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# EUROPEAN ISLAMOPHOBIA REPORT 2018

ENES BAYRAKLI • FARID HAFEZ (Eds)





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## 2018

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ISLAMOPHOBIA IN  
**DENMARK**  
NATIONAL REPORT 2018

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SIBEL ÖZCAN - ZEYNEP BANGERT



## The Authors

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## Executive Summary

In the autumn of 2018, SOS Racism described how the negative discourse on Muslims has created a differentiation between “Us vs. Them” in Denmark, where “Them” refers to Muslims in particular. The discrimination has also become visible in the employment area, since a research confirmed that job applicants with Middle Eastern-sounding names have to send 52% more applications to be invited for a job interview, even though they are as qualified as an applicant with a Danish name. The Danish version of the international movement SOS Racism anticipates that the increasing number of discriminatory bills and approaches, do not treat Danish Muslims equally compared to non-Muslim Danes. In the past year, the Muslim minority was once again highlighted as contradictory with Danish values and incompatible with “Danishness.” This was visible in the political agenda, the media, and the legislation. Accordingly, many bills and initiatives were aimed at Danish Muslims such as the ban on the wearing of face veils in public, also known as the burqa ban, and the mandatory handshake. The demonised image of Muslims has infiltrated parts of the population which resulted in 67 reported incidents of hate crimes in 2018 - the highest number ever recorded.

Although the negative discourse about Danish Muslims dominates the political agenda, as well as parts of society, and the efforts to balance the stigmatising rhetoric are not adequate, several NGOs, politicians, and enthusiastic civilians are trying to change the Islamophobic rhetoric and create a peaceful coexistence. The insistence of civilians on tolerance and multiculturalism is an attempt to handle cultural diversity through various initiatives and to contribute with a positive approach - as opposed to hate preachers and their idea of a homogenous Denmark.

In the struggle to combat Islamophobia in Denmark, it is particularly important to recognise the presence of the problem. It is possible to see this through evidence-based research and documentation of hate preachers’ attempts at creating fear and hatred of Danish Muslims. The lack of facts indicates that the attitude towards Muslims is based on prejudices created through the negative media picture, which is why it is extremely important that Muslims are actively involved as sources on topics connected to Islam.



## Sammendrag

SOS Racisme beskrev i efteråret 2018, hvorledes den negative diskurs om muslimer har skabt en differentiering mellem "os-og-dem", hvor "os" er den danske majoritet, mens "dem" udgøres af især muslimer. Diskriminationen er også blevet tydelig på arbejdsmarkedet, hvor en nylig undersøgelse bekræftede, at ansøgere med et mellem-østligt navn skal sende 52% flere ansøgninger for at blive indkaldt til en jobsamtale, selvom de kvalificerer sig ligeså vel som en ansøger med et dansk navn. Den danske udgave af den internationale bevægelse (SOS Racisme) foregriber, at det stigende antal af diskriminerende lovforslag og tiltag, som flere majoritetsdanskere knytter sig til, ikke holder danske muslimer lige for loven. I året der gik blev den muslimske minoritet endnu engang fremhævet som modstridende med danske værdisæt og ufornelige med danskhed, hvilket både var synlig i den politiske agenda, medierne samt lovgivningen. Således var mange lovforslag og tiltag rettet mod danske muslimer, hvilket bl.a. kom til udtryk igennem maskeringsforbuddet og kravet om håndtryk. Det dæmoniserede billede af muslimer er infiltreret hos dele af befolkningen, der i 2018 i højere grad end registreret før udsatte danske muslimer for hadforbrydelser.

Selvom den negative diskurs rettet mod danske muslimer optager den politiske dagsorden samt andre dele af samfundet og indsatsen mod den stigmatiserende retorik ikke synes balanceret, eksisterer der en række NGO'er, et antal politikere og entusiastiske borgere der forsøger at ændre den islamofobiske retorik og skabe fredelig sameksistens. Befolkningens insisteren på tolerance og multikulturalisme i forsøget på at håndtere kulturel diversitet gennem forskellige initiativer, bidrager med en positiv tilgang som modpol til hadprædikanter og deres ide om et homogent Danmark.

I forsøget på at bekæmpe Islamofobi i Danmark er det særdeles magtpåliggende, at problemet anerkendes som tilstedeværende. Det kan gøres igennem evidensbaseret forskning og en dokumentering af hadprædikanternes forsøg på at skabe frygt og had mod danske muslimer. Manglen på fakta indikerer, at holdningen til muslimer baseres på fordomme skabt gennem den negative mediefremstilling, hvorfor det er særdeles vigtigt, at muslimer aktivt inddrages som kilder i emner, der berører Islam.

## Country Profile

**Country:** Denmark

**Type of Regime:** Constitutional Monarchy

**Form of Government:** Parliamentarism

**Ruling Parties:** Danish Liberal Party, Liberal Alliance, and Conservative People's Party

**Opposition Parties:** Social Democratic Party, Danish Social-Liberal Party, Red-Green Alliance, Socialist People's Party, and Alternative.

**Last Elections:** Parliamentary election in June 2015. The Danish Liberal Party Venstre won the Prime Ministry post as the result of the win of the right-wing parties with 90 mandates and rules with a majority in the parliament with 52,3% of the votes.

**Total Population:** 5,8 million people (2018)

**Major Languages:** Danish

**Official Religion:** Protestant-Lutherans

**Statistics on Islamophobia:** According to the National Crime Prevention Centre, 67 religiously motivated incidents targeted Muslims in 2017. There is an increase of 11 incidents compared to 2016 and it represents almost half of all reported religiously motivated incidents in 2017.

**Statistics on Racism and Discrimination:** According to the National Crime Prevention Centre, 223 incidents based on racism were reported in 2017, compared to 140 in 2016.

**Major Religions (% of Population):** Protestant-Lutheran members of the church (83,1 %), Islam (5,3 %), Catholics (0,6 %).

**Muslim Population (% of Population):** 306.000 people, 5,3%.

**Main Muslim Community Organizations:** Dansk Islamisk Center (DIC), Dansk-Tyrkisk Islamisk Stiftelse, Det Islamiske Trossamfund (DIT), Muslimske Ungdom i Danmark (Munida).

**Main NGOs Combating Islamophobia:** Centre for Danish Muslim Relations, Danish Documentation Centre for Discrimination of Muslims, Sameksistens.dk, SOS Racisme

**Far Right Parties:** Danish People's Party (Dansk Folkeparti), Nye Borgerlige (The New Right), Stram Kurs (Tight line - it is not approved as a party yet).

**Far Right Movements:** Generation Identitær, SIAD (Stop Islamisation of Denmark), For Frihed (For Freedom, former PEGIDA).

**Far Right Terrorist Organisations:** N/A

**Limitations to Islamic practices**

- **Hijab Ban:** No
- **Halal Slaughter Ban:** No. However the Danish People's Party wanted a ban on

halal meat in institutions; this was rejected by the Minister of Education Merete Riisager.

- **Minaret Ban:** No. The Danish People's Party suggested a minaret ban; however, it was rejected by voting in 2017.
- **Circumcision Ban:** No
- **Burka Ban:** Yes. It went into effect on 1.08.2018.
- **Prayer Ban:** No. The proposal for a parliamentary resolution prohibiting prayer rooms in public educational institutions was rejected by voting in 2018.

## Introduction

The concept of Islam and the mentioning of Muslims in 2018 were once again - and perhaps even more - presented as in contradiction with the unity of Danish society. This was witnessed in politics, legislation, and in the media discourse. The inflammatory rhetoric on Muslims in the political debates has created a demonising image of Muslims, which in recent years has contributed to a hateful approach to Muslims in the public sphere. The rhetoric has thus led to legalisation against the verbal assault of Muslims. Furthermore, the media's focus and use of unsuitable sources contribute to an imbalance in the representation of Islam.<sup>1</sup> Thus, there is a lack of nuance in both politics and media coverage.

