



THE MINISTER FOR  
FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Enclosure

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Date

6 January, 2006

Dear Secretary General,

Thank you for a frank and open discussion on the phone today. As I explained to you the Government of Denmark has carefully read the declaration of The Arab League of December 29, 2005, officially handed over to us on January 4, 2006.

In the declaration it is noted that the Arab League finds the Danish Government's reaction to the issue of the drawings in the Danish paper Jyllands-Posten inadequate. The messages conveyed in the declaration 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 Arab 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

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Secretary General of the League of Arab States.

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.

Tolerance, mutual respect and dialogue are crucial values in the Danish society. That is why – as you know – the Danish Government in 2003 launched the Partnership for Progress and Reform with the Arab world.

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 Arab circles have felt hurt and offended by the Danish newspaper's drawings of the Prophet Mohammed. In an Op Ed on January 4<sup>th</sup> 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 Organisation of the Islamic Conferences.

A similar letter has been sent to your colleague, the Secretary General of the Organisation of the Islamic Conferences.

I was very pleased to hear that you have intentions to visit Denmark this year – before or after Davos - as you were prevented from coming in 2005. I also plan to be visiting a number of countries in the Arab region this year.

Yours sincerely,



Per Stig Møller