



Free Speech, State Censorship, and the Prosecution of Dutch Politician Wilders

While they expect censored speech in such brutal dictatorships as China and Iran, they do not look for it in those nations which are historical allies — modern industrial countries with so-called democratic governments. And yet such censorship is rapidly increasing around the world.

Last year hecklers at the University of Ottawa completely drowned out Ann Coulter in her attempt to give a speech — her first such experience in a decade of college campus speeches. [Coulter summed up the moment](#): “The University of Ottawa is really easy to get into, isn’t it?... This has never, ever, happened before — even at the stupidest American university.” Moreover, she received an e-mail from the university vice president and provost warning her that freedom of speech in Canada is very different from freedom of speech in America.



Three years ago in Canada, [Mark Steyn](#) was hauled before the Human Rights Commission for offending Muslims by an article he had written. Authorities denounced his references to Islam as “destructive” and “xenophobic” without ever granting him a hearing. Steyn observed, “Why is this relevant to Americans? Because the superficial fluffily benign language of multiculturalism that comes so naturally to our rulers provides a lot of cover for the shriveling of free speech.... As Canadians have discovered, liberty is lost very quietly and quickly. And trying to get it back is slow and painful.”

Lona Manning noted at the time that Canada suppressed anything advocating Nazism but saw nothing wrong with making swooning endorsements of communism (whose adherents have killed over 100 million people and which still exists as a slavemaster of mankind). The Canada Film Board has endorsed documentaries such as *They Chose China*, which applauds the decision of UN POWs to defect to Mao’s vast, hellish re-education camps in China. Last month the rock song by [Dire Straits](#), “Money for Nothing,” was banned from Canadian radio because at one point the lyrics mention “the little faggot” — and that decision was based upon one single complaint.

Dr. Rachel Eherenfeld, director of the American Center for Democracy and an expert on terrorism, wrote a book, *Funding Evil*, which followed the Islamic terrorist money trail. She was not allowed to publish her book in Britain. Saudi officials sued and obtained a \$225,000 judgment against her.

In August 2006, Artur Borac, the Polish goalkeeper of the Celtic United soccer team actually received a police caution for causing a “breach of the peace” by making the sign of the cross in a game. Britain has not, however, found mass parades by Muslims demanding the death of those who draw cartoons of



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Mohammed to be criminal or hate speech.

Australia also limits free speech — even the expression of opinions. Two Christian pastors were prosecuted in Victoria for violating the “Racial and Religious Act of 2001.” Pastor Danny Nilliah, who had lived in Saudi Arabia, stated that Islam was bent upon world domination and that the Koran endorses the use of violence. Andrew Bolt, a controversial commentator in Australia, has recently been sued by the government for his allegedly offensive remarks about the aboriginal population of the continent.

Political correctness is bringing its siege guns against the last bastion of free people: their right to express honestly held opinions.

If Britain, Canada, and Australia have the tradition of free expression nearest to America’s First Amendment, then the Netherlands should be close behind. In Holland — a haven for the persecuted Pilgrims and Jews, a land that produced controversial thinkers such as Spinoza, a nation among the first to legalize prostitution and pornography under the broad banner of individual liberty — it would seem that a Dutchman could criticize Islam. But such is not the case with [Geert Wilders](#), a member of the Dutch House of Representatives who is the leader of the Netherlands’ third-largest political party, the Party of Freedom. Wilders commented in a newspaper interview, “The core of the problem is the fascist Islam, the sick ideology of Allah and Mohammed as written down in the Islamic *Mein Kampf*.” He has spoken out against Islam many times in his homeland, raising Islam to a national policy debate. Yet this prominent political leader, who is simply stating what he believes is true about Islam, has been prosecuted under Dutch “hate speech” laws, accused of making these sorts of comments more than 100 times. Each “offense” carries a possible term of one year in prison, so theoretically Wilders could receive a 100-year sentence for calling Islam a violent, intolerant, and dangerous religion. It is expected, though, that if convicted, he would instead be ordered to pay a fine.

What would a conviction mean for Wilders’ Party of Freedom? It advocates a number of positions that could offend some Dutchmen. It opposes, for example, allowing Turkey to join the European Union (the Party of Freedom actually has little liking for the EU). Wilders’ party believes that the Netherlands should be founded upon Judeo-Christian and humanist traditions, and it opposes more immigration from non-European nations. In short, the Party of Freedom wants the Netherlands to have a governing principle that involves individual liberty (its economic policies also call for lower taxes and abolishing the minimum wage) and recognition of an historical and cultural value that does not view every system of belief from Marxism and Nazism to the Hindu Kali worship or Muslim Jihad as equally good.

There are voices in all four of these countries that declare that there is no fundamental right “not to be offended” or mandate to pretend that all systems of thought are entitled by private citizens to the same respect. Constitutionalists in America are working to preserve the freedom bequeathed by the Founding Fathers — which sees in liberty and the marketplace of ideas a system which, without state coercion and censorship, leads to friendly toleration and elbow room.

Photo of Ann Coulter: AP Images



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