The Danish Parliament introduced a new scheme for quota migration in 2017, which implies that the Minister of Immigration and Integration Inger Støjberg determines the number of refugees that can be resettled each year in Denmark. The minister used this decision in 2018, when she announced that for that year Denmark would not accept any refugees selected according to the United Nations quota.<sup>2</sup> Although quota refugees are not necessarily Muslims, it can be assumed that there is correlation due to the association between refugees and Muslims, since the majority of refugees in Denmark originate from Muslim countries. Accordingly, in 2017, a member of the Danish People's Party said that if quota refugees were to be received again, Christian refugees would be selected.<sup>3</sup>

Related to the inflammatory rhetoric it could be relevant to add some considerations on the negative discourse and the injudicious use of terminology in the public debate. This is discussed in the latest edition of the journal *SOS Racism* where it is claimed that populism maintains a picture of a divided society when terms like "Us vs. Them" are used. "Us" refers to the Danish people as a homogeneous group and "Them" is especially related to Muslims and is presented negatively. The division does not advocate for democracy, but for ethnocracy. In democracy, all citizens are equal in the eyes of the law, while in ethnocracy the power is placed in the hands of one particular group. Denmark is ruled by democracy, but ethnocracy grows in the form of discriminatory legislation (e.g. the "Ghetto Package")<sup>4</sup> and the exaltation of the Danish ethnic group's culture by the law<sup>5</sup> (e.g. hand-

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1. Christian Birk, "Redaktør: Medierne Er For Dårige Til At Tale Med Muslimer I Debatten Om Islam", *Kristeligt Dagblad*, 21 April 2018, <https://www.kristeligt-dagblad.dk/debat/medierne-er-daarlige-til-tale-med-muslimer-i-debatten-om-islam>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

2. "Danmark Tager Ikke Imod Kvoteflygtninge I 2018", Udlændinge-og integrationsministeriet, <http://uim.dk/nyheder/2018-2018-10/danmark-tager-ikke-imod-kvoteflygtninge-i-2018>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

3. Frederik Fogde, "Hellere Kristne End Muslimske Flygtninge", *Kristeligt Dagblad*, 17 September 2017, <https://www.kristeligt-dagblad.dk/danmark/df-oensker-kristne-kvoteflygtninge>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

4. Regeringen, "Regeringen Vil Gøre Op Med Parallelsamfund", 1 March 2018, <https://www.regeringen.dk/nyheder/ghettoudspil/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

5. "Sprog og Handling", *SOS Racisme – Lige værdighed for alle*, p. 41.

shake)<sup>6</sup> details on both examples will be given in later sections. This differentiation in the social debate and referring to Muslims with negative and exclusionary terms could be a problem for the cohesion of the Danish society. With the tendency to show Muslims in negative contexts, a normalisation of everyday discrimination of Muslims in Denmark has occurred.

Although the negative discourse gets extensive attention, and dialogue does not appear to be on the agenda, which contributes to a distorted picture of Muslims, there are many organisations and enthusiasts who are challenging the Islamophobic rhetoric. In particular, civil society, certain politicians, NGOs, and state-founded institutions appeared once again from a humanistic point of view and presented new ways to counter the hate.

## Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

### Physical and Verbal Attacks

In September 2018, the National Crime Prevention Centre published the third annual report on hate crimes. The report overviews episodes connected to hate crime reported in 2017; however, the Institute for Human Rights claims that victims rarely report hate crimes. One of the reasons for this is that they do not trust that the allegation will be taken seriously.<sup>7</sup> Out of 142 registered religiously motivated violations, 67 incidents targeted Muslims, which represents almost half of the incidents in that category.<sup>8</sup> It is a large proportion despite the fact that Muslims make up only 5,3% of the population.<sup>9</sup> The report shows an increase of 11 incidents compared to 2016. A large share of the hate crimes against Muslims appeared in the form of hate speech and threats on the Internet.<sup>10</sup> It is assumed that hate crimes categorised under ethnicity and hence motivated by racism could contain a proportion of incidents that may also have undertones of Islamophobia.

The annual report on hate crimes gives a few examples of some of the incidents that Danish Muslims have reported in 2017. For instance, a victim explains how he was asked by three men whether he was a Muslim, to which he answered “yes”. The

6. Christoffer Badse, “Misforhold Mellem Håndtrykkrav Og Tildeling Af Statsborgerskab”, Institut for Menneskerettigheder, 8 October, 2018, <https://menneskeret.dk/nyheder/misforhold-mellem-haandtrykkrav-tildeling-statsborgerskab>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

7. Nanna Magrethe Krusaa, “DEBAT: Ofre for hadforbrydelser er mere end tal. Der er mennesker bag”, Institut for Menneskerettigheder, 22 March 2018, p. 1, <https://menneskeret.dk/nyheder/debat-ofre-hadforbrydelser-ere-mere-tal-mennesker-bag>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

8. Nationalt Forbyggelsescenter (NFC), “Hadforbrydelser I 2018”, Rigspolitiet, September 2018, p. 12.

9. Brian Arly Jacobsen, “Hvor mange muslimer bor der i Danmark”, Religion.dk, 8 February 2018, <https://www.religion.dk/religionsanalysen/hvor-mange-indvander-lever-i-danmark>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

10. Nationalt Forbyggelsescenter (NFC), “Hadforbrydelser I 2018”, p. 15.

men attacked him, hitting him across the body. On a bus, another victim was told that he would be killed because he was a “fucking Muslim.”<sup>11</sup>



Figure 1: Screenshots of a private video. Here one of the men can be seen, exhibiting threatening behaviour while pointing at the young woman in a niqab.

Another example of a religiously motivated incident took place in October 2018, when a young woman in a niqab was verbally assaulted and pushed by several men in a Danish supermarket (Figure 1). She was told that she was ugly and had to go home to her own country.<sup>12</sup> Subsequently, she was asked to leave the supermarket by an employee. She reported the case to the police; however, the investigation stopped in November on the basis that it would not be possible to identify the perpetrators (Figure 2). In a correspondence with the victim she stated that the reason for ending the investigation seems strange to her because the police are in possession of the original video where all faces are visible and uncensored.



Figure 2: Letter from the police declaring the case is closed.

In connection with another episode, in which a Muslim woman was verbally assaulted due to her hijab, Brian Arly Jacobsen, associate professor at the Department of Multicultural and Regional Studies at the University of Copenhagen, explains how it is especially Muslim women who are victims of hate crimes. He further believes that the public debate is pushing boundaries of what is acceptable to say. In particular, he believes that Danish politicians are responsible for the expansion of

11. Nationalt Forbyggelsescenter (NFC), “Hadforbrydelser I 2018”, p. 18.

12. Henrik Lund, “Kvinde I Niqab Overfuset I Århusiansk Varehus: Tag Lortet Af, Du Er Grim”, Århus Stiftstidende, 1 December 18, <https://stiften.dk/aarhus/Kvinde-i-niqab-overfuset-i-aarhusiansk-varehus-Tag-lortet-af-du-er-grim/artikel/546865>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

boundaries. Last year's legislative proposals related to Muslims contributed to the aggressive discourse.<sup>13</sup>

The Danish Human Rights Institute calls for a national action plan to ensure co-ordinated and long-term efforts to prevent and combat hate crimes. They refer to Sweden and Britain that already launched such a plan.<sup>14</sup> At the same time, the police states that hate crimes have high priority with increased focus on registration and management in order to conduct operational efforts to minimise that type of crime. Police officers are educated in hate crimes as well. Hate crime has become a part of training in police education and is also offered as continuing education for employed police officers.<sup>15</sup>

## Employment

Official data collecting based on religious belonging is illegal in Denmark, which makes it impossible to collect data from the state equality bodies about the discrimination of Muslims. Neither has civil society made any research on the topic. As a result, evidence of the discrimination of Danish Muslims is only to be found in reports and research about general discrimination in Denmark. Danish Muslims are primarily categorised as non-Western immigrants and descendants, because most Danish Muslims originate from non-Western countries including Turkey, Syria, Palestine, etc.

A research by Malte Dahl and Niels Krog that included 800 fictive job applications to 400 actual job postings, with an equal amount of fictive minority and majority male and female names, revealed the inequality in hiring based on ethnic stigma in Denmark. The paper that was published in the *European Sociological Review* in 2018 shows that the fictive job applicants with Middle Eastern-sounding names have to send 52% more applications to be invited for a job interview, even though they are as qualified and suitable for the job position as a fictive applicant with a 'Danish' name.<sup>16</sup> The findings made big headlines such as "Danish Employers choose 'Mads' Instead of 'Muhammed'" when the research was just published; the headlines used the applicants' names to indicate their religious differences.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, the paper shows that for jobs that are

13. Olav Fonager, "Ekspert Efter Overfusning Af Hibba: Der Er Sket En Stigning I Antallet Af Hadforbrydelser", TV2/Fyn, 22 August 2018, <https://www.tv2fyn.dk/artikel/ekspert-efter-overfusning-af-hibba-det-er-sket-en-stigning-i-antallet-af-hadforbrydelser>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

14. Nanna Magrethe Krusaa, "DEBAT: Ofre For Hadforbrydelser Er Mere End Tal. Der Er Mennesker Bag", Institut for Menneskerettigheder, 22 March 2018, <https://menneskeret.dk/nyheder/debat-ofre-hadforbrydelser-er-mere-tal-mennesker-bag>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

15. "Langt Flere Sager Med Hadforbrydelser", Dansk Politi, <https://www.dansk-politi.dk/artikler/2018/september/langt-flere-sager-med-hadforbrydelser>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

16. Malte Røkkjær Dahl and Niels Krog, "Experimental Evidence of Discrimination in the Labour Market: Intersections between Ethnicity, Gender, and Socio-Economic Status", Department of Political Science, University of Copenhagen, 2018.

