



Press release VOC (Society for the abolition of cannabis prohibition), April 27th 2012

THE NETHERLANDS LEGALIZES DISCRIMINATION

THE HAGUE – Today's court verdict on the so called "weedpass" and tourist ban for coffeeshops (cannabis cafes) leaves the VOC with a feeling of bitterness and shame. The judge has accepted that discrimination is allowed as a means to combat nuisance and criminal activities on the black market for cannabis. However, a causal relation between the coffeeshops and these phenomena has never been established.

It is widely expected that implementation of the "weedpass" on May 1st will lead to more nuisance and criminal activity instead of less. On top of that, the judge completely disregards the fact that the current rules and laws for coffeeshops (the so called AHOJG-criteria) provide ample possibilities to combat nuisance. Criminal activity surrounding cannabis is the sole result of the prohibition of the production of this plant.

A "weedpass" that is only available for Dutch residents goes completely against the first amendment of the Dutch constitution, that forbids any form of discrimination. In an earlier ruling, the "Raad van State" (State Council) stated that this form of discrimination is only allowed in Maastricht if there is a serious disruption of public order, that can not be solved with less serious measures. Even in Maastricht, where foreign patronage of coffeeshops is exceptionally high due to the city's geographical location, neither of these criteria apply.

There is nuisance and criminal activity, but these are caused by the black market, not by the licensed, tax paying coffeeshops. The real solution for solving the problems related to the black market starts with finally regulating the "backdoor" of the coffeeshops: the production / cultivation of cannabis. During the recent debates on drug policy in the Dutch parliament, five political parties (PvdA, D66, GroenLinks, SP and PvdD) called for steps in this direction, steps that are also being taken by other European countries, like Spain, Portugal, the Czech Republic and Belgium.

The VOC will continue to resist and fight the "weedpass" and we await the appeal with confidence. The same goes for the judges who will handle the court cases against coffeeshop owners who refuse to treat non-residents different from residents. In the very near future, these coffeeshops will symbolize the resistance against a government enforced obligation to discriminate.

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