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## **Denmark revokes 334-year-old blasphemy law**

The Local (02.06.2017) - <http://bit.ly/2sBht4F> - Danish lawmakers on Friday repealed a centuries-old blasphemy law which forbid public insults of a religion, such as the burning of holy books like the Qur'an, cementing the country's attachment to freedom of expression.

Only a handful of blasphemy trials have taken place in the past 80 years, and several high-profile cases have been dropped, including the caricature of the prophet Mohammed published in the Jyllands-Posten newspaper in 2005.

Predominantly Lutheran but also fiercely secular, Denmark was the only Scandinavian nation with a blasphemy law, which called for up to four months in prison upon conviction, but also just fines in many cases.

Lawmakers who wanted to repeal the law introduced in 1683 "do not believe that there should be special rules protecting religions against expressions", the parliament said on its website.

But remarks and acts that threaten or demean certain groups of people because of their religious beliefs will still be punishable.

"Religion should not dictate what is allowed and what is forbidden to say publicly," Bruno Jerup, an MP who proposed to repeal the law, was quoted as saying by Jyllands-Posten.

"It gives religion a totally unfair priority in society," he said.

A Danish man who filmed himself burning the Qur'an and posted the video to Facebook in 2015 was to face a blasphemy trial next week, but the case was dropped after the law was revoked.

In 1938, four people were convicted for hanging posters with anti-Semitic writing.

In 1946, two people were fined for conducting a baptism during a masked ball, and in 1971, two public radio officials were convicted for broadcasting a song about a woman's sexuality and her refusal of any divine moral figure.

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## Denmark bans six 'hate preachers' from entering the country

By Teis Jensen

Reuters (02.05.2017) - <http://reut.rs/2qIwsIR> - Denmark on Tuesday banned five Islamic clerics and an American evangelical Christian pastor from entering the country, calling them "hate preachers" who posed threats to public order.

The move came amidst a public backlash in Denmark against Islam in the wake of Islamist violence a decade ago over Danish newspaper cartoons satirising the Prophet Mohammad, a series of deadly militant attacks in Europe including one in Denmark, and a large influx of mainly Muslim migrants in 2015.

The blacklist, the first of its kind in Denmark, arose from legislation passed last year allowing bans on foreign religious figures the government deems to be a danger to public security.

"The government will not accept that hate preachers come to Denmark to preach hatred against Danish society and indoctrinate others to commit violence against women and children, spread ideas about an (Islamic) caliphate and in general undermine our fundamental values," Immigration Minister Inger Stojberg said.

The blacklist includes Islamic cleric Kamal El-Mekki from the United States; Jamaican-born Canadian Bilal Philips, who lives in Qatar; Mohamad al-Arifi and Salman al-Ouda from Saudi Arabia; and Mohammad Rateb al-Nabulsi from Syria.

The sixth person on the list is Terry Jones, a Florida evangelical Christian pastor who in 2010 raised an international outcry when he threatened to burn copies of the Koran.

Stojberg's statement on the ban did not say whether any of the named preachers had been in Denmark. But the law enacted last year said it applied to those for whom there was a "reasonable likelihood" they would enter the country.

It also said behaviour deemed to be hateful could arise from statements or actions whether in Denmark or abroad.

Denmark became a target of radical Islamists in 2005 after the publication of cartoons lampooning the Prophet Mohammad, which led to sometimes deadly protests in the Muslim world.

In 2015, a Danish-born Muslim gunman killed two people in an attack on a debating event and a Copenhagen synagogue before being shot dead by police.

Public sentiment towards Islam and Muslim migrants has soured in long liberal and tolerant Denmark. The European Union country has imposed strict limits on immigration, citing security and cultural concerns.

Anti-Muslim populist parties have gained strength throughout the Nordic region, and elsewhere in Europe, since record numbers of mainly Muslim migrants arrived in 2015. The anti-immigrant Danish Peoples Party is now the second largest in parliament.

# **Danish man who videoed himself burning the Quran charged with blasphemy**

***Case is first time Danish prosecutors have charged anyone with blasphemy in 46 years***

By Lizzie Dearden

The Independent (23.02.2017) - <http://ind.pn/2INPsak> - A Danish man who posed a video of himself setting fire to the Quran on Facebook has been charged with blasphemy in the first such prosecution for 46 years.

The 42-year-old suspect put the clip, entitled "Consider your neighbour: it stinks when it burns" to a group called "YES TO FREEDOM – NO TO ISLAM" in December 2015.

Jan Reckendorff, from the public prosecutor's office in Viborg, said: "It is the prosecution's view that circumstances involving the burning of holy books such as the Bible and the Quran can in some cases be a violation of the blasphemy clause, which covers public scorn or mockery of religion.

"It is our opinion that the circumstances of this case mean it should be prosecuted so the courts now have an opportunity to take a position on the matter."

Judges in Aalborg will heard the case, although a date has not yet been set.

The maximum sentence for blasphemy is four months in prison but Mr Reckendorff said prosecutors were more likely to seek a fine.

Copies of the Quran are treated with reverence by Muslims and any move to desecrate or destroy the holy book is seen as a grave insult.

Rumours of Quran burnings have sparked arrests, lynchings and riots in Muslim-majority countries, while the move has been appropriated by the far-right and anti-Islamic groups, including the Westboro Baptist Church in America.

Under clause 140 of Denmark's penal code, anyone can be imprisoned or fined for publicly insulting or degrading religious doctrines or worship.

Only four blasphemy prosecutions have ever been attempted in the country.

The last was in 1971, when two Denmark Radio producers were acquitted after airing a song mocking Christianity.

Two people were previously fined in 1946 after acting out a "baptism" at a ball in Copenhagen, while four others were sentenced for putting up anti-Semitic posters and leaflets in 1938.

At least a dozen other cases have been considered but not charged, including in 2006 when prosecutors decided to stop an investigation into the *Jyllands-Posten* newspaper over a controversial set of caricatures under the headline "The Face of Mohamed".

The publication sparked protests around the world, with insulting the Prophet seen as a grave offence to Muslims and Islamic scholars interpreting Quran verses on idolatry to forbid any representation of Mohamed.