

*Islam as inspiration – not a decree*

It is possible to be a faithful Muslim and at the same time a firm believer in democracy. But if democracy develops into a new form of absolutism, it becomes that it initially was a reaction against. We believe that democracy should constantly be in development, if it is to be an asset in the struggle to create a just society. The concept of democracy is universal, in the sense that it is not tied to a definite nationality, religion, or geographic location.

We believe that all people share certain universal values. Our focus is always on that which unites us humans. Life is about focus. If this focus is directed towards that which unites us humans, the world could be viewed in a different light.

We seek your presence, your knowledge and your light and we offer you this fellowship of critical Muslims. Are you on fire? Then come and light up our forum, instead of burning the people around you or burning up alone.

# A MUSLIM MANIFESTO

*By the Forum for Critical Muslims*

**Reason  
Renewal  
Critique  
Multiplicity**

*Do you wish to be powerful-  
Do you wish to be right  
Or do you wish to Love God  
and your neighbour*

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## ***For you...***

**“We have sent down to you the Book (the Qur`an ) as an exposition of everything, a guidance, a mercy, and glad tidings for those who have submitted themselves”**

*(The Qur`an 16:89)*

*This is a forum for you who seeks God, for you who is a seeker. For you who lacks a fellowship based on equality, devotion and room for diversity. For you who is progressive, and open to the understanding that differing principle can coexist. For you who is humble. Who does not wish to monopolise the truth, but seeks to reflect it by being a good example and a light to others. For you who does not judge. But dreams of reconciling the irreconcilable. For you who considers all human beings as your brothers and sisters irregardless of religion and nationality.*

*This is for you, who is a servant of Allah and not a slave of medieval traditions such as the worship of national identity. A forum for you, who focuses upon that which unites us as human beings. For you who hungers for knowledge and dares to be critical towards*

*the dogmatic and static interpretations of the Qur`an.*

*We are Muslims with a deeply rooted faith in the Qur`an as the revealed word of God. We believe, this word comes to life, when we seek knowledge and attempt to understand, what our Creator wishes of us and for us. We believe, the Qur`an can transforms us as human beings, when we seek the essence behind the text. To be close to Allah and seek his UNITY ( tawhid ) is one of the foundations of this association. This is a forum for you, who is aware of the motives behind your actions – and who knows, that it is the motive that creates the character of your actions. That which motivates our actions is not the anticipation of heaven or the fear of hell, but purely our devotion to our Creator. Love, without any hint of selfishness or calculation.*

*Our path allows for the unfolding of an enormous spiritual potential and leads to the development of the self. Our path sets us free as human beings. Humility, inner purity and gratitude are faithful pillars of support as we walk the path of the heart. This is a forum for you, who wishes to awaken before you die.*

# Reason

This association is working for a rational, dynamic and open understanding of the Qu`ran, that seeks to discover and use its moral, philosophical, political and spiritual values: equality for all irrespective of gender, race, nationality, social status or religion. Instead of blindly imitating the interpretations and renditions of the Qu`ran by other Muslims, we encourage the individual to use their reason and to study the Qu`ran themselves.

In this process it is vital to find a guide who has knowledge. Our point of departure is that God has given us an intellect, that makes it possible for us to interpret and make living the Word, He has revealed to us.

We believe the individual should seek to understand the Qu`ran by creating a balance between reason and emotion (the heart) in interpreting the Qu`ran. Some of the verses of the Qu`ran are clear in their meaning, while others require further interpretation. Ijtihad means to deduce or draw out and is the individuals use of the intellect to understand the Qu`ran and the practice of the Prophet.

Tafsir refers to an exegesis of the Qu`ran. Discovering, clarifying and revealing that, which before was hidden or veiled. Explaining the meaning of words, which might at first encounter seem unclear. Tafsir is the literary genre consisting of commentary and interpretation of the Qu`ran. Ijtihad and tafsir are important tools when one wishes to understand Gods guidance, which expresses firmness and a flexibility at the same time. The Qu`ran and the practice of the Prophet encourages men and women, to at all times, seek to grow in knowledge.

“Then High above all be Allah, the True King. And be not in haste (O Muhammed) with the Qu`ran before its revelation is completed to you, and say : My Lord! Increase me in knowledge” (*Qu`ran 20:114*)

“Certainly, we have brought to them a Book (the Qu`ran) which We have explained in great detail with knowledge, - a guidance and a mercy to those who believe.” (*Qu`ran 7:52*)

A man once asked the Prophet who was the greatest scientist. He answered: the person who always tries to learn from others, for a student always hungers for new knowledge. Worship without knowledge serves no purpose and knowledge without understanding serves no purpose. And the empty recitation of the Qu`ran without understanding serves no purpose.

# Renewal

We are working to reform the Muslim understanding of the Qu`ran. Al-Nahda is an Arabic term, that among other things refers to the rebirth or renaissance of Islam. We believe there is a need for information amongst both Muslims and non-Muslims. Our focus is therefore aimed towards creating a joint forum for active Muslims in Denmark, where we together, can transform ourselves and give life to an Islamic rebirth. The transformation is contingent on humility and the pure intention of gaining knowledge. If you wish for knowledge, sustenance and meaning from the Qu`ran, you must acknowledge your ignorance and enormous need for transformation and knowledge. Through our activities we wish to create Muslim voices, who can bring nuances to the debate and the image non – Muslims have of Islam in the West.

