

Europe Solidaire Sans Frontières > English > Europe, Great Britain > Fascism, extreme right, fundamentalism (Europe) > **The Netherlands: Extreme right populist party leader Geert Wilders vows to (...)**

# The Netherlands: Extreme right populist party leader Geert Wilders vows to crack down on 'Moroccan scum'

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## Contents

- [Dutch populist Geert Wilders](#)
- [Netherlands trial: Geert \(...\)](#)

SPIJKENISSE, Netherlands (Reuters) - Dutch anti-Muslim, anti-EU party leader Geert Wilders promised to crack down on "Moroccan scum" who he said were making the streets unsafe and urged the Dutch to "regain" their country as he launched his election campaign on Saturday.

Wilders was surrounded by police and security guards during a walkabout in Spijkenisse, part of the ethnically diverse industrial area surrounding the vast port of Rotterdam and a stronghold of his Freedom Party.

"Not all are scum, but there is a lot of Moroccan scum in Holland who makes the streets unsafe," he told reporters, speaking in English. "If you want to regain your country, if you want to make the Netherlands for the people of the Netherlands, your own home, again, then you can only vote for one party."

Crime by young Moroccans was not being taken seriously, added Wilders, who in December was convicted of inciting discrimination for leading supporters in a chant that they wanted "Fewer! Fewer! Fewer!" Moroccans in the country.

Wilders - who has lived in hiding since an Islamist murdered Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh in 2004 - pledges to ban Muslim immigration, close all mosques and take the Netherlands out of the European Union.

Many of his supporters at the Spijkenisse market, however, said they cared more about his social welfare policies.

"The most important thing for me is bringing the pension age back down to 65," said Wil Fens, 59, a crane operator at the port.

Wilders hopes a global upsurge in anti-establishment feeling that has already helped to propel Donald Trump to the U.S. presidency and to persuade Britons to vote to quit the European Union will propel him to power in the March 15 parliamentary election.

A win for Wilders would boost French far-right leader Marine Le Pen and the Alternative for Germany party, both hoping to transform European politics in elections this year.

"Despite all the hate and fear-mongering of the elite both in Britain and Brussels, people took their

fate in their own hands," he said. "I think that will happen in Holland, in France, Austria and in Germany."

Wilders' party leads in opinion polls with 17 percent, a whisker ahead of the pro-business Liberals of Prime Minister Mark Rutte, who has closed the gap by matching some of Wilders' anti-immigration rhetoric and received a boost from a surging economy.

But if he wins, Wilders will struggle to form a government, since most major parties have ruled out joining a coalition with him, viewing his policies as offensive or even unconstitutional.

The fragmented political landscape means a coalition government of four or more parties is all but inevitable.

A study published by the Social Affairs Ministry on Tuesday found that up to 40 percent of the Turks and Moroccans in the Netherlands do not feel that they belong or are accepted.

**Thomas Escritt**

(Editing by Kevin Liffey)

\* FEB 18, 2017 - 19:08:

<http://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/wilders-at-dutch-campaign-launch-vows-to-crack-down-on%E2%80%93moroccan-scum-/42971030>

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## **Dutch populist Geert Wilders talks of Moroccan 'scum'**

**Dutch populist leader Geert Wilders has launched his election campaign by calling some Moroccans "scum".**

Mr Wilders tops opinion polls ahead of the 15 March parliamentary vote, but has seen his lead reduced in recent weeks.

He has vowed to ban Muslim immigration and shut mosques if he wins.

His latest comments come two months after he was convicted in a hate speech trial over his promise to reduce the number of Moroccans in the country.

Mr Wilders addressed his supporters on Saturday amid tight security in his party's stronghold of Spijkenisse, an ethnically diverse area near Rotterdam.

"There is a lot of Moroccan scum in Holland who make the streets unsafe," he said. "If you want to regain your country, make the Netherlands for the people of the Netherlands again, then you can only vote for one party."

He emphasised that he thought "not all are scum".

According to the 2011 census, there were more than 167,000 Moroccan-born residents of the Netherlands, making up the third-largest group of non-EU residents, a figure that does not take into

account second or third-generation Moroccans.

### **Why Dutch populist Geert Wilders is scenting victory**

A few dozen supporters of Mr Wilders turned up in Spijkenisse on Saturday morning, as did a small group of demonstrators.

"The things that he's going to do make very, very scared," one of the demonstrators, Emma Smeets, told the Associated Press.

"A lot of people have gotten used to it and they don't protest any more, and I think it's important that you show your voice, that you don't agree with the things that are happening, and also just to get into contact with the people that are voting for him."

Mr Wilders's Freedom Party holds 12 of the 150 seats in the lower house of Parliament. But his nearest rival, right-wing Prime Minister Mark Rutte, has narrowed the lead with just a month until the election is held.

