

West must not surrender permanent liberty for temporary tolerance.

As I write these lines, there are police bodyguards at the door. No visitor can enter my office without passing through several security checks and metal detectors. I have been marked for death. I am forced to live in a heavily protected safe house. Every morning, I am driven to my office in the Dutch Parliament building in an armored car with sirens and flashing blue lights. When I go out, I am surrounded, as I have been for the past seven years, by plainclothes police officers. When I speak in public, I wear a bulletproof jacket.

Who am I? I am neither a king nor a president, nor even a government minister; I am just a simple politician in the Netherlands. But because I speak out against expanding Islamic influence in Europe, I have been marked for death. If you criticize Islam, this is the risk you run. That is why so few politicians dare to tell the truth about the greatest threat to our liberties today. The Islamic threat to the West is worse than the communist threat ever was. Think of it this way: Politicians who warned against the Soviet threat weren't forced into hiding, as we who speak out against Islam are.

I received my first death threats in September 2003 after I asked the Dutch government to investigate a radical mosque. When the death threats became more frequent, the Dutch authorities assigned me a team of police bodyguards. In November 2004, after a Muslim fanatic murdered Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh for making a movie about the abuse of women under Islam, policemen armed with machine guns came to my house, pushed me into an armored car, and drove me off into the night. That was the last time I was in my house. Since then, I have lived in an army barracks, a prison cell and now a government-owned safe house.

I have grown accustomed to this situation. After more than seven years, the security detail has become part of my daily routine, but in a free society, no politician should have to fear for his life because he addresses issues voters care about.

Nor should special-interest groups be allowed to trump our Western rights of free speech, as Islamic and leftist organizations tried to do by dragging me to court on accusations of "hate speech." After an almost three-year legal ordeal, I was acquitted of all charges.

More Islam means less freedom

I used to travel widely and frequently in the Islamic world, but now it's no longer safe. I have read the Koran and studied the life of Muhammad. It made me realize that Islam is primarily a totalitarian ideology rather than a religion. I feel sorry for the Arab, Persian, Indian and Indonesian peoples who have to live under the yoke of Islam. It is a belief system that marks apostates for death, forces critics into hiding and denies our Western tradition of individual freedom. Without freedom, there can be no prosperity and no pursuit of happiness. More Islam means less life, less liberty and less happiness.

That is why I consider it my duty to sound the alarm about the relentless expansion of Islam. While many Muslims are moderate, Islam is not. Some Muslims take Islam seriously and wage jihad - holy war - against the West, and they do so from within our borders.

Fifty-seven percent of the Dutch people say that mass immigration was the biggest single mistake in Dutch history. Many politicians, however, downplay the most dramatic sociological change of their lifetime. They ignore the worries of the people out of political correctness and cultural relativism, which insist that all cultures are equal; hence, immigrants do not need to assimilate: Islamic values are just as good as Dutch, British or American values.

What we stand to lose

If we do not oppose Islamization, we will lose everything: our freedom, our identity, our democracy, our rule of law. To preserve Western civilization, we must do four things: Defend freedom of speech, reject cultural relativism, counter Islamization, and cherish our Western national identities, whether we are Dutch, French, British or American.

Of all our liberties, freedom of speech is the most important. Free speech is the cornerstone of a free society. So long as we are free to speak, we can make people realize what is at stake. In Western democracies, we do not settle our disagreements with violence, but through spoken and written arguments. In the search for the truth, we allow everyone to express his or her honestly held views. That is how we outgrew barbarism and became a free and prosperous society. We must pass it on to our children.

I have written a book in defense of liberty and freedom of expression, titled "Marked for Death." It explains the many ways in which Islam has marked for death not only me, but all of Western civilization. The book warns Americans about the danger of turning a blind eye to the true nature of Islam.

Though Islam threatens Europe and America, the West is not yet lost. It will survive as long as the spirit of freedom remains unbroken. While Islam has marked me for death, a growing number of Dutch voters have given me their support. In the Netherlands, we have begun to turn the tide against Islamization. So can other countries.

I will never keep silent because we must not let violent fanatics dictate what we say and what we read. We must rebel against their suffocating rules and demands at every turn. We must, in the words of Revolutionary War veteran Gen. John Stark, "Live free or die."

Geert Wilders is a member of the Dutch Parliament. He is leader of the Party for Freedom and author of "Marked for Death: Islam's War Against the West and Me" (Regnery, 2012).

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