

MARTENS: WE HAVE TO AVOID CLASH OF CULTURES

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After days of violent protests against cartoons of the prophet Mohammed in a Danish newspaper, EPP President **Wilfried Martens** called for a more intense dialogue of cultures.

"I respect the feelings of many Muslims and understand that for them it is not acceptable to picture the prophet Mohammed like this. I wish that the press takes its responsibility when it comes to religious feelings," Martens stated.

"But we have to appeal to the governments in those countries not to aggravate the situation but to enter into a dialogue. Violence and threats are not acceptable means to deal with such a situation. For the European democracies the freedom of press is of high value - therefore it is not imaginable that we would limit the freedom of press and introduce some kind of censorship on religious issues. If we would indeed do this, Europe would make a big step back in the freedom of our societies. We would start to question the values which enlightenment has brought to us and I don't know where this would end," Martens concluded.

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