate in the Netherlands with poisonous right @-@ wing populism as Wilders has , and advocates prohibition of the Koran by a comparison with Hitler 's Mein Kampf , is not welcome in Monschau . I wanted to distinguish Monschau from that . "

Ritter didn 't say whether Wilders was enjoying a short vacation in her town or had been meeting with like @-@ minded people . A demonstration to support Wilders was announced to take place in Berlin on 17 April .

In October 2010 , Wilders supported the founding of the German Freedom Party .

In April 2015 , Wilders held a speech for Pegida in Dresden .

= = Other international initiatives = =

In July 2010 , Wilders announced the International Freedom Alliance , a network of groups and individuals who " are fighting for freedom against Islam " .

Wilders plans IFA branches in the United States , Canada , Britain , France and Germany by late 2010 . " The message , ' stop Islam , defend freedom ' , is a message that 's not only important for the Netherlands but for the whole free Western world " , Wilders stated in an address to reporters at the Dutch Parliament .

On 6 August 2010 , Wilders , who had become a regular guest with American conservatives and libertarians , announced that he would speak at a rally on 11 September in New York to protest the plans for Park51 , a Muslim community center with a prayer space to be built near the World Trade Center site . The rally , to be held on the ten @-@ year anniversary of the 11 September 2001 attacks , was organised by Stop Islamization of America , which was supported by former House speaker Newt Gingrich , who was originally announced as a speaker at the event , but never confirmed his appearance and cancelled a video appearance . According to SIOA 's website world leaders , prominent politicians and 9 / 11 family members would be speaking at the rally , but Wilders was not mentioned by name , though he did attend as he had announced .

In political circles in The Netherlands , the announcement caused widespread irritation about his plan . Christian Democrat senator Hans Hillen remarked that Wilders ' words could endanger Dutch interests . Former NATO General Secretary Jaap de Hoop Scheffer advised Wilders not to make a

speech , arguing that the international public does not know who is in the Dutch cabinet and who is in parliament and thus Wilders ' speech could be mistaken as an official statement of the Dutch government . Also Christian Democrat party leader and acting Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs Maxime Verhagen issued a warning .

Also , the Dutch Foreign Ministry allegedly would have issued guidelines to its embassies on how to react to questions about the role being played by the PVV and Wilders in the formation of a new government . On 10 August 2010 , the website of Dutch daily newspaper NRC Handelsblad published the ministry memo . The ministry itself however had declined " to confirm or deny " the authenticity of these guidelines . One question posed is how Wilders could be taking part in negotiations on forming a government coalition when he has been indicted for inciting hatred and discrimination , and for insulting a group of persons . Other questions covered possible bans on the building of new mosques , on the Quran and on Islamic schools in the Netherlands . The memo stressed that such bans would breach the Dutch constitution .

Wilders spoke on Thursday , 12 May 2011 , at Cornerstone Church in Madison , Tennessee , at the Tennessee Freedom Coalition inaugural Signature Series event .

In May 2015 , Geert Wilders was invited to an art exhibit presented by Stop Islamization of America in Garland , Texas that offered a \$ 10 @, @ 000 prize for the best drawing of Muhammad . Towards the end of the event , two gunmen opened fire outside , injuring a police officer before being shot dead by other police officers guarding the center .

= = Trial = =

Several groups and persons in the Netherlands have called for legal action against Wilders , while others defended his right to free speech . On 15 August 2007 , a representative of the Prosecutors ' Office in Amsterdam declared that dozens of reports against Wilders had been filed , and that they were all being considered . Attempts to prosecute Wilders under Dutch anti @-@ hate speech laws in June 2008 failed , with the public prosecutor 's office stating that Wilders ' comments contributed to the debate on Islam in Dutch society and also had been made outside parliament . The office released a statement reading : " That comments are hurtful and offensive for a large number of Muslims does not mean that they are punishable . Freedom of expression fulfils an essential role in public debate in a democratic society . That means that offensive comments can be made in a political debate . "

On 21 January 2009 , a three @-@ judge court ordered prosecutors to try him .

The Middle East Forum established a Legal Defence Fund for Wilders 's defence . The New York Times ran an op @-@ ed criticizing his views and arguing that " for a man who calls for a ban on the Koran to act as the champion of free speech is a bit rich " , concluding , however that the lawsuit against Wilders might not be " a good thing for democracy " , because it made him " look more important than he should be . "

A survey by Angus Reid Global Monitor found that public opinion is deeply split on the prosecution , with 50 % supporting Wilders and 43 % opposed . However , as of 2009 , public support for the Party for Freedom had greatly increased since Wilders ' legal troubles began , with the Party for Freedom virtually tied with the People 's Party for Freedom and Democracy to be the third most popular party . According to Radio Netherlands , " Dutch politicians themselves seem to be keeping quiet on the issue ; they are probably worried that media attention will only serve to make the controversial politician more popular " .

In late October 2010 , the Dutch court approved a request from Geert Wilders to have new judges appointed forcing the court to retry the case . On 7 February 2011 , Wilders returned to the court room in order that his legal team could present evidence from Islamic experts which the court rejected in 2010 , including Mohammed Bouyeri , who murdered film @-@ maker Theo van Gogh , and Dutch academic Hans Jansen .

On 23 June 2011 , Wilders was acquitted of all charges . A Dutch court said that his speech was legitimate political debate , but on the edge . Because both the public prosecutor and the defence requested complete acquittal , the verdict will most likely not be appealed .

= = Awards and recognition = =

Oriana Fallaci Free Speech Award in 2009

Nominated for Sakharov Prize in 2010

Netherlands Politician of the Year 2010

Netherlands Politician of the Year 2013

Netherlands Politician of the Year 2015