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Transcript

TONY JONES, PRESENTER: Now to our guest.

Geert Wilders is the Dutch anti-immigration and anti-Islam MP. He's the founder of the right wing Party For Freedom.

Next week, Geert Wilders arrives in Australia for a visit that's been a long time in the making. He planned to come here about a year ago and drew early support from Liberal Senator Cory Bernadi who later distanced himself from the idea.

Now he's being sponsored by the anti-Islamic group The Q Society, on a road trip that's sure to fire debate over what constitutes free speech or hate speech.

Geert Wilders joins us now live from The Hague. Thanks for being there.

GEERT WILDERS, LEADER, PARTY FOR FREEDOM: Well, thanks for having me on your show tonight.

TONY JONES: Are you on some sort of global jihad against Islam?

GEERT WILDERS: Indeed. I am more on a global jihad to preserve our freedom. I believe that even though I have nothing against the people or Muslims or anybody for that reason, I believe that Islam and freedom are incompatible. And I believe that the mistakes that we made in Europe in the last decades by allowing so much mass immigration from Islamic countries is a warning that if Australia is not vigilant enough to preserve the freedom, what has happened here might happen to Australia in the next decades as well.

TONY JONES: So very precisely you plan to warn Australian audiences of what you see as the danger of Islamic migration, is that correct?

GEERT WILDERS: Well, yes, I believe that once again, Islam and freedom are incompatible. Islam is according to me, my party, not so much a religion as well as it is a totalitarian ideology. In Islam there is not much room for anything else but Islam.

Look how in societies today where Islam is dominant and prominent, how any non-Islamic person, whether it's a Christian or an apostate or a woman or a critical journalist, how they are treated. This is in a very bad way, often with the death penalty or imprisonment or all those kind of terrible things.

I believe that what with the mass immigration to our free societies, our societies will change, and it will change for the worse. And I'm proud to say you are not a racist or a bigot or anything like that if you say that the Netherlands, as Australia, is a culture based on Christianity, on Judaism, on humanism, and it should not, nor ever will become a society based on Islamic failures. We should fight it, we should stop it, we should be proud of who we are and define what we are not.

TONY JONES: I'm going to pick you up on some of those points in a little while. But what do you actually know in the Islamic community in Australia. What you have heard about what is happening here, and Australian multiculturalism - which it seems to me could be quite different to multiculturalism in Holland?

GEERT WILDERS: Of course that's the case. I'm not saying that it's exactly the same. I know and I also spoke in the United States of America and in Canada and other countries already have good results with immigration, that it cannot be compared everything to Europe.

But I know where we today in Europe have enormous influx of... in the last decades of people from Islamic countries, that our society has changed. That it has worsened for that reason. That unfortunately non-Western immigrants, often Muslims, are over-represented in statistics of crime, of dependency on social benefits, that we have honour killings, that we have genital

mutilation, that we have streets where women with headscarves and burqas are not the exception any more. And that it's getting worse.

What I'm trying to do when I visit your beautiful country, Australia, is warn Australians that even though it might not be the case today, learn from the mistakes that we made in Europe: be vigilant and look at Islam for what it really is. Islam is not a religion of peace. Islam is a totalitarian ideology.

The best example is that if any person, any Muslim wants to leave Islam, then the penalty is death. It is not even allowed to leave it. That's why I believe Islam should not be compared with other religions like Christianity or Judaism, but Islam should be compared to other totalitarian ideologies like Communism or Fascism.

TONY JONES: I can tell you for sure there are plenty of Islamic people in Australia who've left the religion without being killed. So what you're saying can't be everywhere. Indeed I suspect what you're talking about is Islamic fundamentalism. Why not restrict your arguments to Islamic fundamentalism or radical Islam - Islamism - why do you include in this broad brush moderate Islam?

GEERT WILDERS: (adjusts earpiece) Sorry, I lose you here for a minute, but I think you asked me why...

TONY JONES: I said why don't you exclude from your annoyance, your anger, moderate Islam, which is very different to what you seem to be describing?

