



THE MINISTER FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Enclosure

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Date

6 January, 2006

Dear Secretary General,

The Government of Denmark has carefully read the final communiqué of the third extraordinary session of the Islamic Summit Conference on December 7 – 8, 2005, as well as the declaration of The Arab League of December 29, 2005, officially handed over to us on January 4, 2006.

The messages conveyed in these declarations are taken very seriously by the Danish Government.

The position of the Danish Government is clear. The Danish Government condemns any expression, action or indication that attempts to demonise groups of people on the basis of their religion or ethnic background. The government has continuously conveyed this message, most recently by Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen in his New Year Address for 2006, held on nationwide TV on New Year's day (transcript in English and of relevant sections in Arabic enclosed).

In some contexts the issue has unfortunately been portrayed as if the drawings were part and parcel of a smearing campaign against Muslims supported by the Danish Government. In the press, the image is sometimes erroneously given that Denmark as a nation is Islamophobic.

It is therefore a priority to me to convey internationally the position of the Danish Government on these issues. While the Danish Government is among the fiercest protectors and promoters of the freedom of expression, we do not condone expressions that demonise or discriminate people on the basis of their religion. The Danish Government respects Islam as one of the world's major religions. It has no wish and no agenda to insult, mock or in any other way behave disrespectfully towards Muslims. We do not in any way support or orchestrate a smear campaign against Muslims in Denmark or elsewhere.

H.E. Prof. Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu
Secretary General of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference

Tolerance, mutual respect and dialogue are crucial values in the Danish society. That is why the Danish Government in 2003 launched the Partnership for Progress and Reform, which has as one of its main objectives to strengthen the dialogue between Denmark and the Middle East.

At the same time, we cannot as a government in any way influence what an independent newspaper chooses to bring. Freedom of expression is absolute. It is a vital element of Danish society. And it is indispensable.

However, Danish legislation prohibits acts or expressions of a blasphemous or discriminatory nature and offenders can be brought before court. I understand that private citizens have already filed a report against the Danish newspaper, and that the police is currently investigating the matter.

We understand that Muslim circles have felt hurt and offended by the Danish newspaper's drawings of the Prophet Mohammed. In an Op Ed on January 4th in a Danish national newspaper, I personally warned against disrespect among religions. It is my firm conviction that societies, in which religions do not respect each other, are deemed to suffer from destructive conflicts. History speaks for itself on this issue. Therefore, we expect that also your organisation and your members will work to further respect and understanding among cultures and religions, as we anticipate your support in countering misinformation about Denmark.

The Danish Government believes in dialogue based on mutual understanding and respect. In that spirit, I would personally very much like to further our cooperation with you as well as with the Secretary General of the Arab League.

A similar letter has been sent to your colleague, the Secretary General of the Arab League.

I would be very pleased to host a meeting in Denmark. I also plan to be visiting a number of countries in the Muslim world this year.

Yours sincerely,



Per Stig Møller