



Cynthia Boll/AFP/Getty Images

## The Netherlands Braces for Clash With Islam

Another clash between Europe and Islam is on the horizon. This time, Europe is not backing down.

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The Netherlands has gained international attention by becoming the most recent European nation to stir up radical Islamic outrage. Geert Wilders, chairman of the recently formed Netherlands' Freedom Party, called the Koran "an inspiration for murder" and said that if the prophet Mohammed were alive today, he would have him "tarred and feathered as an extremist and deported if he were in Holland." Wilders has produced a film he plans to air this [March](#) on how the Koran inspires murder.

It is becoming increasingly common in Europe for politicians to speak out in defense of Western values against Islam. Bavarian Premier [Edmund Stoiber](#) decried the multiplying number of Islamic mosques in Bavaria this past September. German Governor of Hesse [Roland Koch](#) complained about Germany's rising number of "criminal young foreigners." Austrian candidate for the Graz City Council [Susanne Winter](#) made headlines for saying that Islam should be "thrown back where it came from, behind the Mediterranean." Now Geert Wilders has joined the ranks of politicians disgruntled by Islam's spread across Europe.

What makes Wilders's actions even more serious, however, is the fact that he is actually producing a film propagating his views. This is taking it a step beyond just making a statement in a speech. Up to this point, all the most controversial films and cartoons about Islam have been produced by cartoonists, journalists, artists or filmmakers (like [Theo van Gogh](#)). The fact that Wilders is a politician means that many Muslims will interpret his stance against Islam as being endorsed by the Dutch government, even though he is not part of the ruling coalition.

The Islamic retaliation against the release of Wilders's film could be drastic. Online jihadist groups are already posting rap videos showing the beheading of Wilders effigies. With only a slight prod from their leaders, Islamic riots could break out across Europe and the Middle East on a scale not seen since the Danish cartoon crisis in 2005.

Iran has already expressed outrage against Wilders's proposed film. "We expect the Dutch government to prevent screening of such a film. Otherwise, the Majlis MPs will call on the Iranian government to review its relations with Holland," said Iranian Foreign Policy Chairman [Alaeddin Borujerdi](#). He warned that the Muslim world would not tolerate any kind of insult to Islam and that "extensive repercussions from Muslims throughout the globe" would occur if the film is shown.

In the past, the leaders of European nations have apologized for and culled any images that the Islamic world has raised outrage against. This time around, the Dutch seem set to stand up for [free speech](#). Instead of banning the release of the film, the Dutch government has prepared evacuation plans for its Middle East embassies and held emergency meetings with Dutch counterterrorism services.

Dutch government officials have called for EU support in the event of a violent Islamic backlash against the film. On the sidelines of a recent informal EU meeting in Slovenia, Luxembourg Justice Minister [Luc Frieden](#) said, "We must also protect those who may be hurt or harmed by irresponsible statements .... It is our moral duty to call upon everybody, to make people aware, so that they do not abuse their fundamental rights." Islamic repercussions against Wilders's film may extend far beyond the borders of the Netherlands. The European Union is preparing for this eventuality.

It seems EU officials and the Dutch government are not about to let Iran or any other group of radical Islamists dictate what Europeans can say or do. This stance will probably elicit a violent Islamic backlash; Europe is preparing for it. Expect the Netherlands, and the rest of Europe, to take a more hardline approach toward Islamic extremism. Islamists will get increasingly belligerent with Europe—and pay a dear price for it.

For more information on a coming clash of civilizations, read [\*The King of the South\*](#). ■