GEERT WILDERS: Yes. Well, it's not annoyance or anger. It's just the truth. What you're saying about radical Islam, with all respect to you sir, is complete nonsense. There is no radical or moderate Islam. There is only one Islam and that is the Islam from the Koran, the holy book. That is the Islam from Mohammed. There are no two sorts of Islam.

However, there are moderate and non-moderate Muslims, I acknowledge that. As a matter of fact the majority of the Muslims living in our society are moderate people. But don't make the

mistake that even though there are moderate and radical Muslims that there is a moderate or a radical Islam.

There is only one Islam, and that is a totalitarian ideology that has no room for anything but Islam. You see it once again in any country in the world where Islam is dominant. How come that we, for instance...

TONY JONES: Can I just interrupt you there? It happens we live very close to the largest Islamic country in the world, Indonesia, which has 250 million people and has recently transitioned to democracy. According to you that's impossible for an Islamic country to do.

Yes they have a problem with radical Islam. It is a small problem relative to the whole population. How do you think we should deal with Indonesia? Do you think we should treat them as if they are somehow insane?

GEERT WILDERS: Once again you misunderstand my point entirely. I'm not talking about the people. I have nothing against the people or the Arab people or the Muslim people. I'm talking about the ideology. And indeed, as long as a country has a culture a religion an ideology where Islam is dominant it will never be a democracy. It's also happening in Indonesia. Look at how they treat Christians in Indonesia or how they treat Christians in any other country where Islam is dominant.

Why is it not possible to build a church in Saudi Arabia where as we in the Netherlands have almost 500 mosques being built; why is it not possible to buy or sell a Bible in any Muslim or most of the Muslim countries, whereas we can buy a Koran here on every street corner? This is the exact example of the fact that Islam is an intolerant society. I believe that...

TONY JONES: Can I just... I will have to interrupt you on that point as well, because in fact, one of your own ideas is to ban the Koran in the Netherlands. So apparently you're as intolerant as you believe the other side to be?

GEERT WILDERS: No, I made a point in the Dutch Parliament - unfortunately you are wrong

here as well - I made a point in the Dutch Parliament that we're in Holland - you have to see the Dutch context. Mein Kampf, this terrible book of Adolph Hitler is outlawed. I made a point in the Dutch parliament that I say to all these liberal politicians and socialist politicians in my own parliament that, "Hey you are very happy here, you applauded the fact that Mein Kampf was outlawed in the Netherlands. If you are really consistent, you should, for the same arguments that you use as liberal politicians to outlaw Mein Kampf, outlaw the Koran as well."

Of course it was very silent; they were not consistent and they shoved the problem under the carpet. Which is exactly the point again - that we should be able to see Islam for what it is, make a distinction between the people and the ideology, and stop with being politically correct, and address the problems, as many people, also in Australia, see it when it comes to the Islamisation of their country.

TONY JONES: Let's talk to you about what you've said. You've called Islam the "greatest sickness we've had during the last century". I take it that probably includes Nazism. You also say it has to be "tackled and driven back". What do you mean by that exactly? How would you drive it back if you had the power?

GEERT WILDERS: You know, it's very simple. I believe that we should stop the immigration, the mass immigration from Islamic countries. I believe that Muslims that are in our society today are of course equal as anybody else, as long as they adhere to our laws, to our constitution, to our values. And as long as they cross this red line - if they commit crimes, if they start beating up women, if they start the genital mutilation, if they start to commit other crimes and honour killings as they unfortunately do in Western Europe many times - if they do that, I believe we should expel them, the same day if possible, from our country.

So to stop the immigration to our societies - because we have had more than enough Islam in our societies - and people who are here and who are behaving according to our laws and our constitutions are happy to stay, are equal to anybody else, or even want to help them with the better education, but if they cross the line of crime, start acting according to Sharia law, there will be no place for them in our free societies...

TONY JONES: Wait, wait... it's not so simple, because the vast majority of crime committed, for example, by young Moroccans - and do you have a problem there, there's no doubting that - are committed by people who've been born in Holland. Are you suggesting stripping them of their citizenship?

