

Faith in Public Debate
On Freedom of Expression, Hate Speech and Religion
in France & the Netherlands

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Faith in Public Debate
On Freedom of Expression, Hate Speech and Religion
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Esther Janssen



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Twitter Heatmap showing the #jesuischarlie hashtag being tweeted at its height. The hashtag has become one of the most popular in the history of Twitter as people around the world showed their solidarity with the victims of the Paris massacre at the offices of the French satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo where 12 people were slaughtered when Islamist terrorists stormed their offices in Paris on 7 January 2015 sparking a series of attacks lasting three days. At its height the hashtag was tweeted at a rate of 6500 times a minute and featured in 3.4 million tweets in just one 24-hour period.

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'This study contains a thorough and detailed description, comparison and analysis of Dutch and French legislation and case law concerning hate speech. It focuses on the most sensitive issues of freedom of expression and its limitations: hate speech related to race and religion. The book highlights the differences in the Dutch and French approach, takes into account the jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights, criticizes the inconsistencies in the case law, and formulates concepts and proposals with regard to the scope and boundaries of the freedom of expression. It is a comprehensive source of information and provides insight for all who deal with these issues in practice and in theoretical studies.'

Ben Vermeulen, Member of the Council of State, Professor of Law, Radboud University Nijmegen

'Esther Janssen has written an impressive book, which is as thorough as it is captivating. Its publication is very timely because hate speech has become a pressing issue in so many jurisdictions. Including France, rather than the U.S or the UK, in the comparison is both fortunate and refreshing.'

Tom Zwart, Professor of Human Rights, Utrecht University and Director of the Netherlands School of Human Rights Research

'Hate speech and blasphemy have long been topical issues, but they are even more so in the aftermath of what happened to Charlie Hebdo. If only for that reason, a book like this one, which objectively and neutrally analyses the consistency of legal rules and case-law in this difficult area, should be warmly welcomed. This book is all the more valuable because of the author's choice to provide a comprehensive comparison of the legal responses in France and the Netherlands – two national systems with very different traditions of regulation and different attitudes towards freedom of expression. Esther Janssen thus provides a sound and comprehensive overview of the history and functioning of both systems, as well as of the European Court of Human Rights, which makes this book a good read for anyone interested in blasphemy and hate speech in modern-day Western European legal systems.'

Janneke Gerards, Professor of European Law, Radboud University Nijmegen

*'Giant steps are what you take
Walking on the moon
I hope my legs don't break
Walking on the moon
We could walk forever
Walking on the moon
We could live together
Walking on, walking on the moon'*

...

Roseaux featuring Aloe Blacc / Original 'Walking on the Moon' by Sting

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Amsterdam, June 2014

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