

Mister President, members of the Court,

I am here because of what I have said. I am here for having spoken. I have spoken, I speak and I shall continue to speak. Many have kept silent, but not Pim Fortuyn, not Theo Van Gogh, and not I.

I am obliged to speak. For the Netherlands is under threat of Islam. As I have argued many times, Islam is chiefly an ideology. An ideology of hatred, of destruction, of conquest. It is my strong conviction that Islam is a threat to Western values, to freedom of speech, to the equality of men and women, of heterosexuals and homosexuals, of believers and unbelievers.

All over the world we can see how freedom is fleeing from Islam. Day by day we see our freedoms dwindle.

Islam is opposed to freedom. Renowned scholars of Islam from all parts of the world agree on this. My witness experts subscribe to my view. There are more Islam scholars whom the court did not allow me to call upon to testify. All agree with my statements, they show that I speak the truth. That truth is on trial today.

We must live in the truth, said the dissidents under Communist rule, because the truth will set us free. Truth and freedom are inextricably connected. We must speak the truth because otherwise we shall lose our freedom.

That is why I have spoken, why I speak and why I shall continue to speak.

The statements for which I am being tried are statements which I made in my function as a politician participating in the public debate in our society. My statements were not aimed at individuals, but at Islam and the process of islamization. That is why the Public Prosecutor has concluded that I should be acquitted.

Mister President, members of the Court,

I am acting within a long tradition which I wish to honour. I am risking my life in defence of freedom in the Netherlands. Of all our achievements freedom is the most precious and the most vulnerable. Many have given their lives for freedom. We have been reminded of that in the commemorations of the month of May. But the struggle for freedom is much older.

Every day the armoured cars drive me past the statue of Johan de Witt at the Hofvijver in The Hague. De Witt wrote the "Manifesto of True Freedom" and he paid for freedom with his life. Every day I go to my office through the Binnenhof where Johan van Oldenbarneveldt was beheaded after a political trial. Leaning on his stick the elderly Oldenbarneveldt addressed his last words to his people. He said: "I have acted honourably and piously as a good patriot."

Those words are also mine.

I do not wish to betray the trust of the 1.5 million voters of my party. I do not wish to betray my country. Inspired by Johan van Oldenbarneveldt and Johan de Witt I wish to be a politician who serves the truth and hence defends the freedom of the Dutch provinces and of the Dutch people. I wish to be honest, I wish to act with honesty and that is why I wish to protect my native land against Islam. Silence is treason.

That is why I have spoken, why I speak and why I shall continue to speak.

Freedom and truth. I pay the price every day. Day and night I have to be protected against people who want to kill me. I am not complaining about it; it has been my own decision to speak. However, those who threaten me and other critics of Islam are not being tried here today. I am being tried. And about that I do complain.

I consider this trial to be a political trial. The values of D66 [a Dutch leftist liberal party] and NRC Handelsblad [a Dutch leftist newspaper] will never be brought before a judge in this country. One of the complainants clearly indicated that his intentions are political. Even questions I have asked in parliament and cooperation with the SGP are being brought as allegations against me by Mr Rabbae of GroenLinks [the leftist Dutch Green Party]. Those on the Left like to tamper with the separation of powers. When they cannot win politically because the Dutch people have discerned their sinister agenda, they try to win through the courts.

Whatever your verdict may be, that is the bitter conclusion of this trial.

This trial is also surrealistic. I am being compared with the Hutu murderers in Rwanda and with Mladic. Only a few minutes ago some here have doubted my mental health. I have been called a new Hitler. I wonder whether those who call me such names will also be sued, and if not, whether the Court will also order prosecution. Probably not. And that is just as well. Because freedom of speech applies also to my opponents.

My right to a fair trial has been violated. The order of the Amsterdam Court to prosecute me was not just a decision but a condemning verdict by judges who condemned me even before the actual trial had begun.

Mister President, members of the Court, you must now decide whether freedom still has a home in the Netherlands. Franz Kafka said: "one sees the sun slowly set, yet one is surprised when it suddenly becomes dark."

Mister President, members of the Court, do not let the lights go out in the Netherlands.

Acquit me: Put an end to this Kafkaesque situation.

Acquit me. Political freedom requires that citizens and their elected representatives are allowed to voice opinions that are held in society.

Acquit me, for if I am convicted, you convict the freedom of opinion and expression of millions of Dutchmen.

Acquit me. I do not incite to hatred. I do not incite to discrimination. But I defend the character, the identity, the culture and the freedom of the Netherlands. That is the truth. That is why I am here. That is why I speak. That is why, like Luther before the Imperial Diet at Worms, I say: "Here I stand, I can do no other."

That is why I have spoken, why I speak and why I shall continue to speak.

Mister President, members of the Court, though I stand here alone, my voice is the voice of many. This trial is not about me. It is about something much greater. Freedom of expression is the life source of our Western civilisation.

Do not let that source go dry just to cosy up to a totalitarian ideology. "Freedom," said the American President Dwight Eisenhower, "has its life in the hearts, the actions, the spirit of men and so it must be daily earned and refreshed – else like a flower cut from its life-giving roots, it will wither and die."

Mister President, members of the Court, you have a great responsibility. Do not cut freedom in the Netherlands from its roots, our freedom of expression. Acquit me. Choose freedom.

I have spoken, I speak, and it is my duty – I cannot do otherwise – to continue to speak.

Thank you.