

Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear Colleagues,

I am quite aware that this should not become another discussion about the Mohammed Crisis or the cartoons as such. What I have been asked to speak about is the question whether the Mohammed Crisis has changed anything as to the Freedom of the Press in Denmark – that is legally or in the practice of the different editorial offices.

The answer to that question is, of course, both yes and no.

However, before qualifying that answer more, I wish to draw your attention to three pre-conditions in a specific Danish context:

- 1) The Freedom of the Press Act – that is the freedom to print – in Denmark was given by decree of the absolute monarch in 1771 and it was never since abolished. At first, the freedom of the press was total, however, already one year later it was restricted with lese-majesty, and later it was restricted more and more. A number of well-known persons were exiled or imprisoned during the years up to 1848. However, still the Freedom of the Press Act was never abolished. Censorship as such was never restored – that is with the exemption of people already convicted for crimes under the restrictions of the Freedom of the Press Act.
- 2) Drawings – cartoons, caricatures – was, as a consequence of the relatively wide Freedom of the Press, an important part of public information already when Freedom of the Press was enacted in 1771, and it stayed so up till this day in Denmark. Recently, it has been established in a book on the history of press drawings that the freedom for cartoonists are very wide in Denmark, also compared to other countries with a comparable attitude to the Freedom of the Press.
- 3) Between 1973 and 1989, for 16 years, it was discussed in Denmark if the well-known arts historian and arts happening activist Jens Jørgen Thorsen should be allowed to produce his film, his movie, about Jesus's love life. The discussion had to trails: 1) would the movie be blasphemous and, therefore, liable to censorship, 2) should the public money support for the movie be withdrawn. Thorsen told 1973 that in the movie the audience would – among other sexual activities – Jesus having sex with Maria Magdalena, and then 5,000 people demonstrated at the City Hall Square in Copenhagen. Pope Paul VI condemned the movie project – shortly after, there was a telephone bomb threat against the Danish embassy in Madrid and a number of Molotov-cocktails against the residence of the Danish Ambassador to Rome. To shorten a long story, this

movie was never produced, however, a changed movie project was shot in 1992. However, already in 1984 Thorsen was asked, as an artist, to decorate a wall at the S-train station of Birkerød. He chose to show the crucified Jesus with an erect penis. The then minister of transport, a confessional Jew, immediately decided to have the decoration painted over. No legal actions were ever taken in connection with the movie project or the decoration.

As you will see, dear colleagues, there might be another historical background in Denmark when Jyllands-Posten decided to publish the 12 cartoons on September 30, 2005, that is another background that people from abroad – and also the Danish Moslems – did accept when the Mohammed Crisis exploded in the end of January – four months later.

So, in my mind, the so-called Mohammed Crisis is a political crisis. It is a crisis that followed the political reactions of the then Danish government – not a crisis regarding the Freedom of the Press.

You might know that the Turkish Ambassador to Copenhagen wrote a letter to then Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen on behalf of the ambassadors of other Moslem countries, and that a meeting was refused by the Prime Minister.

And, now to the consequences:

- 1) No legal changes have been proposed or enacted as a result of the Mohammed Crisis.
- 2) Yes, Jyllands-Posten has been criticized by a long range of other newspapers, politicians, former politicians, writers, etc. for what has been seen as an un-wise provocation.
- 3) The membership paper of our union has just published the news that since September 30, 2005, five cartoons have been rejected by sub-editors of the Danish media because they somehow referred to Mohammed. Turbans with bombs are just not shown as it has been put.
- 4) For almost five years now there has been an everyday realistic threat against the lives of our colleagues working at Jyllands-Posten's head office in Aarhus and its Copenhagen office, now in the same building as the editorial offices of the other dailies Politiken and Ekstra Bladet at the City Hall Square in Copenhagen. It's a mere fortress.
- 5) You have, no doubt, heard about the life threatening attack on the cartoonist Kurt Westergaard in his home. In his garden a police station has now been built, and he is the only person in Denmark having as much security as the Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, let our Queen and her

family stay in of category of their own. The have been other arrests with regard to Jyllands-Posten as you well know.

- 6) In February 2010, the now late editor-in-chief of the daily Politiken, Tøger Seidenfaden, made what was considered a political happening when he said “We are sorry” to Mohammed’s ancestors. He did not say that he was sorry for having printed the cartoons, the ‘sorry’ was to the feelings of Mohammed’s ancestors and all other Moslems. You have to bear in mind when referring to this happening that Seidenfaden in his own – and many other people’s minds – were the real Leader of Her Majesty’s not always so loyal opposition.
- 7) As a union, we have concentrated our efforts in trying to protect the lives of our colleagues through a very close co-operation with the Security Police. At first, it was the lives of the 12 cartoonists, however, later it has now for a very long time been the lives of several hundred colleagues working at Jyllands-Posten, Politiken, and Ekstra Bladet.