Yesterday was a beautiful day for freedom of speech in the Netherlands. An Amsterdam court acquitted me of all charges of hate speech after a legal ordeal that lasted almost two years. Yesterday, the Dutch people learned that political debate has not been stifled in their country. They learned that they are still allowed to speak critically about Islam and that resistance against Islamization is not a crime.

I was brought to trial despite being an elected politician and the leader of the third-largest party in the Dutch parliament. I was not prosecuted for anything I did, but for what I had said. My view on Islam is that it is not so much a religion as a totalitarian political ideology with religious elements. While there are many moderate Muslims, Islam's political ideology is radical and has global ambitions. I expressed these views in newspaper interviews, op-ed articles and in my 2008 documentary, "Fitna."

I was dragged to court by leftist and Islamic organizations that were bent not only on silencing me but on stifling public debate. My accusers claimed that I deliberately "insulted" and "incited discrimination and hatred" against Muslims. The Dutch penal code states in its articles 137c and 137d that anyone who either "publicly, verbally or in writing or image, deliberately expresses himself in any way that incites hatred against a group of people" or "in any way that insults a group of people because of their race, their religion or belief, their hetero- or homosexual inclination or their physical, psychological or mental handicap, will be punished."

I was dragged to court for statements that I made as a politician and which were meant to stimulate public debate in a country where public debate has stagnated for decades. Dutch political parties see themselves as guardians of a sterile status quo. I want our problems to be discussed. I believe that politicians have a public trust to further debates about important issues. I firmly believe that every public debate holds the prospect of enlightenment.

My views represent those of a growing number of the Dutch voters, who have flocked to the Party for Freedom, or PVV. The PVV is the fastest-growing party in the country, growing from one seat in the 150-seat House of Representatives in 2004, to nine seats in 2006 and 24 seats in 2010. My party's views, however, are so uncommon in the Netherlands that they are considered blasphemous by powerful elites who both fear and resent discussion.

That's why I was taken to court, despite the fact that the public prosecutor saw no reason to prosecute me. "Freedom of expression fulfills an essential role in public debate in a democratic society," the prosecutors repeatedly said during my trial. "That comments are hurtful and offensive for a large number of Muslims does not mean that they are punishable."

The Netherlands is one of the few countries in the world where a court can force the public prosecutor to prosecute someone. In January 2009, three judges of the Amsterdam Appeals Court ordered my prosecution in a politically motivated verdict that already focused on the content of the case. They implied that I was guilty and ordered my prosecution. The case was subsequently referred to the Amsterdam Court of First Instance.

The judges who acquitted me yesterday already had a peremptory ruling from the appeals court on their desk. They decided, however, to follow the arguments of the public prosecutor, who during the trial had once again reiterated his position and had asked for a full acquittal.

Though I am obviously relieved by yesterday's decision, my thoughts go to people such as Danish journalist Lars Hedegaard, Austrian human-rights activist Elisabeth Sabaditsch-Wolff and others who have recently been convicted for criticizing Islam. They have not been as fortunate as I. In far too many Western countries, it is still impossible to have a debate about the nature of Islam.

The biggest threat to our democracies is not political debate, nor is it public dissent. As the American judge Learned Hand wrote: "That community is already in the process of dissolution . . . where faith in the eventual supremacy of reason has become so timid that we dare not enter our convictions in the open lists to win or lose." It has been a tenet in European and American thinking that men are only free when they respect each other's freedom. If the courts can no longer guarantee this, then surely a community is in the process of dissolution.

Legislation such as articles 137c and 137d of the Dutch Penal Code disgraces our democratic free societies. On the basis of such legislation, I was prevented from representing my million-and-a-half voters in parliament because I had to be in the courtroom for several days, sometimes up to three days per week, during the past year-and-a-half. Such legislation should be abolished. It should be abolished in all Western countries where it exists and replaced by First Amendment clauses.

Citizens should never allow themselves to be silenced. I have spoken, I speak and I shall continue to speak.

Mr. Wilders is a member of the Dutch Parliament and leader of the Party for Freedom.

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