GEERT WILDERS: It doesn't matter.

TONY JONES: Say that again.

GEERT WILDERS: Well, you know, in Holland, Moroccans automatically also have the Moroccan nationality even if they're born in the Netherlands, because the Moroccan law says that if one of the parents is Moroccan the children wherever they are born in the world are Moroccan as well. So any of those youth... and let me tell you, the Moroccan youth in the Netherlands between the age of 14 and 23, two-thirds of them have been arrested by the police at least once in their life. Two-thirds of the young...

TONY JONES: Actually, I did look at your department, your department... it is a big problem, but you are exaggerating it. The Department of Interior Statistics say 40 per cent in that age group, not two thirds, which is 60 per cent.

GEERT WILDERS: Yes, that was two years ago. And if you would've looked at the latest report you would see that it's more than 60 per cent today. But the point is that since they are Moroccan and Dutch, if they commit crimes, if they commit serious crime - I'm not talking about driving through a red light, but if they commit serious crimes - I believe we should strip them indeed of the Dutch nationality and send them back to Morocco as Morocco does.

If you are a Morocco citizen with a dual nationality, if you commit a crime in Morocco you are stripped Moroccan nationality and send to our own country. We can learn from them in that respect.

TONY JONES: Does this mean you would only strip Islamic criminals of their passports and their citizenship or all criminals who crime from another country? For example if you came from Australia and committed a crime, you were Dutch, but you had an Australian origin, you would be sent back to Australia, would you? Is it all criminals or are you singling out Islamic criminals?

GEERT WILDERS: No that would be ridiculous even for you to suggest. I'm not a racist. It would had also go for Swedish people, for Australian people - but let me tell you we have no problem in the Netherlands with Australian criminals or with Swedish criminals. We have a problem with, amongst others, Moroccan criminals.

Of course that would apply with anybody for any dual nationality, but the mere fact would be the reality because we have overrepresentation of often Moroccan people and other people from Islamic background in a crime that they would be stripped of the Dutch nationality and sent away. I don't know what's wrong with it: if you commit a crime, you've overstayed our welcome. If I have guests in my house and if they start messing up my kitchen or start getting a fire in any sleeping room I would send them away...

TONY JONES: They're not guests in your house! They are citizens in your country. That's a very different thing. They're not guest workers who just happen to be there. They are people who are Dutch citizens who've been born in your country?

GEERT WILDERS: Well, yes, if you talk about Moroccans, indeed they are also, besides...

TONY JONES: All right, okay, you've made that point. Okay.

GEERT WILDERS: But we also have a lot of people who are not Dutch, and who are in Holland as a guest, whether they are asylum seekers or others. I believe if you commit a crime you overstay your welcome, if we could extradite you.

TONY JONES: Let's go through some of your other potential policies were you to gain more power than you currently have. You've got a five year moratorium, was what you originally said, on migration from foreign countries. You're now, I believe saying that should be from Islamic countries; Islamic migration should be banned. Isn't that against European rules?

GEERT WILDERS: I'm a politician. I believe that we can change any rule that is there. Once again, we have an enormous support within the Dutch public. One million people voted for my party. We are number three, and in the polls today even number two party the second biggest

party of Holland. So, we are not as you said in your introduction a far-right party. If we would've been extreme, we would've got 0.01 per cent of the vote. We got more than 10 per cent of the vote.

Why? Because we address the problems of so many Dutch citizens that are afraid to go out in their neighbourhoods after 10pm, who are afraid to send their children to school because of all the harassment they get from this parallel Islamic society. And people are not extreme in Holland. We are one of the most tolerant societies in the world, and in order to stay tolerant, my party believes that we should stop being tolerant to the people who are intolerant to us. We should start being intolerant to those who are intolerant to us. This is not modern logic, this is not extreme, this is common sense.

TONY JONES: Can I ask why it is the values the solidarity of Dutch society is not strong enough to cope with the Islamic population of 6 per cent? How can 6 per cent overturn the values of your society?

