

Press Release

Pegida and Islam in Europe

The anti-Islam movement Pegida The Netherlands which wanted to roast pigmeat just outside the Lalei Mosque in the south of Rotterdam was politely sent away by a huge crowd of counter protesters. That is, the 20 Pegida members themselves chose to flee the scene with their tails between their legs. Many felt this was a victory against these haters of Islam. Perhaps this is true, however if we as a Muslim community casually sit back thinking that this is the end of it, than we are mistaken. It is now more than ever important to roll up our sleeves and prepare for coming times. Because then we will not be dealing with a movement like Pegida but an increasingly ghastly anti-Islamic threat that will seize the whole of Europe.

In Austria, seven mosques were closed and sixty imams might face expulsion. Chancellor Kurz justified these draconian measures by hiding behind and utilizing vague political catch-all terms which were used to strike fear into the hearts of the people and silencing opponents. During a press conference he said: "There is no room for parallel societies, political Islam and radicalization in our country." This is of course nothing more than a sly attempt to work aggressively against unwelcome Islamic norms and values, judgements and opinions. On the one hand they flaunt their democracy and freedoms on the other they want each individual to think and act according to the framework outlined by the secular liberals.

In France, President Macron announced that he's working on reforming Islam by laying down markers for French Islam. He wants to push secular ideas and wants to comply Islam to them. He said: "We're working on structuring Islam in France and also it's explanation." This has had an echo at 300 of France's prominent personalities such as former president Nicolas Sarkozy, former Prime Minister Manuel Valls and former mayor of Paris Bertrand Delanoe. Also artists such as the singer Charles Aznavour and actor Gerard Depardieu and other influentials supported the call to write a manifest for the "actualization" of the Quran and the removal of "anti-Semitic" and "anti-Christian" passages.

Denmark recently issued a ban on the niqaab. Muslim women wearing a face veil are now committing a criminal act which is punished by a fine of 135 euros with a maximum of 1350 euros if they are convicted for the fourth time. But of course individuals that cover their faces by using a scarf (against the cold) or because of party wear are excluded. By doing this Denmark is following the footsteps of France, Belgium, Austria and likewise The Netherlands will probably follow soon as well. Furthermore, Denmark has implemented policies forcing children living in disadvantaged

neighborhoods to educate them on democracy, equality and Christian traditions like Christmas. From the age of 1 children from certain neighborhoods are required to receive 25 hours of secular indoctrination per week. Spoken of democracy and freedom!?

Germany **wants to ban** the hijab at schools for girls under the age of 14 in the province of North Rhine Westphalia. There was already a ban regarding the wearing of the hijab by public servants employees and since 2017 this specifically applies to Muslim teachers. Now they've taken one step further by prohibiting young Muslim pupils to wear the hijab at school. Yet again secular norms and values are being imposed forcing the Muslims to give up a part of their Islamic identity.

All the aforementioned is but a new addition to the long list of repressive measures specifically targeting Islam and the Muslims in Europe. Also The Netherlands is not exempt from this.

Anti-Islamic sentiments in Europe are rapidly expanding and are being used to justify the increasingly stigmatizing and discriminatory measures against the Muslim communities in an attempt to assimilate the Muslims by forcing them to compromise in their religion or even to leave Islam.

However, between all of these negative developments, a rather positive development is taking place and that is that the repressive policy has failed and had a counterproductive effect on the Muslims. According to a new research conducted by The Netherlands Institute for Social Research found that Muslims are becoming more religious and that the younger generation specifically live up to Islam with even more conviction and enthusiasm and that they will pass this on to the generations that will come after them. Islam remains unabatedly an important aspect in their lives.

The challenge of the Muslim community is to preserve this, further develop it, work consciously and actively to unite the Muslims, condemn the repressive measures and spread the message of Islam.

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