

Geert Wilders on trial

In 2011, Dutch right-wing politician Geert Wilders was cleared of charges of group defamation, incitement to hatred and discrimination against Muslims. Rutger Kaput looks at the case.



In October 2010, Dutch MP Geert Wilders was brought to justice on [charges](#) of group defamation, incitement to hatred and discrimination against Muslims. Wilders is an outspoken critic of Islam and leader of the Freedom Party, which won 24 out of 150 seats in parliament in the June 2010 elections. Initially, prosecutors [found](#) insufficient grounds to prosecute Wilders. An Amsterdam court judged otherwise, after various individuals had successfully demanded a legal reconsideration of Wilders' statements. This right is granted under Dutch law to those directly affected by potential offences which have not been pursued. The court argued that it was in the “public interest” to put Wilders on trial for his “insulting” comparison of the Qu'ran with nazism as well as for [various other](#) potentially illegitimate statements.

After a tumultuous trial, Wilders was cleared of all charges in June 2011. As the official English transcript of the verdict states, the judge ruled that, though sometimes “hurtful and humiliating”, Wilders' statements had remained within the boundaries of the law. Moreover, Wilders had consistently directed his criticism at Islam as a body of beliefs rather than at Muslims as a group of believers.

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