

Wilders gets Canadian support on eve of trial

donderdag, 28 januari 2010

TORONTO – On the same day that the Dutch parliamentarian Geert Wilders appeared before a court in the Netherlands on charges of incitement to hatred and discrimination against the religious beliefs of Muslims, about 150 people filled a room in Toronto's Zionist Centre to show their support for Wilders and view his controversial film, Fitna.

Although the public prosecutor's office in The Netherlands had already declined to charge Wilders, the appeals court reviewed the complaints made against him and decided that he should stand trial. According to the web site of the Amsterdam Court of Appeal, Wilders will be tried for statements that he has made in public and in his film, Fitna (which means strife in Arabic). He is also accused of insulting the Islamic community by comparing the Koran to Mein Kampf.

The Toronto rally was hosted by the Jewish Defence League of Canada whose national director, Meir Weinstein, introduced the guest speakers and gave the final speech of the evening.

Bjorn Larsen, a member of The International Free Press Society and a friend of Wilders, talked about the issues that prompted Wilders to make Fitna and introduced the film. Larsen told the Jewish Tribune that Wilders was aware of the rally.

Other speakers included the author and blogger Kathy Shaidle (Five Feet of Fury), Ron Banerjee of Canadian Hindu Advocacy and Arnold J. Bennett of CUFI (Christians United for Israel) on Campus. The speakers presented the Wilders case as an issue of freedom of speech in the fight against political correctness and radical Islamists.

Rabbi Jonathan H. Hausman of Ahavath Torah Congregation in Stoughton, MA, gave the keynote address.

Dubbed the Warrior Rabbi by his friends, he was already involved in raising awareness of Islamic radicalism and Shari'a (Islamic) law when he arranged to have Wilders speak at his synagogue last February, so it is not surprising that the two men became friends.

In an interview with the Jewish Tribune, Rabbi Hausman said that although Wilders is often described in the media as a far-right politician, he is libertarian as much as he is conservative. In line with his libertarianism, Wilders is calling for an American-style First Amendment in The Netherlands. For Wilders and his supporters, that country seems to be heading in the opposite direction.

“It does seem to be going the other way, absolutely,” said Rabbi Hausman. “Some say it's the politically correct relativist culture in which many of us live these days, where all truths are equal. From a Jewish perspective, all truths are not equal. From Geert Wilders's perspective, all cultures are not equal. There is a value to the Judeo-Christian culture in which he was raised and he wants to defend that.”

Rabbi Hausman said that Wilders, founder and leader of the Party for Freedom (PVV), might become the next prime minister of The Netherlands. He said the criminal charges are intended to silence Wilders and destroy the movement against Islamism, which he is spearheading.

“Interestingly, the extremist right in Europe will have nothing to do with him. Why? Because he doesn’t believe in totalitarian government. He believes in personal liberties: freedom of assembly, freedom of religion, freedom of speech. He is a social moderate and he’s a huge friend of Israel and the Jewish people. So the right doesn’t want him.

“The left doesn’t want him, either. Why? Because he doesn’t believe in statist fascism. Because he believes in personal liberty, private ownership of property and a whole host of liberties that we in the United States would recognize as rights granted to us by the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. So the left can’t stand him either. Oh, and he’s a lover of Israel, so the left can’t stand him there.

“So, neither side wants him. He doesn’t want either side and he’s very public about it.”

Although that would appear to leave Geert Wilders alone in a political wilderness, public opinion polls in The Netherlands give the man and his party a high approval rating. As with the crowd who attended the rally in Toronto, there would seem to be many people in The Netherlands who agree with Wilders’s message and believe that his trial proves that freedom of speech is in danger of being eroded in Europe and around the world.

Source:

JewishTribune.ca