Many are ignorant of the great Muslim literary works in the fields of science, theology, philosophy, etc. We wish to, through our activities, make visible the Muslim intellectuals, philosophers, scientists, artists, and spiritual guides, who do not appear in the curriculum of the western educational systems. We also wish to re-establish the active role women have played in the history of Islam. In this association we are working for the removal of the separation of the sexes. We respect those who wish to retain this separation, but believe, that the balance prescribed by the Qu`ran, is better served by letting the two sexes work together and be together.

Furthermore we wish to make women more visible, as they are often under-represented and invisible in the public debate about Islam. We are advocates of the principle, that those who have knowledge should propagate it to both men and women. The determining factor is knowledge and not the gender. One of our visions is a mosque with a female khatiba. A woman leading the sermon (the khutba) for men and women during Friday prayers. After the sermon, the female khatiba can lead the prayers for the women, while the imam leads the prayers for the men. A female speaker/khatiba would strengthen the harmony and balance between the sexes and send an important signal about solidarity, fellowship, and cooperation across the gender divide to the coming generations of Danish Muslims. In Mecca, which is a symbol of the ultimate level of faith and removal of all distinctions and barriers, men and women walk around the Kabba together.

“Exalt yourselves with the book of Allah, for verily it is a strong rope, a bright light, and a good cure, a spring which quenches thirst, a protection for the one who is guided by it and a source of freedom to the one who clings to it” Sayyiduna Ali

# Critique

Critique is known as naqd in Arabic and is a positive word to us, as it fuels development and dynamism. It is important, that we dare to criticise each other, as critique often develops our understanding of how we ought to act as well as refining our points of view. There is a need for more critical voices among Danish Muslims. The highest form of critique is self-criticism to turn ones sight and critique inwards before we look outwards. We believe in the Qu`ran as the revealed word of God. We consider this word to be eternally true, universal and infallible.

Our interpretations on the other hand are relative, impermanent and fallible. Our criticisms are aimed at our interpretations, which often become ideologies of truth. We are working for a critical approach to the dogmatic and reactionary interpretations of the Qu`ran, as well as a critique of tradition and culture.

We stand in opposition to those from our parent's generation, who are slaves of national identity and tradition instead of being servants of God. We wish to know the essence (haqiqa) behind the external framework which forms the (sharia). We take a critical stance in regards to those Muslims, who divide the world into Islam and the west.

Those who feel morally superior due to the fact that they are Muslims and use the word kafir, translated as unbelievers to denote all non-Muslims as unbelievers.

We take a critical standpoint in regard to those Muslims, who encourage youths in the west not to participate politically and influence the society, in which they live. Those in whom such rhetoric is conditioned by a indiscriminating hatred of the west. We take a critical standpoint to the Danish political right wing which demonizes Islam and Muslims in Denmark. Which will not cease its activities until Muslims in Denmark give up their firm belief in the Qu`ran as the revealed word of God. In this way we pose an alternative to the extreme Danish political right wing and the extreme Muslim political left, who both claim that Islam and democracy are incompatible. We wish to dissolve the growing Islam phobia within the political rightwing and unravel the iron curtain that has been erected between Them and Us. Our struggle takes place through factual argumentation and balanced messages. Our struggle takes place in the realm of values.

"Allah will not change the (good) condition of a people as long as they do not change their state (of goodness) themselves" (Qu`ran 13:11)

# Multiplicity

We working for the recognition of alternative interpretations of the Qu`ran and religious multiplicity. Capaciousness, respect and tolerance are the keywords. We are not the representatives of the Muslim community of Denmark and neither do we seek to be.

"Anti-representativity" is our point of departure: nobody can speak on behalf of Islam. Muslims can speak for themselves. The many attempts to unite Muslims in Denmark, have often ended in theological debates about who are the true Muslims. By having multiplicity as our starting point, we wish to avoid discussions about who are the true Muslims. The idea that there is a true version or interpretation of Islam has dangerous consequences, as it leads to the exclusion of those who deviate from the allegedly correct version. People who do not accept or tolerate diversity in the understanding and reading (exegesis) of Islam, as well as its practice, cannot play a part in bridge building and reconciling of values in a society where competing perceptions, about what is valuable live side by side. It is not our different approaches to the Qu`ran that are divisive, but rather our unwillingness to accept the right to have differing interpretations. This is what causes us to be divided and seemingly irreconcilable.

Multiplicity and diversity are a blessing from God according to the Qu`ran. The Qu`ranic ideal of the good and just human being is not conditioned by race, gender, belief or nationality. The only thing that separates one human from another is spiritual excellence or virtue, understood as righteous action. To do good towards one fellow human beings and accept ones neighbour despite our differences. These are some of the clearest signs that a person carries Islam within their heart – kindness, patience, mercy and tolerance. We believe god created a world of multiplicity because he wanted us to want multiplicity. So as to understand his unity (Tawhid)

"O mankind! We have created you from a single (pair) of male and female and made you into Nations and tribes, that ye may know each other. (Not that ye may despise Each other) Verily the most honoured of you In the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most Righteous of you. And allah has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things)". (Qu`ran 49:13)

Verily, those who believe and those who are Jews and Christians and those who are Sabians, whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day and does righteous good deeds shall have their rewards with their Lord, on them shall be no fear, nor shal they grieve. (Qu`ran 2:62)