17. Kenneth Lund and Poul Aarøe Pedersen "Danske Arbejdsgivere Vælger 'Mads' Frem For 'Muhammed'", Politikken, 9 December 2016, <https://politiken.dk/debat/art5731006/Danske-arbejdsgivere-vaelger-'Mads'-frem-for-'Muhammed'>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

male-dominated, men with minority background are only invited to 19,5% of the applied postings, while 36,5% of the men with majority background and an equally qualifying application are invited. For job postings that are female-dominated, females with majority names are invited 34,5% of the time, while females with minority names are invited 29,1% of the time. This shows that prejudice and discrimination is worse for men with non-Western names than it is for the women of the same group.<sup>18</sup>

While discrimination in employment based on non-Western names is visible in research in Denmark, it is difficult to measure concrete discrimination based on Islamophobia. However, personal reports about Islamophobic experiences by Danish Muslims show that discrimination in employment is widespread among Danish Muslims. An article in *Information*, which was published in November 2018, shows examples of discrimination against Muslim workers in the health sector, where patients refuse to be treated by employees with darker skin, hijab, or Middle Eastern names.<sup>19</sup> One of the examples in the article is based on a woman with Turkish roots, who works as a laboratory technician and has experienced Islamophobic discrimination because of her hijab. Several times her patients refused treatment, called her names, and provoked her with questions like why she is choosing “to choke herself” with reference to her hijab.<sup>20</sup> Another male doctor with Iraqi roots was told by a patient that “she’d rather die than get treated by him”, while another female patient didn’t want to shake his hand saying, “I can’t shake hands with someone like you”.<sup>21</sup> The article also points out that incidents like these are ignored because racism and discrimination are not covered by official research. Furthermore, it claims that researchers in this field are turned down by research institutions because it is assumed that discrimination and racism are not big problems – yet experiences show that discrimination, racism, and Islamophobia are big and growing problems in Denmark.

## Education

While there have not been any major issues about Islamic content in educational material at schools, a novel written by the former MP Özlem Cekic drew negative attention in January 2018. The novel for school children introduces the younger brother of the main character, who is going to be circumcised. This was heavily criticised by Danes for creating a “very circumcision-friendly and circumcision-positive picture” and was evaluated as being almost like propaganda.<sup>22</sup>

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18. “Mellemfolkeligt Samvirke – ActionAid Denmark: ”Dokumentation: Diskrimination i Danmark”, <https://www.ms.dk/arbejde/danmark/antidiskrimination/dokumentation>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

19. Merle Baere, “Jeg Vil Ikke Behandles Af Sådan En Som Dig”, *Information*, 24 November 2018, <https://www.information.dk/moti/2018/11/behandles-saadan>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

20. Ibid.

21. Ibid.

22. Sally Frydenlund Larsen, “Den Blonde Pige Er Ikke Alene: Fire Gange Vi Diskuterede Krænkelser I 2018”, *DR*, 19 December 2018, [https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/indland/den-blonde-pige-er-ikke-alene-fire-gange-vi-diskuterede-krænkelser-i-2018?cid=soc\\_facebook\\_drnyheder\\_ddoastq9&fbclid=IwAR2VtIjbpAX\\_MTR7RY1g0ITf9QN-PHqbauDFjHSDWfpyUU6OwcPr5F8QGNM](https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/indland/den-blonde-pige-er-ikke-alene-fire-gange-vi-diskuterede-krænkelser-i-2018?cid=soc_facebook_drnyheder_ddoastq9&fbclid=IwAR2VtIjbpAX_MTR7RY1g0ITf9QN-PHqbauDFjHSDWfpyUU6OwcPr5F8QGNM), (Access date: 3 September 2019).



In January 2018, the Danish People's Party petitioned to ban prayer rooms in public educational institutions again. The motivation behind the petition was that Marie Krarup from the Danish People's Party claimed that prayer rooms support radical environments that impose social control on Muslim students.<sup>23</sup> The petition was not supported by other parties, but from specific politicians. The Danish People's Party reopened the petition in February 2018, when it was turned down again.<sup>24</sup> The Minister of Education Merete Riisager from the Liberal Alliance, and other politicians like Mattias Tesfaye from the Social Democrats, agreed with the petition, while several principals emphasised that there are no signs of group pressure, radicalisation, or social control.<sup>25</sup> The reason behind the petition was not seen as an actual problem by the educational institutions, where only 10 out of 37 universities answered positively to having a prayer room, and most of them were primarily used by Christian student organisations. A ban for Krarup means that Muslim students would not be able to have a room to pray in, while Christian students would be able to borrow a classroom during the breaks to eat together followed by communal prayer.<sup>26</sup>

Later in the year, the focus on prayer rooms moved on to budget cuts in state aid for Free Muslim Schools where the majority of students have foreign background.<sup>27</sup> Since the federal inspection claimed to have found "Jihad-themed material" in the copy room at one of the schools, Muslim Free Schools were subjected to heavy surveillance.<sup>28</sup> Since then, the specific school was shut down, and other Free Schools have been subjected to austerity measures. In May 2018, the government inserted background checks and deprived state aid from several Free Schools that were not meeting the requirements of the Free School Law. This meant the closure of certain Muslim Free Schools.<sup>29</sup>

In January 2018, the Ministry of Education published the *Knowledge-Supporting Report* about the democratic formation at youth education institutions, which was

23. Elisabeth Yskes, "DF Sætter Bederum På Dagsordenen", Kristeligt Dagblad, 24 January 2018, <https://www.kristeligt-dagblad.dk/kirke-tro/df-saetter-bederum-paa-dagsordenen>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

24. Danish Parliament, "Motion B 57, Turned Down", 17 April 2018, <https://www.ft.dk/samling/20171/bslutningsforslag/b57/tidsplan.htm>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

25. Morten Munkholm, "DF Foreslår Igen At Forbyde Bederum: At Skyde Myg Med Kanoner". Berlingske, 3 February 2018, <https://www.berlingske.dk/politik/df-foreslaar-igen-at-forbyde-bederum-at-skyde-myg-med-kanoner>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

26. Ibid.

27. Danish Parliament, "Motion B 68, Lapsed", 28 March 2018, <https://www.ft.dk/samling/20171/bslutningsforslag/B68/bilag.htm>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

28. Jens Anton Bjørnager and Henrik Jensen, "Københavnske Skole Med Jihadbøger Blev Lukket – Nu Åbner Ny Friskole I Samme Lokaler", Berlingske, 14 July 2018, <https://www.berlingske.dk/samfund/koebenhavnske-skole-med-jihadboeger-blev-lukket-nu-aabner-ny-friskole-i-samme>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

29. Jens Anton Bjørnager, "Lukning Af Tre Muslimske Friskoler Bekymrer", Berlingske, 6 August 2018, <https://apps-infomedia-dk.ep.fjernadgang.kb.dk/mediearkiv/link?articles=e6d912ce>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

based on a survey conducted in September 2017 that was heavily criticised.<sup>30</sup> Many, both Muslim and non-Muslim students, teachers and principals denied any existence of such a problem and boycotted the survey claiming that it was made to examine social control targeting Muslim students.<sup>31</sup> The survey was criticised because of controversial and one-sided questions like whether students experience that Muslim students are victims of social control and exclusion if they do not follow Islamic rules.<sup>32</sup>

## Politics

The majority of the current parliament constantly contributes to creating suspicion around Muslims and Islam; when politicians simultaneously choose words like ghettos and parallel societies, they use negative associations, thus linking them to the Muslim minority.<sup>33</sup> The year 2018 was marked by abusive opinions, negative terms, and exclusionary political campaigns targeting Muslims. Steen Petersen, former chairman of the Employment and Integration Committee in Faxe Municipality, urged the Spanish police to shoot migrants coming into Europe. After the controversial posting, he chose to resign.<sup>34</sup>

Inger Støjberg, the Danish Minister for Immigration and Integration, created fear among the population when she wrote a blog post in summer 2018, where she claimed the Danish population was at risk when the Muslim minority was fasting during Ramadan. She claimed that it would cause practical, safety, and productivity challenges to modern Danish society when the Muslim minority would abstain from drinking and eating during the day. The news received a lot of attention, both in Denmark and internationally, and created debate and criticism as her claims were without scientifically substantiated data.<sup>35</sup>

One of 2018's most controversial political campaigns originated from the Danish People's Party. A cartoon campaign had the following exclusionary message: "Drop your headscarf and become a member of Denmark" (Figure 3). The person on the drawing represents Martin Henriksen, a member of the Danish Parliament and one

30. Ministry of Education, "Ledere På Ungdomsuddannelserne Oplever Udfordringer Med Elever Med Udemokratiske Værdier", 31 January 2018, <https://www.uvm.dk/aktuelt/nyheder/uvm/2018/jan/180131-ledere-paa-ungdomsuddannelserne-oplever-udfordringer-med-elever-med-udemokratiske-vaerdier>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

31. Christian Birk, "Indsats Mod Religiøs Kontrol Møder Kritik", *Kristeligt Dagblad*, 14 March 2018, <https://www.kristeligt-dagblad.dk/danmark/indsats-mod-religioes-kontrol-moeder-kritik>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

