



MUSLIM LEADERS
OF TOMORROW

The Netherlands: MLTs Respond to Islamophobic Movie by Dutch MP Geert Wilders

The projected release of a movie, which the Gulf Times reported as anti-Quranic, has led MLTs and the broader Muslim community in the Netherlands to mobilize. Initially, some speculated the movie's release would escalate into a global crisis. Dutch Member of Parliament Geert Wilders announced his film last November, saying he was making a film "to show the violent and fascist elements of the Muslim faith." He promised that his film will be broadcast on television or on the internet regardless of pressure not to.

Unlike the Danish cartoon situation, the Dutch government and Muslim leaders have responded to this situation seriously and expeditiously in order to prevent a crisis. Floris van Hovell, a spokesman for the Dutch Embassy in Washington, D.C, expressed concern, saying, "The government is taking the announcement of this movie quite seriously. Obviously, because the movie hasn't been made, we cannot say anything about the movie until the movie has been shown, but the message Mr. Wilders has told us he wants to portray is disturbing. We're explaining that in the Netherlands you have freedom of expression, and that at the same time the Dutch government is very concerned about the message Mr. Wilders supposedly wants to portray in his movie." Maxime Verhagen, Dutch Foreign Minister, said that "It is difficult to anticipate the content of the film, but freedom of expression doesn't mean the right to offend."

Dutch MLTs have responded to this potential crisis in a number of ways. Dutch lawyer and activist Famile Arslan, along with Rajae El Mouhandiz, Leyla Cakir, and Youssef Azghari, have taken steps to mobilize Dutch Muslim organizations and civil society. They have coordinated ways to reach out to Wilders, including Famile's kind gesture of sending him flowers and thanking him for bringing her closer together with other Muslims. They have also circulated petitions against the film, published newspaper articles, and started the "Sending Hugs" campaign (activists organizing mass "email hugs" to Geerts Wilders because "all he really needs is love"). A t-shirt petition campaign with the message, "Holland Loves Muslims" and "Muslims Love Holland" was also started. Tawfiq Dibbie, a filmmaker, is interested in producing a film to counter Wilders's with the possible help of Ersan Kish, another filmmaker.

Additionally, ASMA and Cordoba Initiative contacted other MLTs in its network (especially those in media) to provide support, exchange information, and explore ways to collaborate on this issue. Tarek Elgawhary, who has an international PR

firm focusing on the Arab Muslim world and Europe and the US, and Shamil Idriss, Acting Director of UN's Alliance of Civilization, lent support to these efforts.

ASMA and Cordoba held conferences with government officials and an email *khutbah* was sent out two weeks ago aimed at calming the Muslim community.

More on youth mobilization:

<http://www.turkishdailynews.com.tr/article.php?enewsid=94523>

<http://hollandlovesmuslims.com/>

More on response by the Dutch Government:

<http://www.turkishdailynews.com.tr/article.php?enewsid=94523>

<http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,324406,00.html>

[http://www.ft.com/cms/s/5cdcb0e4-d05f-11dc-9309-0000779fd2ac,Authorised=false.html? i_location=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.ft.com%2Fcms%2Fs%2F0%2F5cdcb0e4-d05f-11dc-9309-0000779fd2ac.html%3Fnclick_check%3D1& i_referer=&nclick_check=1](http://www.ft.com/cms/s/5cdcb0e4-d05f-11dc-9309-0000779fd2ac,Authorised=false.html?i_location=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.ft.com%2Fcms%2Fs%2F0%2F5cdcb0e4-d05f-11dc-9309-0000779fd2ac.html%3Fnclick_check%3D1&i_referer=&nclick_check=1)

More on the movie:

<http://observer.guardian.co.uk/world/story/0,,2243805,00.html>

http://www.theamericanmuslim.org/tam.php/features/articles/how_geert_wilders_anti_quran_film_can_be_made_to_benefit_the_muslim_communi/