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Online, a Violent View of Islam

Anti-Immigration Dutch Lawmaker Characterizes His Film as 'Tough Reality'

By [Molly Moore](#)
 Washington Post Foreign Service
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THE HAGUE, March 27 -- A Dutch lawmaker known for his outspoken opposition to immigration posted a graphic film depicting Islam as a religion of violence on a maverick video-sharing Web site Thursday night after government and religious officials spent weeks trying to prevent its release.

The 15-minute film splices verses from the Koran with videos of mutilated bombing victims, the [World Trade Center](#) attack, the beheading of a man by masked gunmen and an Afghan woman draped in a pleated blue burqa being shot in the head.

"It is not a provocation, it is tough reality -- a reality that some Muslims might not find comfortable," [Geert Wilders](#), a member of the [Netherlands'](#) far-right Party for Freedom, told reporters after the Web site LiveLeak.com received so many hits within the first hour of posting the film that the video temporarily froze. "I think I have made a very decent film, within the boundaries of the law. This is a call for debate; that is how people should respond."

Prime Minister Jan Peter Balkenende had warned Wilders that the film, called "Fitna," the Arabic word for chaos or strife, could imperil the country's national interests and endanger its soldiers and other citizens abroad. In recent weeks, news that the film would soon be released set off violent protests in [Afghanistan](#), [Pakistan](#) and other predominantly Muslim countries.

"The pictures are horrible and very bloody," Rabbat said in an interview. "It is a film according to the ideology of Mr. Wilders -- he always tries to make a link between violence and the Koran."

Dutch television stations had refused to air the film, and Wilders was unable to find a venue to screen it in the Netherlands because of the prohibitively costly expense of security. The U.S. Internet provider that Wilders used to advertise the film suspended its Web site last week.

The U.N. Human Rights Council adopted a resolution Thursday deploring the use of the media to "incite acts of violence, xenophobia or related intolerance and discrimination towards Islam" or other religions.

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Protesters demonstrated last week in Amsterdam against the film, which was posted yesterday by a Web site in Britain after attempts to block its release. (Photos By Fred Ernst -- Associated Press)

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But early Thursday evening, LiveLeak.com, a site based in the [United Kingdom](#) that specializes in running raw videos from the battlefields of Afghanistan, as well as crime footage from around the world, posted "Fitna."

"There was no legal reason to refuse Geert Wilders the right to post his film (Fitna) on LiveLeak.com and it is not our place to censor people based on an emotive response," the Web site said in a statement posted next to the video. "To many of us involved in LiveLeak.com some of the messages therein are personally offensive. . . . Our being offended is no reason to deny Mr. Wilders the right to have his film seen."

Within minutes of its release on the Internet, Dutch television aired clips from "Fitna," and the film dominated the nightly news.

Paul Scheffer, a professor of urban sociology at the University of Amsterdam, said that "in principle, criticism of the Koran or radical Islam is part of an open society. The problem with Wilders is he has linked that with limiting the freedom of Muslims in this country; he not only criticizes the Koran, he wants to ban the Koran."

Wilders's personal Web site carries a banner that declares, "Stop the Islamization of the Netherlands." The government has assigned bodyguards to protect Wilders because of death threats against him.

The Netherlands, like most other Western European nations, is in the midst of a divisive struggle over national identity in the face of large-scale immigration in recent decades. The debate has been particularly pronounced in the Netherlands, which has long enjoyed a reputation as a liberal, open society that allowed personal freedoms.

In 2004, Dutch filmmaker [Theo Van Gogh](#) was murdered in [Amsterdam](#) by an extremist after he released a short film criticizing Islam's treatment of women.

On Friday, a Dutch court is scheduled to hear a petition by the Dutch Islamic Federation seeking a review of whether Wilders's film violates hate-speech laws.

Special correspondent Merel Boers in Amsterdam contributed to this report.

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