32. Ministry of Education, "Vidensunderstøttelse af Dialogforum Om Demokratisk Dannelse På Ungdomsuddannelserne", Rambøll Management Consulting, (January 2018), p. 9, <https://gymnasieskolen.dk/sites/default/files/180131-Tabelrapport---demokratisk-dannelse-paa-ungdomsuddannelserne.pdf>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

33. Jette Møller, "Sprog og Handling", *SOS Racisme – Lige værdighed for alle*, Tidskrift nr. 119, p. 6-8.

34. Thomas Albrechtsen, "DF'er Trækker Sig Efter Kontroversielt Facebook-Opslag", *TV Øst*, 27 August 2018, <https://www.tv2east.dk/artikel/dfer-traekker-sig-som-formand-efter-kontroversielt-opslag-paa-facebook>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

35. Charlotte Price Persson, "Hvad Siger Forskningen Om Støjbergs Ramadan-Påstand?", *Videnskab.dk*, 23 May 2018, <https://videnskab.dk/kultur-samfund/hvad-siger-forskningen-om-stoejbergs-ramadan-paastand>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

of the most visible members of the Danish People's Party. In response, Jens Rohde, a member of the European Parliament for the Danish Social-Liberal Party, reposted the picture and wrote on his Twitter post, "Throw away your inner racist and join the Danish Social-Liberal Party."<sup>36</sup> Martin Henriksen participated in the TV program *Debatten* (The Debate) in December 2018 on the state-funded TV station DR2, where he stated that people should stop making it sound as if immigrants from Muslim countries have been an enrichment to the Danish economy.<sup>37</sup> The above-mentioned statement is discriminatory and contributes to the formation of a generalising, negative image of Muslims. In 2018, the Danish People's Party also demanded serving pork in schools and institutions. At the same time, they wanted a ban on halal meat in institutions;<sup>38</sup> however, this was rejected by the Minister of Education Merete Riisager.<sup>39</sup>

In the September edition of the Danish People's Party's magazine, words related to Muslims, such as halal, Islam, Muslim were mentioned more than 12 times. The reference to Muslims occurs in a context of negative terms.<sup>40</sup> The New Right, a right-wing party founded in 2015, also does not hold back from negative terms about Islam and the Muslim minority in Denmark. Pernille Vermund, the chairman of the New Right, stated that no one who originates from a Muslim country that is over-represented in crime statistics should be able to obtain Danish citizenship.<sup>41</sup> She also made it clear that assimilation is the criterion for obtaining Danish citizenship.<sup>42</sup>



Figure 3: One of the pictures from the campaign of the Danish People's Party with the message "Drop your headscarf and become a member of Denmark".

36. Jens Rohde, Twitter, 4 September 2018, [https://twitter.com/rohde\\_jens/status/1036897770253295617?lang=da](https://twitter.com/rohde_jens/status/1036897770253295617?lang=da), (Access date: 3 September 2019).

37. *Debatten*, "En Helt Ny Asylpolitik", DR2, 6 December 2018, <https://www.dr.dk/tv/se/debatten/debatten-dr2/debatten-2018-12-06#!/37:01>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

38. "DF: Skoler Skal Servere Svinekød", *Folkeskolen.dk*, 30 May 2018, <https://www.folkeskolen.dk/636204/df-skoler-skal-servere-svinekoed>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

39. Undervisningsministeriet, <https://www.ft.dk/samling/20171/spoergsmaal/s836/svar/1495292/1905579.pdf>, 2017-18 S 836 endeligt svar, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

40. *Dansk Folkeblad*, September 22. årgang, 5/2018, [https://danskfolkeparti.dk/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/DANSK-FOLKEBLAD-5-2018\\_web.pdf](https://danskfolkeparti.dk/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/DANSK-FOLKEBLAD-5-2018_web.pdf), (Access date: 3 September 2019).

41. Pernille Vermund, "Islam Er Ikke En Dansk Værdi", *Nye Borgerlige*, 24 August 2018, <https://nyeborgerlige.dk/islam-er-ikke-en-dansk-vaerdi/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

42. Pernille Vermund, "De Vil Ikke Være Danske", *Nye Borgerlige*, 19 December 2018, <https://nyeborgerlige.dk/de-vil-ikke-vaere-danske/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

A discussion took place when Kenneth Kristensen Berth, a member of the Danish People's Party, posted a picture of a cake that was made for the Muslim Eid and was for sale in Bilka (Danish chain of hypermarkets) on Facebook (Figure 4). He regarded the cake as an expression of an increasing Islamisation of Denmark, where Islam is increasingly occupying the public space. Several public figures and politicians responded to the criticism and expressed disagreement.<sup>43</sup>



Figure 4: Kenneth Kristensen Berth's Facebook post on an Eid cake.

## Media

In the wake of a new analysis in 2017 which concluded that the media lack nuances in dealing with Danish Muslims and Islam in general, Bent Dahl Jensen, who authored a study on the appearance of Muslims in the media, stated the need for Muslims to contribute to the debate. The Internet-based newspaper *Sameksistens.dk* compared seven newspaper articles about Islam and Muslims. The analysis concluded that it is more likely for politicians to be used as sources instead of Muslims. Similarly, organisations that represent only a very small proportion of Muslims get attention and, therefore, the majority of Muslims are not represented. Even though Bent Dahl Jensen encourages Muslims to participate in the debate, he also explains that some Muslims do not feel fairly treated: they are good enough to contribute when it comes to distancing from terrorism but not good enough in other contexts.<sup>44</sup>

43. Emil Eller, "Bilka Efter Ballade Om Ramadan-Kage: Vi Har Kager Til Enhver Anledning", DR.dk, 18 June 2018, <https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/politik/bilka-efter-ballade-om-ramadan-kage-vi-har-kager-til-enhver-anledning>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

44. Christian Birk, "Redaktør: Medierne Er For Dårlige Til At Tale Med Muslimer I Debatten Om Islam", Kristeligt Dagblad, 21 April 2018, <https://www.kristeligt-dagblad.dk/debat/medierne-er-daarlige-til-tale-med-muslimer-i-debatten-om-islam>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

Danish-Iranian Jaleh Tavakoli is known for her criticism of Islam, but when she wrote a post on her blog titled “Even Baby Sex Is Mainstream Islam”<sup>45</sup>, she was met with resistance from certain media (Figure 5). The blog post was published in *Jyllands-Posten*, which is known for its anti-Muslim bias and their contribution to the Prophet Muhammed cartoons controversy in 2005. The news manager of Tv2 claimed, among others, that the post was generalising and deeply insulting to Islam. At the same time, he also emphasised that news platforms are responsible for the published posts containing a minimum of truth and complying with certain standards.<sup>46</sup>



Figure 5: Jaleh Tavakoli's blog post "Even Baby Sex Is Mainstream Islam".

One of the major media events in 2018 that concerned Muslims was when a group of Muslims celebrated the Muslim Eid with a bonfire. The episode went viral in the news where it was alleged that they had violated a fire ban, which at the time was valid throughout parts of Denmark. The story became even more dramatic as the Muslims supposedly attacked the police with wooden sticks. “Den Korte Avis”, a

45. Jaleh Tavakoli, “Selv Babysex Er Mainstream Islam”, Jyllands-Posten Debat, 2 October 2018, <https://jyllands-posten.dk/debat/blogs/jalehtavakoli/ECE10914384/selv-babysex-er-mainstream-islam/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

46. Lise Mailand, “Blogger Kæder Islam Og Pædofili Sammen: - Det Er Groft Formærmende”, TV2 Presselogen, 7 October 2018, <http://nyheder.tv2.dk/samfund/2018-10-07-blogger-kaeder-islam-og-paedofili-sammen-det-er-groft-formaermende>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

Danish news blog, added fuel to the fire with fake news. The rhetoric they use about Muslims contributes to the alienation of the Muslim minority in Danish society. Many have claimed that the language is exclusionary when they use alienating terms and expressions in their articles such as “now it turns out that the ban obviously applies only to ordinary Danes and not to Muslims” and “so there is a difference between people in Denmark”. Aggressive Muslims can obviously break the rules that all of us must comply with”.<sup>47</sup> Subsequently, it appeared that the police had not been attacked and that the group of Muslims actually had been granted permission to have the bonfire.<sup>48</sup>

The DR program *Debatten* (The Debate), which hosts debates about current news between several people with different attitudes to a given subject on a weekly basis, is one of the news platforms challenging anti-Muslim racism by letting people with a Muslim background present a fact-bound contribution. News debates like these help shed light on the image of Islam and Muslims in Denmark, and more and more highly educated and eloquent Muslims emerge in the debate - contrary to the media’s Muslim-critical propaganda.

