

Press Release

The Invitation Letter from the Municipality of Amsterdam: Blatant Assimilation Policy!

The municipality of Amsterdam has invited several boards of mosques to sign a statement of support whereby mosques explicitly condemn violence and discrimination towards the LGBTQ+ community. This letter of Amsterdam from Mayor Femke Halsema to 'all boards of mosques in the city', came to light after Lody van de Kamp, a rabbi, publicly expressed his criticism against this discriminatory act in his column.

This has led to a chain reaction of criticism from boards of mosques last week which forced Mayor Femke Halsema to cancel the meeting which was planned on Wednesday, the 19th of October. The column and reactions of a few boards of mosques which followed seem to have a blocking effect on the stigmatizing management from the municipality of Amsterdam.

If we look back on this topic, we see the following:

Halsema claims that there is no discrimination and that other organizations will be approached as well. However, there is no such at present. The fact remains that this request was put solely towards mosques and no other (religious) organizations. Even if approaching other organizations is something that they plan to do, the question remains why mosques are being prioritized.

Even more so, why are mosques invited in the first place? What do have mosques have to do with violence against the LGBTQ+ community? By inviting mosques to sign a joint statement, the municipality of Amsterdam connects Islam towards violence against the LGBTQ+ community. And by solely inviting mosques, the monopoly of violence is also being placed on the Muslim community. While the municipality of Amsterdam without a doubt knows that the mosques do not preach violence, why is it then laid upon them?

Although, the statement of support emphasizes the aspect of violence against the LGBTQ+ community, the true message is that the mosques should take a position regarding the discrimination against the LGBTQ+ community. Put differently, the municipality is asking mosques to normalize LGBTQ+ lifestyle within the Muslim community. This entails that preachers or the average Muslim cannot critically or negatively express themselves on LGBTQ+, because it will be considered discrimination. They are undoubtedly aware that Islam rejects the obscenity of homosexuality and is strongly criticized by Muslims. They are undoubtedly aware that Islam rejects the obscenity of homosexuality and is strongly criticized by Muslims.

Also, the aggressive LGBTQ+ propaganda of the Dutch government is not solely rejected by Muslims but by numerous other non-Muslim groups in society.

Despite this, they keep pointing their finger at the Muslims. The only difference between them and the Muslim community is that the rejection of LGBTQ+ is done due to Islamic reasons instead of traditional or even other religious considerations which are strongly secularized. This confirms the battle which is fought against Islam and the political agenda to

secularize the Muslim community; you are allowed to be Muslim, but only according to the understanding of secular thought.

The agenda of the city of Amsterdam is not detached from the national assimilation policy that is being enforced for years against the Muslims and for the acceptance of the LGBTQ+ community. The goal of this assimilation policy is that the Muslims embody secular thought and approach Islam from a secular viewpoint.

Despite the boycott of many mosques, the spokesperson of Halsema stated that eventually 'few' of the approximately sixty Islamic prayer houses in Amsterdam were willing to come. The question is, how many mosques would have come if the declaration of support did not receive such a public criticism? The reality is that the municipality, police, justice and mosques are in contact with each other and have regular talks on these subjects and in some cases, they have even engaged in collaborative arrangements (including the controversial radicalization programs).

The capacity of this unequal relationship is shown as follows. Amsterdam's rainbow policy of 2019-2022 states for example: "We shall increase our focus on the acceptance within the target group of bi-cultural lgbtiq+ themselves" and: "We will stimulate the presence of visible role models through accessible locations, like community centers, mosques and cultural centers." The mosques are described here as if they are private possessions of the municipality which they can use to reach their goals.

So, it states in the invitation letter that the municipality of Amsterdam addresses the boards of mosques with the following: "This meeting is a follow-up of the meeting on the 9th of May 2022 of the members of the Triangle with the board members of the mosques of Amsterdam in Taqwa Mosque. During that meeting we discussed the protection of the lgbtiq+ community and about the contribution that mosques could make to strengthen the security of this group. The mayor wishes to discuss with the boards of mosques how to further concretize the matter."

This shows that projects like the statement of support for LGBTQ+ did not come as a surprise or presented in a vacuum. Halsema's spokesperson refers to it as a "delicate process", which means the invitation for the meeting could not have been a surprise.

The spokesperson also states that the idea for the statement of support stems from regular meetings with boards of mosques and police, justice and the mayor. A couple of months ago there were discussion on a statement that all religious communities in the city would have to support. "Boards of mosques initially wanted to come to a shared idea first before the would approach other religions. Therefore, they have received the invitation first."

This is one of the reasons that the Muslim community should be vigilant and critical of the relationship between the board of their mosque with the government. Boards of mosques should be transparent and vigilant so that they will not be used by the government for the assimilation policy.

The joint position that boards of mosques have taken have shown that which we call upon the Muslim towards united is strength. We should uphold this and push through on an ideological and structured manner.

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