

Ruling

NORTHERN NETHERLANDS DISTRICT COURT

Civil law

Place of hearing: Leeuwarden

Case number: C/17/190788 / HA ZA 23-172

Order of 14 October 2026

in the case of

1. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
2. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
3. (THE LATE [REDACTED]
who reside [REDACTED]
4. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
5. [REDACTED],
of [REDACTED]
6. (THE LATE) [REDACTED]
who resided [REDACTED],
7. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

the claimants,

hereinafter collectively referred to as: the claimants,
lawyer: Mr P.W.H. Stassen,

against

1. EVERHARDUS ITE HOFSTRA,
2. JAAP TAMINO VAN DISSEL,
3. Maria Petronella Gerarda Koopmans,
4. Mark Rutte,
5. SIGRID AGNES MARIA KAAG,
6. HUGO MATTHEÛS DE JONGE,
7. ERNST JOHAN KUIPERS,
8. DIEDERIK ANTONIUS MARIA PAULUS JOHANNES GOMMERS,
9. WOPKE BASTIAAN HOEKSTRA,
10. CORNELIA VAN NIEUWENHUIZEN,
14. FEIKE SIJBESMA,
all electing domicile in The Hague,
17. THE STATE OF THE NETHERLANDS,
with its seat in The Hague,
solicitors: Mr R.W. Veldhuis and Mr M.E.A. Möhring,
11. ALBERT BOURLA,
residing in Greenwich (United States of America),

lawyers: D. Roessing, LL.B., and Bredenoord-Spoek, LL.B.,
12. GISELLE JACQUELINE MARIE-THÉRÈSE VAN CANN,
residing in the municipality of De Bilt,
13. PAUL EDWIN JANSEN,
residing in the municipality of Leiden,
lawyers: A. Bekema and P.A. Lichtendahl,
15. WILLIAM HENRY BILL GATES III,

residing in Medina, Washington (United States of America),
residing in Medina, Washington, solicitor: Mr W. Heemskerk,
16. AGNES CATHARINA VAN DER VOORT-KANT,
having elected domicile in Amsterdam,
lawyer: Mr A.H. Ekker,
the defendants,
hereinafter collectively referred to as the defendants.

1. The proceedings

1.1. The further course of the proceedings is set out in:

- the case management order of 23 September 2026, by which Exhibit 157 submitted by the claimants was rejected
- the letter from the claimants dated 25 September 2026, requesting that this order be reconsidered
- the letter from the court dated 2 October 2026, rejecting that request
- the letter from the claimants dated 11 October 2026.

1.2. It was subsequently ordered that a ruling on the case would be made on 14 October 2026.

2. The grounds

2.1. By letter of 11 October 2026, the claimants submitted Exhibit 159. This exhibit was rejected by the court. In legal ground 2.11 of its interim judgment of 11 March 2026, the court ruled that the parties may submit further documents to the proceedings no later than four weeks before the oral hearing and that, if another party wishes to submit further documents in response to this, it must do so no later than ten days before the oral hearing. As none of the defendants submitted any documents to the proceedings, there was nothing for the claimants to respond to and therefore the claimants had no opportunity to submit any further documents to the proceedings.

2.2. Furthermore, in their letter of 11 October 2026, the claimants again requested the court to reconsider the procedural order of 23 September 2026, by which their Exhibit 157 had been rejected. By letter of 2 October 2026, the court stated that it would not reconsider that order. However, as is apparent from that letter, the response at the time related exclusively to the claimants' letter of 25 September 2026. At the time of deciding on that request, the panel had not in fact yet received a letter from the claimants dated 1 October 2026, which supplemented their letter of 25 September 2026. The panel has since taken note of the contents of that letter and rules as follows. A decision has already been made on the primary application – the full admission of Exhibit 157 – and the application to reconsider that decision was also rejected by the court by letter dated 2 October 2026. That matter is therefore closed.

2.3. With regard to the alternative request – to admit only the statements of the party-appointed experts – the court considers that it will grant this if the claimants submit an amended video as an exhibit in the proceedings. This must be a video file containing only the statements of the party-appointed experts, as previously recorded in the ‘video submission’. These statements must therefore no longer form part of the ‘video submission’, which was previously rejected in its entirety. This exhibit may be introduced into the proceedings at the hearing on 21 October 2026. This constitutes a departure from the four-week deadline previously set by the court, and the defendants are therefore no longer able to respond with new documents prior to the oral hearing on 22 October 2026. They may also be unable to respond substantively to these video statements during the oral hearing. The court will therefore – if necessary – still give the defendants the opportunity to do so by way of a statement of defence in the judgment following the oral hearing.

3. The decision

The court

3.1. rejects Exhibit 159 submitted by the claimants.

3.2. refers the case to the roll of 21 October 2026 for the plaintiffs to file a pleading, whereby only an amended video, as referred to in paragraph 2.3, may be submitted as an exhibit in the proceedings.

This order was made by Mr C.M. Telman, Mr T.P. Hoekstra and Mr P. van Eijk on 14 October 2026.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'O' followed by a series of loops and a horizontal line at the end.