## Justice System

There has been a significant increase in legislative proposals, with the intention of restricting Muslim citizens’ freedom in recent years and 2018 was no exception. According to the Danish Documentation Centre for Discrimination of Muslims, a proposal or law is considered discriminatory against Muslims and restrictive towards Muslim citizens’ freedom - and human rights - when the background or purpose of the proposal or law is aimed at Muslims. This is expressed through political statements in the media in connection to the proposal’s presentation or by the proposal’s consideration in the parliament.<sup>49</sup>

Since 2017, more than ten resolutions aimed at Muslims have been put forward in parliament. The majority of the resolutions were proposed by the Danish People’s Party. The resolutions cover different aspects of Muslim lifestyle, and include, for example, religious garments: “that citizens may not wear a headscarf on their driving license photograph for religious reasons” (rejected in 2018), “prohibiting the use of significant religious symbols for students and teachers in primary and lower secondary school” (rejected in 2018), and “a ban on all public employees from wearing religious headwear at work”. Some of the other resolutions are based on the limitation of Muslim citizens’

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47. Poul Erik Andersen, “Rasende Muslimer Jog Politik Og Brandvæsen På Flugt – Trods Afbørlændingsforbud Havde De Tændt Bål For At Fejre Muslims Eid”, *DenKorteAvis.dk*, 17 June 2018, <https://denkorteavis.dk/2018/rasende-muslimer-jog-politik-og-brandvaesen-paa-flugt-trods-afboerlaendingsforbud-havde-de-taendt-baal-i-gribskov-for-at-fejre-muslimsk-eid/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

48. Ritzau / Nyheder, “Muslimer Tændte Bål Trods Forbud: Nu Kommer Politiet Med En Overraskende Indrømmelse”, *Ekstra Bladet*, 6 July 2018, <https://ekstrabladet.dk/112/muslimer-taendte-baal-trods-forbud-nu-kommer-politiet-med-overraskende-indroemmelse/7225255>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

49. “Den Lovgivende Magt”, Dansk Dokumentationscenter for Diskrimination af Muslimer, <http://dokumentationscenter.dk/dansk-lovgivning/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

freedom rights, such as “change of rules for student distribution at upper secondary schools”<sup>50</sup> and “a ban on prayer rooms at public educational institutions”.<sup>51</sup>

In addition, several new legislative proposals concerning Muslims and new adopted laws were presented in 2018. One of the more remarkable proposals was the proposal for changes to the law on day care. The substance of the proposal is based on the discrimination against Muslim children due to the deprivation of Muslim parents’ right to choose freely where their children will go to day care.<sup>52</sup> The proposal was adopted by favourable vote in December.<sup>53</sup>

Probably, the most discussed law was the burqa ban, which was put into practice in August 2018. The parties which supported the ban and voted for it include the Liberal Party of Denmark, the Conservative People’s Party, the Danish Social Liberal Party, the Danish People’s Party, and the Social Democrats.<sup>54</sup> However, it is estimated that only between 100 and 200 women wear burka/niqab in Denmark.<sup>55</sup> A violation of the ban triggers a fine of 1,000 Danish Kroner (134 EURO), and the fine will increase if the ban is subsequently violated again.<sup>56</sup> The Danish Institute for Human Rights views the ban as an intervention of the right to self-determination and freedom of religion.<sup>57</sup>

In early 2018, the Danish government introduced a new set of laws to regulate life in low-income<sup>58</sup> and heavy Muslim enclaves, known as the “Ghetto Package”. Some of the proposals were rejected as being too radical, such as one saying that “ghetto children” should have curfew after 8 p.m. and should be fitted with electronic ankle bracelets.<sup>59</sup> The purpose of the Ghetto Package is claimed to be to reduce

50. “B 48 Forslag Til Folketingsbeslutning Om Ændring Af Reglerne For Elevfordeling På Gymnasierne”, Folketinget, 26 January 2018, <https://www.ft.dk/samling/20171/bslutningsforslag/b48/index.htm>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

51. “B 57 Forslag Til Folketingsbeslutning Om Forbud Mod Bederum På Offentlige Uddannelsesinstitutioner”, Folketinget, 22 February 2018, <https://www.ft.dk/samling/20171/bslutningsforslag/b57/index.htm>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

52. “Den Lovgivende Magt – Lovforslag”, Dansk Dokumentationscenter for Diskrimination af Muslimer, <http://dokumentationscenter.dk/dansk-lovgivning/lovforslag/2018-2019/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

53. “L7 Forslag Til Lov Om Ændring Af Dagtilbudsloven Og Lov Om En Børne- Og Ungeydelse”, Folketinget, 13 December 2018, <https://www.ft.dk/samling/20181/lovforslag/l7/beh3/forhandling.htm#t68924C542233449782137DDB-3807CA3Atab2> (Access date: 3 September 2019).

54. “Afstemning nr. 452, 2017-18”, Folketinget, <https://www.ft.dk/samling/20171/afstem/452.htm>, (Access date: 3 September).

55. Jon Hornemann Hahn, “Få Muslimske Kvinder I Danmark Bærer Niqab Eller Burka”, *Bias*, 8 December 2018.

56. Rikke Gjøøl Mansø, “Nu Er Det Vedtaget: Fremover Udløser Det En Bøde At Bære Burka Og Niqab På Gaden”, *DR*, 31 May 2018, <https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/politik/nu-er-det-vedtaget-fremover-udloeser-det-en-boede-baere-burka-og-niqab-paa-gaden>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

57. Christoffer Basde, “Lovligt, Men Problematisk Tildækningsforbud”, *Institut For Menneskerettigheder*, 6 March 2018, <https://menneskeret.dk/nyheder/lovligt-problematisk-tildaekningsforbud>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

58. Regeringen, “Regeringen Vil Gøre Op Med Parallelsamfund”, 1 March, 2018, <https://www.regeringen.dk/nyheder/ghettoudspil/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

59. Ellen Barry and Martin Selsoe Sørensen, “In Denmark, Harsh New Laws for Immigrant Ghettos”, *The New York Times*, 1 July 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/07/01/world/europe/denmark-immigrant-ghettos.html>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).



the effects of parallel society and create better integration. This should be done with, among others, the following initiatives: greater penalties for crime, less money from the public sector, and restrictions on how to raise children (school and day care, etc.) In total, there are 22 initiatives that are believed will contribute to achieving the government's desired goals.

Just before the end of the year, two new decisions were reached. The autumn's major political debate on the handshake was approved in December 2018. The government and the Danish People's Party voted for a change of law, which means that handshakes with the local mayor are mandatory at the citizenship ceremony if one wants to be a Danish citizen.<sup>60</sup> The law has the undertones of being aimed at Muslims because a share of Muslims refuse to shake hands with the opposite sex. The Danish Institute for Human Rights estimates there is risk of the European Court of Human Rights considering the handshake law as an indirect discrimination based on religion.<sup>61</sup>

By the end of 2018, a majority consisting of the Liberal Party of Denmark, the Liberal Alliance, the Conservative People's Party, and Danish People's Party voted for a new proposal to be adopted. In the future, the island of Lindholm is going to house deported criminal asylum seekers. Although the adoption does not directly concern Muslims, members of the Danish People's Party have referred to the island's new residents in a very unfortunate way. Erik Høgh-Sørensen, regional council member in Nordjylland, and parliamentary candidate for the Danish People's Party, wrote on a debate that "at Lindholm, pig should be on the menu. Every day. Morning, noon, evening. And for late night snack".<sup>62</sup> The Danish People's Party also made a controversial video with an animated figure of a man with a dark complexion and Muslim headwear sailing to the island (figure 6).<sup>63</sup> The video was criticised and was accused of being indecent. Subsequently, the newspaper *Berlingske* published an article claiming that the government's plans for Lindholm have a poor prospect of being upheld by the Supreme Court's normal practice in this matter, and, in addition, will be contradictory to the European Convention on Human Rights.<sup>64</sup>

60. Rasmus Lindegård and Johan Blem Larsen, "Håndtryk For Statsborgerskab: De Første Ni Vil Alle Give Hånd Ved Ny Ceremoni", DR, 20 December 2018, <https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/politik/haandtryk-statsborgerskab-de-forste-ni-vil-alle-give-haand-ved-ny-ceremoni>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

61. Christoffer Badse, "Misforhold Mellem Håndtrykskrav Og Tildeling Af Statsborgerskab", Institut for Menneskerettigheder, 8 October 2018, <https://menneskeret.dk/nyheder/misforhold-mellem-haandtrykskrav-tildeling-statsborgerskab>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

62. Morten Madsen, "DF-Regionsrådsmedlem: De Skal Servere Svin Morgen, Middag Og Aften På Lindholm", Information, 17 December, 2018, <https://www.information.dk/indland/2018/12/df-regionsraadsmedlem-servere-svin-morgen-middag-aften-paa-lindholm>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

63. Dansk Folkeparti, Twitter, 30 November 2018, <https://twitter.com/danskdf1995/status/1068528638834798593?lang=da>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

64. Helene Kristine Holst, "Højesteret Trækker Tæppet Væk Under Regeringens Ønske Om At Gøre Tålte Ophold Utålelige", *Berlingske*, 30 December 2018, <https://www.berlingske.dk/politik/hojesteret-traekker-taeppeet-væk-under-regeringens-oenske-om-at-goere>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).





