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## Muslims Denounce Film Critizing Islam

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AMSTERDAM, Netherlands -- Hundreds of angry Muslims marched Friday in [Pakistan](#) and denounced a Dutch legislator's film that portrays Islam as a ticking time bomb aimed at the West. Dutch Muslims were more restrained, saying they had expected worse.

The 15-minute film \_ titled "Fitna," or "Strife" in Arabic \_ was made by anti-immigrant lawmaker Geert Wilders and was posted on a Web site Thursday.

The host site, LiveLeak.com, removed the film Friday evening, citing threats to its staff "of a very serious nature." But the film already had been widely dispersed across the Internet on file-sharing sites.

Employing elements and symbols calculated to offend Muslims, it draws on recycled footage of terrorist attacks and anti-Western, anti-Jewish rhetoric meant to alarm the native Dutch.

The film begins with the Danish cartoon image of Muhammad with a fuse in his turban \_ an image that provoked violent protests in Islamic countries when it was published by European newspapers two years ago.

The same image appears at the end of film, although the fuse is lit and a ticking clock counts down the seconds, then fades into blackness broken by flashes of lightning and thunder.

In another provocative image, a hand turns a page of the Quran as the screen darkens and the sound of tearing paper is heard. A printed text says it is only a telephone book being torn, and adds: "It is not up to me, but to Muslims themselves to tear out the hateful verses from the Quran."

It cited verses from the Quran interspersed with images of the Sept. 11 attacks on the United States, the 2004 commuter train bombings in Spain, and the slaying later that year of Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh by a Muslim radical for perceived insults to Islam.

The film concludes with a scrolling text saying that the West had defeated the Nazis and communism, and now must defeat an Islam that "wants to dominate, subject and seeks to destroy our Western civilization."

Wilders told reporters he made the film because "Islam and the Quran are dangers to the preservation of freedom in the Netherlands."

He argues in the film that Islam's objective is to rule the world and impose an Islamic order without Western freedoms, where gays would be persecuted and women discriminated against.

The Pakistani Foreign Ministry summoned the Dutch ambassador to deliver an official complaint against what it called a "defamatory film which deeply offended the sentiments of Muslims all over the world."

Small groups of demonstrators, mostly followers of hard-line religious groups, rallied in Pakistan's major cities, demanding Pakistan cut diplomatic relations with the Netherlands. A banner at one demonstration read: "We hate the uncivilized West."

Militant Qari Mohammed Yusuf warned before the film's release that revenge attacks were being planned.

"I am telling you now that after this maybe you won't be able to come to Peshawar like this. Foreigners will not be able to come so easily anywhere in Pakistan," he told The Associated Press last week in an interview in Peshawar, Pakistan.

Condemnations also came from the government of Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim nation, [Iran](#) and Jordan.

"It is not Islam that should be stopped, it is fear-mongers like Geert Wilders who should be stopped from spreading their hatred," said Zakaria al-Sheik of the Rassoul Allah Yajmana, a Jordanian group formed to protect the image of Islam.

U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon also condemned the movie.

"There is no justification for hate speech or incitement to violence. The right of free expression is not at stake here," he said in a statement. "The real fault line is not between Muslim and Western societies, as some would have us believe, but between small minorities of extremists, on different sides, with a vested interest in stirring hostility and conflict."

The Council of Europe said the film was a "distasteful manipulation" that exploits fear, and three U.N. rights experts said it showed a distorted vision of Muslims.

The World Council of Churches said the film failed to distinguish extremism from mainstream Islam.

Even before its release, the Dutch government went out of its way to distance itself from Wilders, but was powerless to gag him.

It set up a crisis center to deal with reaction, but Muslim demonstrations failed to materialize after the film hit the Internet and Dutch TV stations showed excerpts.

"I want to pay tribute to Muslim organizations and the way they have reacted: Moderate reactions despite totally disagreeing with its contents. The Cabinet is proud \_ proud of people who react in this way," said Prime Minister Jan Peter Balkenende.

Mainstream political parties and many Muslims dismissed the film as a tactic to polarize society and scare people into supporting Wilders, whose reactionary Freedom party holds nine seats in the 150-member parliament.

Dutch Muslims said the film misrepresented Islam, but that Wilders had largely stayed within the bounds of acceptable political discourse. Wilders praised their civil reaction.

Mohamed Rabbae, leader of a group representing the Netherlands' large Moroccan immigrant community, said the film was "less bad" than expected from Wilders' prior comments. Rabbae called on Muslims abroad to be calm and let Dutch Muslims deal with Wilders, adding: "Harming Dutch people harms us."

"I wasn't personally offended," said Imad el Ouarti, a worshipper at El Umma mosque in Amsterdam. He said Wilders had taken Quranic texts out of context and had reused images that have been seen thousands of times since Sept. 11, 2001. "It's just tasteless and non-creative, as if a child had pasted it together."

Kurt Westergaard, the artist who has lived under police protection since the Muhammad cartoon was published two years ago, objected that Wilders had violated his copyright. "I won't accept my cartoon being taken out of its original context and used in a completely different one," he told Denmark's TV2.

A Rotterdam court said it would rule April 7 on a petition by the Dutch Islamic Federation seeking to gag Wilders and order him to publicly apologize.

Wilders' lawyer Serge Vlaar said the federation "wants to ban a point of view," which he said was not possible under Dutch law.

Federation lawyer Ejder Kose countered that "my clients are not attacking freedom of speech. This is about ending the unjustified insulting of Islam."

Outside the courtroom, a pro-Wilders demonstrator shouted far-right slogans until police removed him.

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Associated Press writers Mike Corder in Amsterdam, Kathy Gannon in Peshawar, Pakistan, and Desmond Butler in Washington contributed to this article.

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