The BBC's Anna Holligan, in The Hague, said Mr Wilders's championing of US President Donald Trump's policies appears to be backfiring, as many Dutch voters believe Mr Trump is bad for global stability.

Even if Mr Wilders wins, he may struggle to put together a coalition, as leading parties have said they would not work with him.

Mr Wilders's three-week trial last year was triggered when police received 6,400 complaints about remarks he had made during a municipal election campaign in The Hague.

At a rally, he asked supporters whether they wanted "fewer or more Moroccans in your city and in the Netherlands".

When the crowd shouted back "Fewer! Fewer!" a smiling Mr Wilders responded: "We're going to take care of that."

At the trial, prosecutors took testimony from Dutch-Moroccans who said his comments made them feel like "third-rate citizens". He was convicted of insulting a group and inciting discrimination.

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<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-39016179>

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### **Netherlands trial: Geert Wilders guilty of incitement**

**Dutch anti-Islam political leader Geert Wilders has been convicted of insulting a group and inciting discrimination.**

But no penalty was imposed by the court near Amsterdam on Wilders, whose party is leading in polls ahead of parliamentary elections in March.

Wilders was also acquitted of inciting hate over telling supporters in March 2014 he would ensure there were fewer Moroccans in the Netherlands.

He called the guilty verdict “madness” in a tweet posted a short time later.

He said he would appeal.

The three-week trial was triggered when police received 6,400 complaints about remarks Wilders made during a municipal election campaign in The Hague.

At a rally, he asked supporters whether they wanted “fewer or more Moroccans in your city and in the Netherlands”.

When the crowd shouted back “Fewer! Fewer!” a smiling Wilders responded: “We’re going to take care of that.”

At the trial, prosecutors took testimony from Dutch-Moroccans who said his comments made them feel like “third-rate citizens”.

This guilty verdict will do little to damage Geert Wilders’ political aspirations.

In fact, the trial has provided the populist leader with the two vital elements upon which his party thrives - a platform to promote his political message and masses of media attention. In court he repeated warnings about the dangers of Islam and immigration.

Many supporters see this trial as reaffirming their belief that Wilders is a courageous leader prepared to stand up for them and address the issues a politically correct elite is afraid to talk about. They have been emboldened by populist victories in the UK and US. Wilders’ Freedom Party (PVV) is currently 10 percentage points ahead of the ruling liberal party in the polls.

In response to the guilty verdict, Mr Wilders accused the judges of convicting “half of the Netherlands” - a reference to research commissioned by the PVV which found 43% of the Dutch public believe the country has a problem with Moroccans.

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### ***European speech laws: Key cases***

- **Dieudonné M’bala M’bala**, a controversial French comedian regarded by many as anti-Semitic, has been condemned many times over the past 10 years for hate speech, Holocaust denial and “praising terrorism”. Some of his shows have been banned by officials.
- In 2006, an Austrian court sentenced controversial British historian David Irving to three years in jail for Holocaust denial, over a speech and interview he gave in 1989 in which he called for an end to the “gas chambers fairy tale”.
- In October 2016, German prosecutors dropped a case against comedian Jan Boehmermann on charges of insulting Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in a satirical poem filled with profanities and allusions to bestiality and child sex abuse.
- French far-right leader Jean-Marie Le Pen was condemned to a heavy fine for calling the Holocaust

“a detail of history”, in a 1987 interview. In 2008, he was given a three-month suspended sentence for saying the Nazi occupation of France had not been “particularly inhumane”.

- In 2015 Marine Le Pen, daughter and successor of Mr Le Pen as leader of the National Front party, was acquitted of inciting hatred after she compared Muslim street prayer to the Nazi occupation.

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Wilders had argued his comments should be protected by his right to freedom of speech.

But judges at the court in Schiphol ruled that there were limits and that this right could not be used to limit the freedom of others - in this case, a minority group.

“If a politician crosses the line, that doesn’t mean free speech is being restricted,” said Presiding Judge Hendrik Steenhuis. “A crime cannot be protected by the right to free speech.”

The verdict suggests that, in effect, Wilders and his party staged a stunt. Judges found evidence that they planned the remarks in advance and coached the supporters on how to respond.

He had intended to insult, they said.

The judges described it as an “extraordinary case” because Wilders was the leader of a political party and had a duty not to polarise society.

They said the conviction was punishment enough and that there would be no jail sentence or fine, as the prosecution had requested.

### **Geert Wilders And his Freedom Party (PVV)**

12 seats currently held in 150-seat Dutch parliament

35 seats predicted in recent poll

3 million Dutch voters who could back the PVV, poll suggests

Wilders was previously prosecuted in 2011, over anti-Islam comments such as comparing the religion to Nazism and calling for a ban on the Koran. He was acquitted and the case was widely seen as giving the populist leader a publicity boost.

9 December 2016

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-38260377>

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