Figure 6: Screenshot of the video by the Danish People's Party showing an animated figure of a man with a dark complexion and Muslim headwear on an island.

## Internet

“Danishness” has been and is still a very discussed subject. Especially in the last few years, it became a popular and an important topic for politicians, citizens, and minorities in Denmark.<sup>65</sup> The term is being used by politicians as a goal for the integration strategy, and minorities are being measured on their “Danishness” in order to be recognised as Danes. Non-Western minorities are specifically targeted, especially because some right-wing politicians are claiming that Muslim culture and religion is incompatible with “Danishness”. Therefore, the Internet is a very important tool for both the demand for “Danishness”, but also for the minorities who want to prove its proponents wrong by creating inclusive campaigns, hashtags, and other initiatives. While some of the hate is spread on different social media platforms, it is also cultivated in international forums like *4chan*, where “Danes share their hateful utterances and calls for violence” against minority groups including Muslims (figure 7 and 8).<sup>66</sup>

65. Andreas Marklund, “Analyse: Der Har Aldrig Været Konsensus Om Danskheden Og De Nationale Værdier”, DR.dk, 3 November 2016, <https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/kultur/historie/analyse-der-har-aldrig-vaeret-konsensus-om-danskheden-og-de-nationale>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

66. P1 orientering, “Udryd Jøder, Muslimer Og Homoer’ - Her Dyrker Danske Unge Vold Og Had På Nettet”, DR.dk, 27 November 2018, <https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/indland/udryd-joeder-muslimer-og-homoer-her-dyrker-danske-unge-vold-og-had-paa-nettet>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).



Figure 7: Headline from the homepage of the online newspaper of Denmark's Radio's: "Destroy Jews, Muslims and Gays".



Figure 8: Screenshot from anti-Islam pages on Facebook, where followers utter comments like "Tear the whole shit down with its content, thanks", with allusion to Muslims who may be inside the mosques.

Also, right-wing politicians like Pernille Vermund use their party websites to regularly share their othering opinions about Islam and Muslims, pointing out that neither Islam or Muslims are welcome in Denmark.<sup>67</sup> Mette Thiesen – also a politician from the New Right – used the Internet to share a false story on her Facebook page, claiming without any evidence that there were "armed sharia guards" at the annual open *iftar* event in the Town Square in Copenhagen (figure 9).<sup>68</sup> The story was shared by the wider public and created a negative atmosphere against Muslims until Thiesen was reported to the police by the security company for spreading false information about them. By that point in time, her Facebook post had already created a big storm among many citizens who did not question her story.

67. Pernille Vermund, "Det Har Alt Med Islam At Gøre", NyeBorgerlige [www.nyeborgerlige.dk](http://www.nyeborgerlige.dk), 14 December 2018, <https://nyeborgerlige.dk/det-har-alt-med-islam-at-goere/>, (Access date: 17 December 2018).

68. Michael Højgaard and Oliver Kjaerhauge Okkels, "FAKTATJEK: Ingen Bevæbnede Sharia-Vagter På Rådhuspladsen", DR, 14 June 2018, <https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/indland/faktatjek-ingen-bevaebnede-sharia-vagter-paa-raadhus-pladsen> (Access date: 3 September 2019).

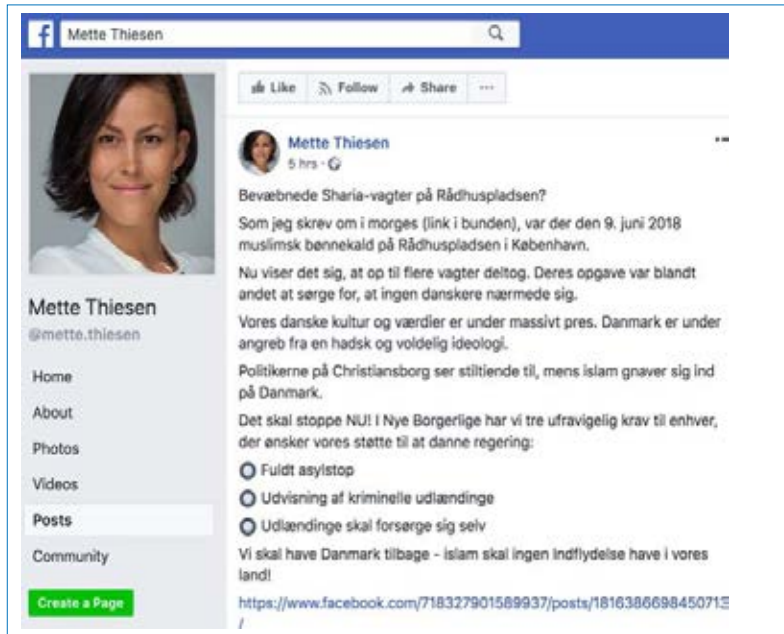


Figure 9: Mette Thiesen's Facebook post about "armed sharia guards".

## Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

Lawyer Rasmus Paludan is behind the political wing Tight Line (Stram Kurs) with the motto, "There is no need to restrict immigration. There is a need for a big amount of Muslims to leave the country every year".<sup>69</sup> Paludan is known for his many provocative demonstrations with few participants where he openly insults Muslims, and has many viewers on his Muslim-targeting videos on social media.<sup>70</sup>

The New Right politician Mette Thiesen is well known for her Islamophobic statements and postings on social media. In March 2018, she posted a video of (who she claimed to be) "young Muslim men who are making noise late on a Sunday night", followed by the headline "Harassment by Muslims has become an everyday thing!".<sup>71</sup> Thiesen was later criticised by other politicians and the wider public for assuming without any proof that the event had a Muslim motive, simply on the basis of the ethnic appearance of the men.

The Minister of Immigration and Integration Inger Støjberg is another central figure who is known for her far right political views especially towards non-West-

69. Stram Kurs homepage, [www.stramkurs.dk](http://www.stramkurs.dk), (Access date: 3 September 2019).

70. Davis Buch and Keld Vrå Andersen, "Indvandrerkritisk Parti Går På Gaden Igen Og Igen - Med Det Er På Nettet, De Bliver Set", Tv2, 5 September 2018, <http://nyheder.tv2.dk/samfund/2018-09-05-indvandrerkritisk-parti-gaar-paa-gaden-igen-og-igen-men-det-er-paa-nettet-de>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

71. Daniel Seistrup, "Dansk Politiker Delte Videoer På Facebook: Nu Føler Hun Sig Truet – Og Har Et Budskab Til Ukendte Unge Muslimske Mænd", BT, 27 March 2018, <https://www.bt.dk/danmark/dansk-politiker-delte-videoer-paa-facebook-nu-foeler-hun-sig-truet-og-har-et-budskab>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

ern immigrants and the controversial cartoons of the Prophet Muhammed that is the wallpaper on her electronic devices.<sup>72</sup> In December 2018, it emerged that Inger Støjberg together with the Minister of Education Merete Riisager from the Liberal Alliance “ordered an analysis of non-Western children of immigrant descendants from their officials, that doesn’t fulfil scientific standards”. It was revealed later in the same week that the report was misinterpreted and that they made the results of the report appear worse for the newspaper *Berlingske*, despite warnings by the officials.<sup>73</sup>

SIAD (Stop the Islamisation of Denmark) is an organisation that is described as “extreme” by the Danish Security Service (PET). It is working diligently on creating hate against Danish Muslims since 2005 through demonstrations, flyers, blogposts, etc.<sup>74</sup> Their latest performance was when the former politician Özlem Cekic was going to give a speech at a church in January 2018, where she was met with a protests including banners, because of the fact that her new book included the concept of circumcision.<sup>75</sup>

Another congregation that comes together on the notions of Islamophobia and xenophobia is the youth movement Generation Identitær that originates from the French movement Génération Identitaire. In August 2018, Rikke Louise Peters, who holds a PhD on the topic of political movements, analysed Genration Identitær as a movement aiming to make Islamophobia and xenophobia mainstream, targeting youth, and playing on anxiety about the demise of the European culture.<sup>76</sup>

For Freedom (For Frihed) - former PEGIDA that was shut down because of its violent acts against Muslims - is another organisation that is mainly visible on Facebook with different supporter groups. For Frihed hosts demonstrations that are supported by Rasmus Paludan, the founder of Tight Line.<sup>77</sup> Groups on Facebook play an active role in spreading Islamophobia because they are open to a wide segment of society and are supported by thousands of followers and likes. An example among the many hate-mongering Facebook groups that agree with the purpose of For Free-

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72. Astrid Mortensen, “Støjbergs Ipad-Baggrund Har Aflyst Vigtigt Møde”, Ekstra Bladet, 11 December 2018, <https://ekstrabladet.dk/nyheder/politik/danskpolitik/stoejbergs-ipad-baggrund-har-aflyst-vigtigt-moede/7433393>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

