



Muslims in the Netherlands: Some facts and figures

THERE are currently around 850,000 Muslims in the Netherlands, which is 5.6% of the total population. After France, this is the highest percentage in Western Europe. There are many strands of Islam within the Dutch Muslim community. As well as Sunnis, there are Shites, Alevis and Ahmadis, not to mention a number of Sufi orders. The largest number of Muslims by far hail originally from Turkey (323,000) followed by Morocco (264,000). Significant other numbers come from Afghanistan, Iraq and Surinam.

The Dutch political system is based on the separation of church and state. Churches, mosques and other religious organisations operate independently and without government intervention. Everyone has the right to freedom of religion, association and expression.

Freedom of religion means the right of every Muslim in the Netherlands to profess his or her

own beliefs, to build mosques and to establish religious organisations. There are currently some 450 mosques in the Netherlands.

All Muslims have the same civil, social and political rights as other Dutch residents. The Dutch Constitution prohibits discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief.

The Dutch Constitution guarantees the right of Christians and Muslim schools to be fully financed from public funds. Islamic schools have the right to devote attention to the Turkish or Moroccan language and culture, or to religious education. The government does uphold the standards of all educational institutions, including the quality of the curriculum and the qualifications of the teachers. At present there are some 40 Islamic primary schools (with over 7500 students) and 2 secondary schools.

Muslims play an active part in Dutch politics: 3% of the local council seats are occupied by people with a non-western back-



El Fath mosque, Amersfoort

ground. The Muslim Democrat Party, for example, has a seat on The Hague's municipal council. In Parliament, 12 out of 150 members have a non-western background. And two members of the current Dutch government (one male and one female both deputy ministers) were born in Muslim countries.

Non-western and Muslim

women are less well-educated than native Dutch women or men with the same background. While the second generation has made great improvements in education performance, a large percentage does not hold proper qualifications to attain a viable position on the labour market. Still, 38% of non-western women hold at least a part-time job (against 56% of the

native Dutch women).

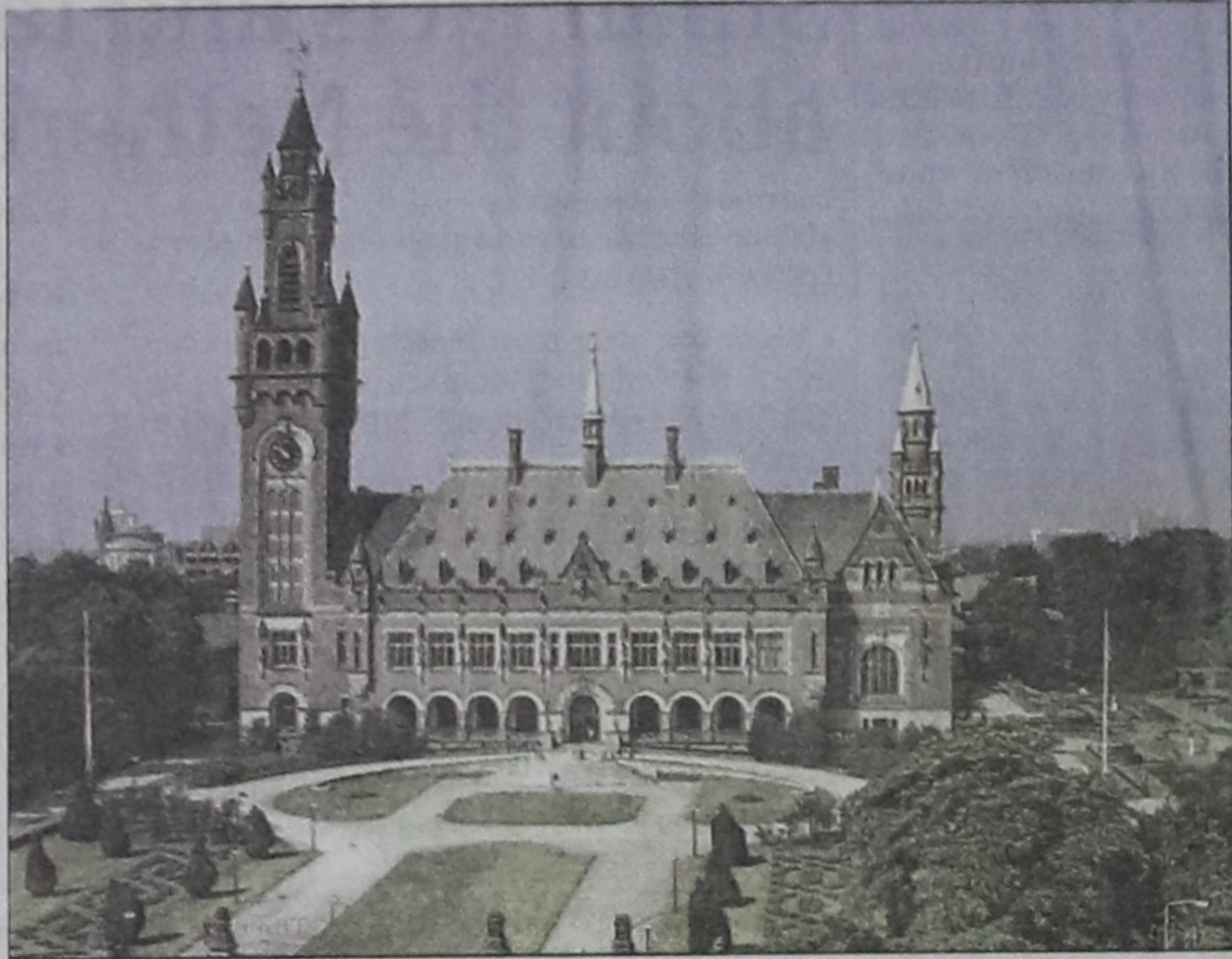
Interestingly, when non-western women get a degree in secondary education, they are more likely than native Dutch women to continue their education at the college or university level. Moreover, they tend to favour studies that are in demand on the labour market rather than gender-specific studies.

