

FLASH REPORT

Date: 21 March 2014
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Title: Wilders leads supporters in anti-Moroccan chant
Country: The Netherlands
Context
Issue at stake: Dutch right-wing politician Geert Wilders has led his supporters in an anti-Moroccan chant
Ground of discrimination: Race/ ethnic origin
Source: Political development
Field: Other

Content

Political development: Geert Wilders, the leader of the right-wing Party for Freedom (“Partij voor de Vrijheid” - PVV) has caused commotion by leading a gathering of his followers in an anti-Moroccan chant.

The chant took place after the local elections (19 March 2014), during a party meeting in The Hague. Wilders asked his supporters whether they wanted “more or fewer” Moroccans in the Netherlands. The assembled crowd responded: “Fewer! Fewer! Fewer!”, before breaking into applause. Wilders replied: “All right, then we’ll take care of that.” Afterwards, Wilders stated that he did not say anything that is not allowed, as it falls under the scope of the freedom of speech.

The chant created an unprecedented storm of protest and outrage across the country. Politicians have been unanimous in condemning Wilders’ views on immigration and integration, emphasizing to be disgusted by Wilders’ remarks and stating that Wilders has “again crossed a line”. Two PVV Members of Parliament have announced to quit the PVV-fraction in the Dutch House of Representatives in response to the chant. Other political parties, such as Prime Minister Rutte’s VVD, have declared that they will not cooperate with the PVV on the national as well as the local level, as long as this Party does not publicly denounce the statements made by its leader. Wilders’ behaviour at the after-elections meeting has also been condemned in very strong wording by vice Prime Minister Asscher, on behalf of the entire cabinet.

Dutch-Moroccan interest organisations have called on the public to report Wilders to the police for discrimination and spreading hatred. Numerous posts on social media recall the right of the Moroccan minority to stay in the Netherlands. Facebook page “I’ll report Wilders” has received over 80,000 likes as by Friday 21 March. The public prosecution office has received hundreds of reports thus far. Wilders was previously brought to trial for hate-speech based on anti-Muslim remarks made in 2011, but was acquitted of all charges at that time.



Short analysis: This chant has been the last drop for many people in the Netherlands, bringing them to the conclusion that Wilders has definitely crossed a line now. It remains to be seen whether Wilders' statements are punishable as being discriminatory as such or as incitement to discriminatory violence. Wilders was previously acquitted of hate-speech, but then targeted a religion (the Islam) rather than a specific ethnic group. Legal experts disagree as to whether Wilders' current statements fall under the scope of freedom of expression as protected under Article 7 of the Dutch constitution and Article 10 of the European Convention of Human Rights.

Wilders' party PVV ranked third in the last national election (June 2012), but leads in many opinion polls for the upcoming elections for the European Parliament. The PVV took part in two municipalities during the latest local elections; it won the most votes in Almere and became the second-biggest party in The Hague. It is expected that the statements made by Wilders will also have electoral consequences, but no polls have been published thus far.