73. Steffen Groth, “Et Politisk Bestillingsarbejde – Berlingske Som Megafon For Inter Støjberg”, POV, International, 12 December 2018, <https://pov.international/berlingske-megafon-stojberg/?fbclid=IwAR0SrSdnlQghLhXmLU-uCvYL6NPQaPLZ7bo9xKFzCdxt9EGsqbK9SQ-7vHk>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

74. “Stop Islamiseringen Af Danmark”, Siaddk Wordpress, <https://siaddk.wordpress.com/hvem-er-siad/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

75. Mette Skov Hansen, “Dannebrogflag Og Tilråb: Islamkritisk Forening Demonstrerede Mod Özlem Cekic Foran Kirke”, Kristeligt Dagblad, 20 January 2018, <https://www.kristeligt-dagblad.dk/kirke-tro/islamkritisk-forening-i-aktion-foran-kirke>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

76. Simon Valeur and Anna Gottschalck, “Indvandrerkritisk Bevægelse Sender Unge Danskere I Træningslejr I Frankrig”, Berlingske, 4 August, 2018, <https://www.berlingske.dk/samfund/indvandrerkritisk-bevaegelse-sender-unge-danskere-i-traeningslejr-i-frankrig>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

77. For Frihed, [www.forfrihed.dk](http://www.forfrihed.dk) (Access date: 3 September 2019).

dom is the group “NEJ Tak til moskeer I Danmark” (NO Thanks to mosques in Denmark), which is followed by more than 20.000 people (figure 10).<sup>78</sup>

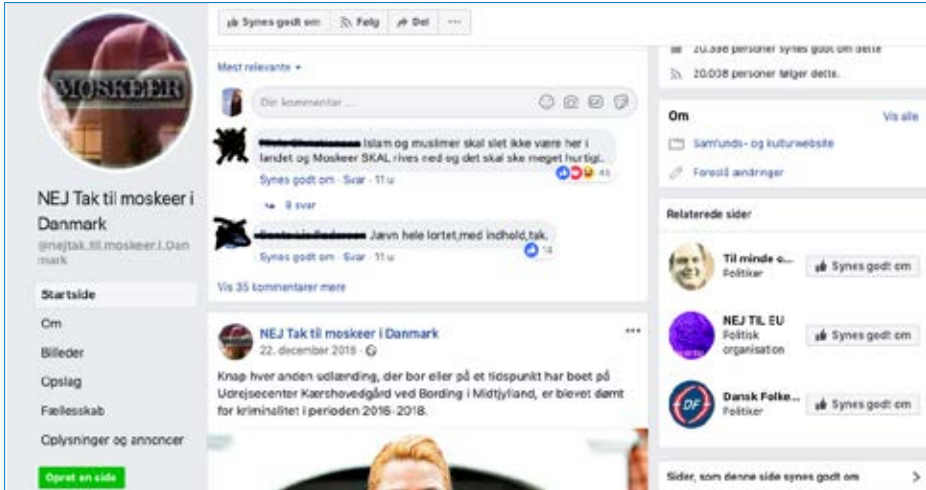


Figure 10: A screenshot from the “NO Thanks to Mosques in Denmark” Facebook group, with comments that encourage Danes to “tear down the mosques”.

There are also other individuals who are making an effort to create discriminatory, generalising, and stereotypical pictures of Islam and Muslims. Jaleh Tavakoli, mentioned previously, an Iranian-born author, debater, and blogger, often shares blogposts about Islam and Muslim immigration being “the death of Europe” on her blog or in her articles.<sup>79</sup> Others are the anonymous writers behind blogs like “Free Speech Blog”<sup>80</sup> (figure 11) or “Kulturradikalisme smadrer Danmark” (Cultural Radicalism Destroys Denmark).<sup>81</sup> Free Speech Blog shares hate speech on its blogposts about Muslims with headlines like “It is okay to be Nazi-hipster, even though you live on Nørrebro” (a part of the city of Copenhagen that is known for its multiculturalism), while Kulturradikalisme I Danmark reposts negative, discriminating, and excluding articles and stories about Muslims in Denmark, attaching supportive comments from the blogger like “Islam does not stop before the Danes are destroyed” (figure 12).

78. NEJ Tak til moskeer i Danmark, Facebook, [https://www.facebook.com/nejtak.til.moskeer.i.Danmark/?ref=py\\_c&eid=ARBhneGaTuxy\\_4tUmGAQgw7BiCVjyIxUMaltVx3aPMRzY5Emwffx2doapyIHlpvm1Qo-Qno5CeqhNj-U-](https://www.facebook.com/nejtak.til.moskeer.i.Danmark/?ref=py_c&eid=ARBhneGaTuxy_4tUmGAQgw7BiCVjyIxUMaltVx3aPMRzY5Emwffx2doapyIHlpvm1Qo-Qno5CeqhNj-U-), (Access date: 3 September 2019).

79. Jaleh Tavakoli, [www.jaleh.dk](http://www.jaleh.dk) (Access date: 3 September 2019).

80. Free Speech Blog, <https://fightthepowerwithfreespeech.blogspot.com>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

81. Kulturradikalisme smadrer Danmark, “Mette Thiesen: Hvorfor Tillader Politikerne Den Massive Muslimske Indvandring? Islam Stopper Ikke, Før Danskere Er Tilintetgjort.”, 5 May 2018, <https://ksdha.wordpress.com/2018/05/05/mette-thiesen-hvorfor-tillader-politikerne-den-massive-muslimske-indvandring-islam-stopper-ikke-foer-danskere-er-tilintetgjort/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).



Figure 11: Headline from the Free Speech Blog “Aggressive Arabs forced airplane to emergency landing in Denmark”.



Figure 12: Headline from Kulturradikalisme smadrer Danmark: “Muslims are on average much more criminal than the Danes: Now Denmark’s Radio accuses the police of racism”.



## Observed Civil Society and Political Assessment and Initiatives

A central figure who is counteracting the negative staging of Muslims is the politician Zenia Stampe from the Danish Social-Liberal Party. She regularly shares on social media how some politicians like Pernille Vermund, Mette Thiesen, and Inger Støjberg target Muslims and creates awareness of the injustices against Muslims that are taking place in parliament (figure 13).<sup>82</sup>



Figure 13: An example of Zenia Stampe's posts, where she encourages the Prime Minister to fire Inger Støjberg because of her hate preaching.

Another politician from the same party, Samira Nawa, started the #BarnAfEn-Flygtning (#ChildOfARefugee) campaign that was created to bring attention and recognition towards the many prosperous, well-educated, and contributing non-Western and Muslim children of refugees, as opposed to the negative picture spread by hateful politicians.<sup>83</sup>

Denmark's Radio aired several documentaries about Islam and Muslims in 2018, which create a nuance to the general discourse about Muslims. One of the documentaries, "Why Do Muslims Celebrate Ramadan?", offered an objective understanding of the nature of Ramadan.<sup>84</sup> Another documentary program was "My Friend's Wild Transformation", which focused on two Danish high school friends. One of them converted to Islam and the other one tries to understand his transfor-

82. Stampe, Facebook, 21 May 2018, [https://www.facebook.com/search/str/zenia+stampe+muslimer/keywords\\_bleneded\\_posts?esd=eyJlc2lkIjoUzpfSTeYnZM0NDM2MDYxNTA3NDoyMTc3MzczNTQ4OTQ1NDY4IiwicHNpZC16eyIxMjcjNDQzNjA2MTUwNzQ6MjE3NzM3MzU0ODk0NTQ2OCi6IIV6cGZT-VEV5TnpNME5ETTJNRFl4TIRBM05Eb3INVGMzTXpjk5UUTRPVFExTkRZNCJ9LCJjcmN0IjoidG-V4dCIsImNzaWQiOiIwMDVmNTEzNWVmNWNjZWQ0NTk2M2ZkMTYwMWVjNzkzOCJ9](https://www.facebook.com/search/str/zenia+stampe+muslimer/keywords_bleneded_posts?esd=eyJlc2lkIjoUzpfSTeYnZM0NDM2MDYxNTA3NDoyMTc3MzczNTQ4OTQ1NDY4IiwicHNpZC16eyIxMjcjNDQzNjA2MTUwNzQ6MjE3NzM3MzU0ODk0NTQ2OCi6IIV6cGZT-VEV5TnpNME5ETTJNRFl4TIRBM05Eb3INVGMzTXpjk5UUTRPVFExTkRZNCJ9LCJjcmN0IjoidG-V4dCIsImNzaWQiOiIwMDVmNTEzNWVmNWNjZWQ0NTk2M2ZkMTYwMWVjNzkzOCJ9), (Access date: 3 September 2019).