GEERT WILDERS: Like I said, it's not just a Dutch problem. I don't know if you've lately visited Europe, if you've been to the city of Malmo in Sweden, or to Berlin or to Hamburg or to London or to Paris in the suburbs, or Rotterdam in my own country. You see many cities where there is a city within a city - where even today in the United Kingdom - I don't know if you're aware of that - there are even sharia courts active, whether it's rulings that the worth of a woman is half of that of a man.

You see crime and you see all the things happening, unfortunately all over Europe, because of (a) the mass immigration, but (b) also because of we politicians are not able to deal with it. We are politically correct, we are afraid to address the problem. Because if you address the problem like I do, people like you call us evil extreme, or you're being taken to court or you will get death threats in your life. There is a big disincentive to talk about the truth. I will speak the truth...

TONY JONES: Sorry, I don't mean to interrupt you, but we are sort of running out of time, and I want to get to a couple of other things. I mean, when you got the balance of power, the government under your influence basically got rid of multiculturalism in Holland. Ended the concept of multiculturalism in Holland.

We're to have an election this year in Australia. There are senior figures in the Coalition, that is the conservative party, who are seriously questioning multiculturalism in Australia. Will you be encouraging that debate when you come here?

GEERT WILDERS: I don't want to get involved in Australian politics. That's up to you. You are a democracy, and Australian people should decide who they will vote for and I'm not mingling or interfering in that all. I just want to say that the multiculturalism - and especially the cultural relativism which is even worse than multiculturalism, the concept that all cultures are equal - is the worst recipe for any society.

So yes, I believe that we should like I said before define who we are and in order to do that you have to know what you are not. And I'm proud to be a member of a society that is based, whose values are based on Christiany, Judaism and humanism. I never would like to be a country that is that multicultural that, for instance, the Islamic values become more dominant. We should not do that. We should stop that.

I'm not against other cultures, but I believe what the Germans call a "leitkultur", a dominant culture that we should have, even in our constitution state, what our dominant culture is and that our laws should apply to that culture and to no other one.

TONY JONES: Finally, it's been reported that you are coming with your own personal protection team of Dutch Secret Service. I don't know if that's true. But if it is I'm wondering what sort of reception you are expecting in Australia, and are you worried - because there have been many threats to your life in Holland - whether that could happen here?

GEERT WILDERS: I hope you understand that I'm always advised and I follow that advice never to talk about security issues, so I cannot tell you who will be accompanying me and why, because that would only make myself more vulnerable. So I will not talk about that.

But yes indeed, I hope - I'm a democrat. I'm a democratically elected politician from the Netherlands representing one of the major parties in Holland - I hope that I will be able to talk and to discuss with people. Not only people I agree with - it's very easy to talk to people you agree with - but also people you disagree with, maybe even Australian politicians.

Don't be afraid of me. I'm a law maker I'm not a law breaker, and I'm just telling the truth. And I want Australia, a country and a people that I respect very much - any Dutchman knows the young Australians that fought for our freedom in the First and Second World War - I hope I can tell you what happened in Europe and support you in your fight to preserve freedom for your children and your grandchildren, and tell them what I believe the Islamic threat is, and to discuss it with anybody - also people who don't agree with me. This is democracy. This is civil society. We should cherish that.

TONY JONES: Very briefly before we go, you mentioned politicians there. Of course you have had contact with Senator Cory Bernardi of the Liberal Party. Do you intend to see him or other politicians when you're in the country?

GEERT WILDERS: Well, I met Mr Bernardi in Holland. I believe you are in an election now. I believe it might be more difficult for him to meet me now. I think he doesn't intend to do that. I understand that this is politics. The friend from yesterday can have an argument not to see you tomorrow. It's sad but true.

But I'm open to meet any politician in Australia, to meet any person; I think we can learn from one another. I believe I have an important message and we are fighting the same fight, which is the fight for freedom in Australia, in Holland and in Europe.

TONY JONES: Geert Wilders, it's a long discussion that needs to be had with you. We've had a, I think, small portion of it here tonight. We thank you very much for taking the time to come and talk to us.

GEERT WILDERS: It's my pleasure. I'm looking forward to meeting your country next week.