

Press Release

Spying on Muslims by 10 Municipalities is the Erosion of Democracy by the Democratic Rule of Law

On February 5, 2026, media reported that ten Dutch municipalities received fines from the privacy watchdog, the Dutch Data Protection Authority (AP). The AP's findings show that ten municipalities unlawfully collected data on Muslims within their jurisdictions. The unlawful collection of private data from Muslims by mayors of cities including Eindhoven, Zoetermeer, and Delft was carried out because the municipalities allegedly feared 'radicalization' within their borders.

The execution of these investigations by municipalities did not actually occur on their own initiative. The national government and the National Coordinator for Security and Counterterrorism (NCTV) incentivized local municipalities to prevent 'radicalization' and 'traveling abroad' (to conflict zones).

The municipalities collected data from the Islamic community regarding their beliefs and which denominations they follow. Additionally, these municipalities gathered information regarding tensions and relationships within mosques. The involved municipalities hired external agencies for this information gathering, and the resulting reports were even unlawfully shared with other entities such as the police and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment. Ultimately, the AP imposed a fine of 25,000 euros on each of the ten municipalities. In response to the findings, several municipalities accepted the fine in advance, and Mayor Pechtold of Delft, among others, has offered an apology.

The implementation of policies against 'radicalization' is neither a random policy initiative nor an error in judgment by the involved municipalities. For decades, the national government has outlined in various policy papers how municipalities will be responsible at a local level for combating 'radicalization' within the Islamic community. It goes so far that intelligence services such as the NCTV and AIVD have drafted reports with definitions and provisions on what they deem 'radical-Islamic.' For instance, the concept of a Muslim believing in a global Ummah is designated as a strong signal of potential radicalization.

The fact that the national government, as established by the AP itself, called upon municipalities to monitor the local Islamic community proves that this is a structural problem not limited to local levels of government. The violation of Muslims' privacy without any cause is, in fact, the execution of anti-Islam policy as it was intended. It is therefore remarkable, to say the least, that only the municipalities were held responsible by the AP while the municipalities themselves were directed by the national government.

Finally, these findings by the AP once again demonstrate that democratic foundations are completely hollowed out when it concerns the Islamic community. According to democratic values, a citizen's privacy is a cornerstone of a so-called functioning democratic society. The lack thereof is often blamed on autocratic regimes by Western countries. By structurally violating the privacy of the Muslim community in this manner, the Dutch government itself creates the problem it seeks to combat. Ironically, the Dutch state thus becomes the cause of the breakdown of its own 'democratic rule of law' through the policy measures it applies to the Muslim community.

It is crucial for Muslims in the Netherlands to continue protecting their Islamic identity and to remain ever-cautious of the fact that anti-Islam policy manifests in all facets of the daily lives of Muslims.

As long as the Muslims in the Netherlands believe in Allah (swt), His Messenger (saw), and their duty to spread the da'wah of Islam to all of humanity, the government will never be satisfied with the current state of the Muslim community until they have found a way to completely dismantle the Islamic identity.

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