The Hague - legal capital of the world

THE city of The Hague is not only the seat of the Netherlands Government; it also houses 32 international judicial, executive and other organisations. This makes it the 4th UN city in the world, behind New York, Geneva and Vienna. It started with the *Peace Conference* in 1899, at the initiative of the then Tsar of Russia Nicolas II to settle disputes rather than waging war, for which the young Queen Wilhelmina of the Netherlands made her palace available. The landmark *Vredespaleis* ("Peace Palace") was built in 1913 with a generous donation from the US millionaire Andrew Carnegie.

Some of these international organisations are

- Permanent Court of Arbitration (1899; the oldest existing global mechanism for peaceful settlement of cases between states, international organisations; and between states and international organisations). Recent case: territorial claims Ethiopia-Eritrea
- International Court of Justice. (1945) UN institution for disputes between states. Advises UN General assembly and UN Security council. Recent case: separation



Peace Palace - Vredespaleis

wall between Israel and the Palestinian Territories

- Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (1993). Monitors the ban on chemical weapons and the eradication of these.
- International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia
- Special Court for Sierra Leone
- International Criminal Court (1998 operational in 2002). For cases of genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes. Only for individuals (not states). First cases under investigation: Uganda, Democratic Republic of Congo and Darfur (West Sudan)
- EUROPOL (1999). EU police and customs organisation to combat terrorism, drugs trade and other forms of international crime in Europe.
- EUROJUST (2002). EU organisation to coordinate investigation and prosecution of international crime.

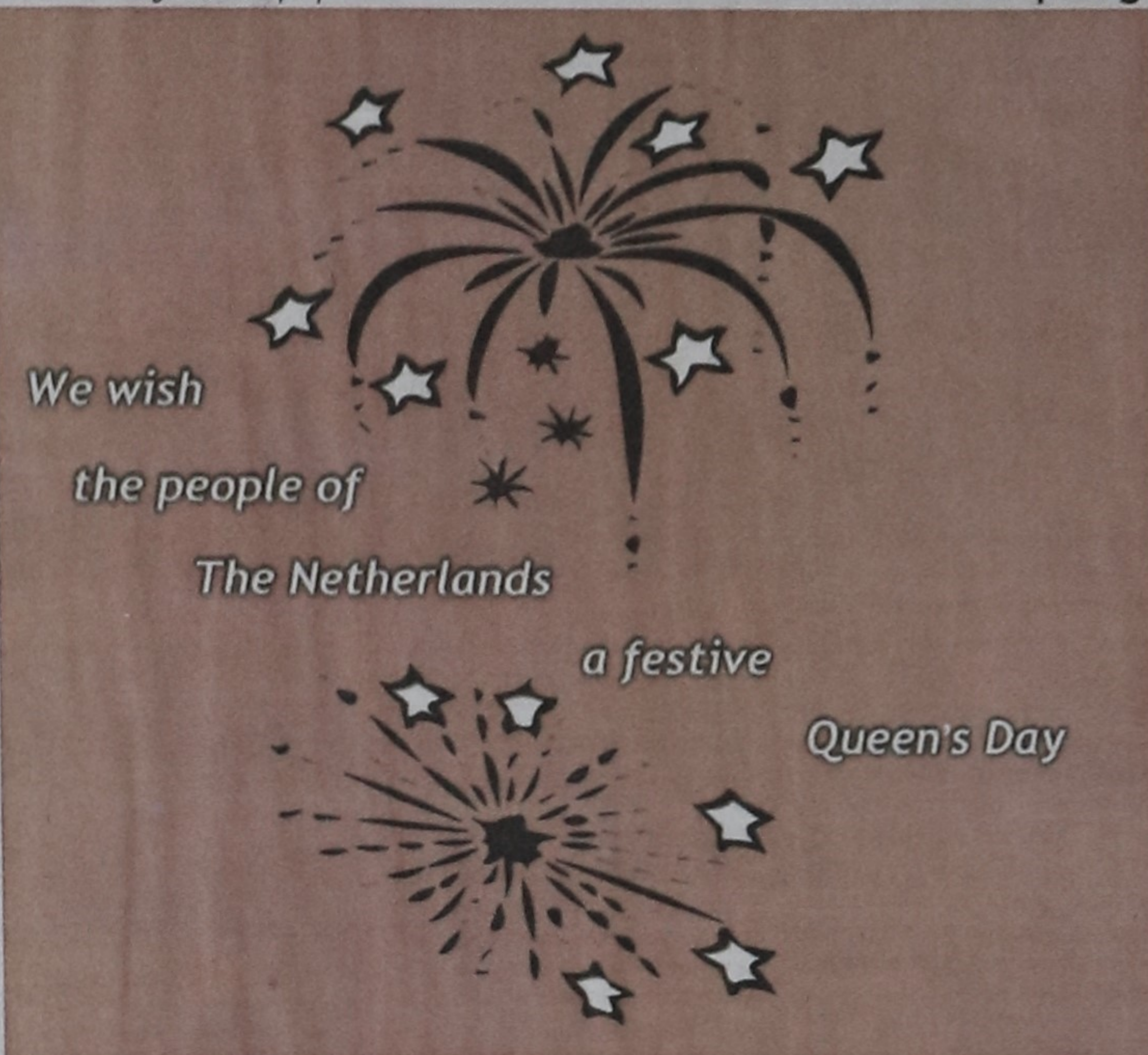
For further information see www.haguejusticeportal.net

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