83. Samira Nawa, Facebook, 20 November 2018, [https://www.facebook.com/hashtag/barnafenflygtning?source=feed\\_text&cpa=HASHTAG&\\_\\_tn\\_\\_=\\*NK-R](https://www.facebook.com/hashtag/barnafenflygtning?source=feed_text&cpa=HASHTAG&__tn__=*NK-R) (Access date: 3 September 2019).

84. "Hvorfor Fejrer Muslimerne Ramadan?", Denmark's Radio, 18 May 2018, <https://www.dr.dk/ligetil/ligetil-paa-tegnsprog/hvorfor-fejrer-muslimerne-ramadan> (Access date: 3 September 2019).

mation, while bringing in aspects that show the peace connected to Islam and the insider-perspectives of a Muslim.<sup>85</sup>

Another initiative that aims to make coexistence possible is the website *Sameksistens.dk*. It publishes analyses with a focus on integration, coexistence, and barriers for freedom of religion.<sup>86</sup> The online newspaper publishes news and interviews about violations of freedom of religions, including the many civil and political violations against Muslims that occur in Denmark.

There are different initiatives on the Internet that create awareness of Islamophobic incidents. “Hate crimes against Muslims in Denmark” is a homepage created by the two journalists Julia Friis Jørgensen and Mikkel Sølvberg Abildgaard, who investigate why Muslims are the victims of hate crime in Denmark and focus on hate crimes against Muslims as a societal problem.<sup>87</sup>

Another page is the “Danish Documentation Centre for Discrimination against Muslims” that aims to monitor and document the visible discrimination and hate crimes against Muslims in Denmark.<sup>88</sup> “SOS Racism” is a Danish NGO and a partner of international cross-political movements against racism in Europe.<sup>89</sup> The organisation prepares journals and events that aim to create compassionate understanding and bring attention to Islamophobia in Denmark. In this spirit, they published a journal in the fall of 2018.

The CFE (Centre for Prevention of Exclusion) is another NGO that works to create coexistence through integration and active citizenship.<sup>90</sup> They created the hate report portal *anmeldhad.dk* that includes both laws, rights, records, and personal stories connected to hate crimes.

## Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

The year 2018 saw a significant increase in legislative proposals and new laws such as the burqa ban, the mandatory handshake, and the Ghetto Package, which are all laws that in practice restrict the freedom of Danish Muslims - an already stigmatised minority group in Denmark. The official statistics still show that Muslims are the most targeted minority group for religiously motivated hate crimes. The Islamophobic rhetoric, the negative portrayal of Muslims, their exposure to

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85. “Min Vens Vilde Forvandling”, Denmark’s Radio, 7 December, 2018, <https://www.dr.dk/tv/se/min-vens-vilde-forvandling/min-vens-vilde-forvandling-2/min-vens-vilde-forvandling-1-2>, <https://www.dr.dk/tv/se/min-vens-vilde-forvandling/min-vens-vilde-forvandling-2/min-vens-vilde-forvandling-1-2#1/00:00> (Access date: 3 September 2019).

86. Sameksistens.dk, <https://sameksistens.dk/om-os/> (Access date: 3 September 2019).

87. “Hadforbrydelser Mod Muslimer I Danmark”, Forbrydelser mod Muslimer, <https://friisjulia.wixsite.com/hadforbrydelser?lipi=urn%3Ali%3Apa>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

88. Dokumentationscenter.dk, <http://dokumentationscenter.dk/om-dcm/> (Access date: 2 September 2019).

89. SOS Racisme, <https://sos-racisme.org/>, [http://sosracisme.dk/?Om\\_os](http://sosracisme.dk/?Om_os) (Access date: 2 September 2019).

90. Anmeld Had, [www.anmeldhad.dk](http://www.anmeldhad.dk) (Access date: 3 September 2019).



derogatory and insulting statements by politicians have spread to wider society by the media and the Internet, which bring to the forth certain politicians as leading figures in the Islamophobic discourse in Denmark. One of the best ways to challenge the Islamophobic rhetoric occurs when civil society unites and presents new ways to counter the hate; 2018 witnessed several such moments through different initiatives. Another effective way is when various organisations and scientists make an effort to create research and expose evidence-based facts countering the prejudices of populism and the attempts to create fear and hatred. This also indicates the need of an informed society that can act responsibly against the hate speech amplified by the media and politicians. Talking *about* Muslims and mocking them through politics, media, and society should be replaced by cooperative solutions brought *with* Muslims included in the process, both academics and members of civil society.

Some solution-oriented policy recommendations are the following:

- The focus should be shifted from talking *about* Muslims to talking *with* Muslims by including them actively as a source of knowledge when dealing with different aspects of Islam. The media must take responsibility and involve the Muslim minority in nuanced and knowledge-based media coverage, instead of contributing to an “Us and Them” division of society where Muslims are incompatible with “Danishness”.
- Muslims should be encouraged to participate in debates. It is necessary for Muslims to take responsibility and seek to contribute by bringing nuances to the debates. This is desirable in order to create a debate based on facts instead of prejudices.
- Society must recognise the presence of Islamophobia, and the fact that Muslims are being stigmatised and discriminated in Denmark. An action plan must be implemented to counter the hate.
- Academic studies on Islamophobia in Denmark in different fields such as employment, education, and the justice system, and its effects on society should be researched, so the hatred can be identified, articulated, and countered.
- Challenges associated with Islamophobia should be studied by national agencies so that the negative discourse of hatred against Muslims and the effects of this hatred on Muslims, can be combatted or prevented, aiming to make peaceful coexistence possible.
- The focus on discrimination and hate crimes with Muslims as victims should be intensified by the national police so that the problem can be addressed and not neglected by politicians. More funds should be allocated in order to pursue the cases, which may indirectly encourage more people to report hate crimes, as it creates a message that there are consequences for this sad trend.

- Initiatives that may contribute to changing the negative public discourse on Muslims and non-Western minorities should be supported and co-founded by the Danish state.
- Civil society should unite in order to counteract Islamophobia; unity between Muslim and non-Muslim civilians will counteract the stereotyping and prejudices against Muslims.
- Finally, a clear encouragement is necessary both towards the Danish majority society and the Muslim minority to meet each other and interact with each other so that the views on each other are based on facts and not prejudices. There should be a vigorous attempt to create tolerance and understanding of each other's differences.

## Chronology

- **09.01.2018:** Özlem Cekic is criticised for including content about circumcision in her new educational children's book.
- **24.01.2018:** Marie Krarup requests to ban prayer rooms in educational institutions by claiming they impose social control.
- **31.01.2018:** The Ministry of Education publishes a *Knowledge-Supporting Report* regarding youth education institutions, which includes stigmatising questions about Muslims.
- **22.03.2018:** The Human Rights Institute calls for a national action plan to ensure co-ordinated and long-term efforts to prevent and combat hate crimes.
- **08.05.2018:** The Ghetto Package's financial framework is set. Its purpose is declared to be to reduce parallel society and create better integration with, among others, the following initiatives: greater penalties, less money from the public sector, and restrictions on how to raise children (school and day care, etc.).
- **21.05.2018:** Inger Støjberg claims that it is a risk for the Danish population when the Muslim minority fasts during Ramadan.
- **14.06.2018:** Mette Thiesen makes a false accusation against the Muslim *iftar* event claiming armed sharia guards are participating.
- **16.06.2018:** A group of Muslims who have lit a bonfire are accused of violating a fire ban and of attacking the police. The media goes crazy. It turns out that the police were not attacked and the Muslims had been granted permission to light the fire.
- **17.06.2018:** Kenneth Kristensen Berth considers an Eid cake sold in supermarkets as a sign of the increasing Islamisation of Denmark.
- **01.08.2018:** The burqa ban enters into force.

- **26.08.2018:** Steen Petersen urges Spanish police to shoot migrants coming into Europe.
- **03.09.2018:** The Danish People's Party launched a new political campaign with the exclusionary message: "Drop your headscarf and become a member of Denmark".
- **24.09.2018:** The third edition of the annual report on hate crime by the National Crime Prevention Centre is published.
- **04.10.2018:** A woman wearing a niqab is verbally assaulted and pushed by several men in a Danish supermarket.
- **12.12.2018:** Inger Støjberg and Merete Riisager deliberately misinterpreted, worsened and misrepresented the results of an analysis of non-Western children of immigrant parents.
- **13.12.2018:** A proposal to change the law on day care is adopted by voting. The law means a deprivation of Muslim parents' right to freely choose where their children go to day care.<sup>91</sup>
- **19.12.2018:** Pernille Vermund states that assimilation is the criterion for obtaining the Danish citizenship.
- **19.12.2018:** It is decided, by voting, to allocate money to Lindholm, which should house deported criminal asylum seekers in the future.
- **20.12.2018:** Law requiring handshakes in citizenship ceremonies passes.

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91. "Den Lovgivende Magt – Lovforslag", Dansk Dokumentationscenter for Diskrimination af Muslimer, <http://dokumentationscenter.dk/dansk-lovgivning/http://dokumentationscenter.dk/dansk-lovgivning/lovforslag/2018-2019/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

