

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

SCHOOL OF HUMAN RIGHTS RESEARCH SERIES, Volume 68

The titles published in this series are listed at the end of this volume.

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



intersentia

Cambridge – Antwerp – Portland

Intersentia Publishing Ltd
Sheraton House | Castle Park
Cambridge | CB3 0AX | United Kingdom
Tel.: +44 1223 370 170 | mail@intersentia.co.uk

Esther Janssen
Faith in Public Debate. On Freedom of Expression, Hate Speech and Religion in
France & the Netherlands
www.estherjanssen.nl | www.faithinpublicdebate.com

ISBN 978-1-78068-309-6
D/2015/7849/41
NUR 828

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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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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data. A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

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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

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to thank my advisor, Nico van Eijk, for giving me the opportunity to do this research, for his flexibility and constructive approach. Secondly, I would like to thank my daily supervisor, Aernout Nieuwenhuis, for his time, dedication, expert guidance, and feedback. I am very grateful to him for teaching me the craft of scientific research and for his critical input on written texts, which has undeniably enhanced their quality.

In addition, I have benefited enormously from the expertise of and inspiring discussions with Egbert Dommering. I would like to thank him for so generously sharing his world of ideas, for his interest and confidence in mine and for stimulating me to work from a concept of justice. I am also particularly grateful to Committee member Janneke Gerards for her thorough and sharp commentary on my manuscript, which has enabled me to improve its overall scientific quality.

Furthermore, I would like to thank Annabel Brody and Matthijs Janssen for their tremendous editing job, which makes this study look so much smarter, and Tarlach McGonagle for his kind support and, generally, for caring. On this note, I would also like to thank Janne Nijman and Bernt Hugenholtz for making time for me and for lending their ears on crucial moments. I probably could not have finished this project without their professional advice.

I want to thank Frederik Borgesius and Catherine Jasserand for being such great roommates and Bart van der Sloot for being the perfect neighbour-colleague during the years covering this research; for their talks over coffee, useful legal discussions as well as providing comic relief. In this respect, other (ex-) colleagues from the University of Amsterdam and beyond that I would especially like to thank are: Christina Angelopoulous, David Korteweg, Gerard Mom, Hana van Ooijen, Martine Beijerman, Uladzislau Belavusau and Wolfgang Sakulin.

I am very grateful to have met so many knowledgeable people with whom I was able to share information and ideas: Ben Vermeulen, Birgit van Roessel, Els Lucas, Françoise Tulkens, Gerard Spong, Jeroen Temperman, Marloes van Noorloos, Paul Velleman, Rick Lawson, Theo Rosier and Ties Prakken. During my time at the Sorbonne, Paris I was fortunate enough to meet many experts in the field. I have greatly relied on the expertise of and have received immensely valuable input from: Anne de Fontette (district attorney Paris prosecution office), Anne-Marie Sauteraud (judge Paris District Court press chamber), Bernard Schmid (MRAP), Prof. Emmanuelle Dreyer, Macha Pariente (LICRA), drs. Nathalie Droin, Nicolas Tavieaux Moro (barrister), Prof. Véronique Champeil-Desplats. Thank you very much.

It has been a true privilege to have spent the past few years studying the interesting topic of hate speech; I have enjoyed every second. But there have also been some difficult moments during the completion of this PhD project and I want

to thank all who have eased those moments with their warm friendship, starting with my two Para nymphs Adriaan Dokter, for dancing the tango and endlessly discussing life in the Engelbewaarder with me, and Nienke van der Meulen, for all her encouragement, comfort and conviviality, Caitilin McGivern, Janine Dortmund, Joost Overdijkink, Martin van Harten, Melchior Bussink, Myrddin van Westendorp, Robert Pieters, Roos Kraanen, Sanne van Ruitenbeek, Sarah Lindenboom, Stef LeFevre and Tanja de Vette.

Finally, I would like to thank my family: my parents Harry and Gusta and my brother Matthijs, Olesja, Diana and Margje for their patience, unconditional love and support. Our side-projects such as renovating my apartment and creating Amsterdam's most beautiful garden (& shed), the drinks and couch surfing in Bilthoven and the dinners and movie nights in The Hague have provided the necessary distraction to eventually realize this project.

Amsterdam, June 2014

This thesis was conducted at the Institute for Information Law (IVIR), Law Faculty of the University of Amsterdam.

The research for this thesis was officially completed in January 2014; only the most necessary updates were made after this date.

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