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## OPINION

# Talking About 'the Moroccan Issue' Is Not a Crime

A democracy must allow for the frank discussion of the problems it faces.

By GEERT WILDERS

Dec. 21, 2014 3:55 p.m. ET

*The Hague*

Four years ago I was taken to court in the Netherlands on hate-crime charges. After a trial that lasted almost two years, I was finally acquitted. But the case cost me a lot of time and energy that, as an elected politician, I would rather have devoted to my parliamentary work.

Now, just as my Party for Freedom (PVV) is taking the lead in the polls and the Dutch government is facing serious political difficulties, the public prosecutor is again bringing me to court, this time for asking my party supporters, during a PVV electoral meeting in March, whether they want more or fewer Moroccans in the country.

This question needs to be understood in proper context.

In the Netherlands, as in many other Western European countries right now, problems arise when Muslim immigrants refuse to assimilate and integrate into the wider community. In our case I referred specifically to the Moroccans not because I have anything against them generally but because they are one of the largest immigrant groups here and are overrepresented in our crime and welfare statistics.

Moroccans are suspects in violent robberies 22 times as often as indigenous Dutch. Between 1996 and 2010, more than 60% of the Moroccan male youths born in 1984 had at least once been suspected of a crime, a rate three times as high as their indigenous counterparts. Meanwhile, 14% of the Moroccan population between ages 15 and 64 is dependent on welfare, compared with 9% for the Turks and 3% for the indigenous Dutch. According to Dick Schoof, the Dutch national coordinator for counterterrorism and security, Moroccans also account for three-quarters of all Dutch Muslims who leave for Syria to wage jihad.

The Dutch often refer to this problem as the "Moroccan issue." If instead the Americans were the largest group of immigrants refusing to assimilate in the Netherlands, we would no doubt be referring to it as "the American issue."



FREE FOR ALL: Protesters demonstrating against the views of the author are exercising the same right to free speech as the author himself. *REUTERS*

For almost a decade, my party has proposed three measures to address this issue. First, we want an end to immigration from Muslim countries. Second, we want to expel all criminals of foreign nationality and, for those offenders who have dual nationality, deprive them of their Dutch citizenship, sending them back to the country of their other nationality. Third, we want to encourage the voluntary repatriation of non-Western immigrants.

These three measures don't target any particular ethnic group, but given the demographics in our country it would immediately entail the presence of fewer Moroccans. Hence my question: "Do you want more or fewer Moroccans?" I never advocated that all Moroccans should leave. Nor do I object to every Moroccan. The decision to prosecute me for insulting an ethnic group and inciting hatred and discrimination is preposterous.

The prosecutor's decision can't be seen as being anything but politically motivated, especially when he has refused to prosecute two leading politicians of the governing Labor Party, Diederik Samsom and Hans Spekman, for similar statements on Moroccans. Mr. Samsom said that Moroccans have an "ethnic monopoly" on street crime, while Mr. Spekman said that Moroccans who don't abide by the law have to be "humiliated in front of their own people."

Polls have indicated that more than 43% of Netherlandsers agree with me. I was thus expressing the feelings of millions in my country. In a democracy, a public debate about important political issues, such as "the Moroccan issue," shouldn't be restricted by criminalizing the expression of certain problems and policy proposals.

Unfortunately, political debate is now being increasingly restricted, not just in the Netherlands but across many European countries. Laws limiting freedom of expression, including the freedom of political debate, are introduced to protect subjective rights such as the right of certain groups to not feel offended, preventing the open discussion of pressing problems like those that arise from large-scale immigration across Western Europe. The unwillingness to address such problems is leading to the growth of parties, similar to my own PVV, in many other Western countries.

And existing laws are being applied ever more vigorously. Earlier this month, the Dutch Supreme Court ruled that the existing Dutch penal laws not only criminalize incitement to hatred and discrimination but also "incitement to intolerance."

I don't believe in political self-censorship. During the past 10 years, I have drawn attention to the problems that Dutch citizens experience related to integration, immigration and the Islamization of our society. And I have paid, and continue to pay, a very high price for it. For more than a decade now I have lived under constant police protection because I am on the death list of several Islamist terror groups. However, I will never let anyone silence me, no matter the consequences. My voters have elected me to express their concerns, and that is what I will do.

Prosecuting me as an elected politician for expressing the opinions of my constituents is absurd. Excluding certain problems from the political debate by making it a crime to discuss them won't lead to the disappearance of these concerns, let alone contribute to a solution. This prosecution, moreover, is also dangerous. People will begin to lose their trust in the democratic process. Festerling political problems do not go away simply because they are kept in a dark corner. I wish the Dutch public prosecutor had been wise enough to see that.

*Mr. Wilders is a member of the Dutch Parliament and the leader of the Party for Freedom. He is the author of "Marked for Death: Islam's War Against the West and Me" (Regnery).*

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