DENMARK'S MIGRATION DISCOURSE AND THE RISK OF ANTI-ISLAM POLITICAL GENERALIZATION

Teoman Ertuğrul TULUN

Analyst

Denmarks Migration Discourse and the Question of Religious Attribution

According to press reports, during a 12 August 2026 Danish parliamentary debate concerning the Ceuta-related migration developments, Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen referred to people with an Islamic background who did not want an open, free European society.[1] Although states are entitled to address irregular migration, violent extremism, and integration failures through lawful means, the reported statement warrants closer examination. It raises the question of whether a political discourse directed at specific unlawful conduct is being broadened to treat a religiously defined population as a source of societal threat.

Islamophobia, Anti-Muslim Hatred, and the Rule of Law

For present purposes, Islamophobia □□□ anti-Muslim hatred □□□□□□□□ prejudice, hostility, discrimination, or violence directed at Muslims and persons perceived as Muslim. The Council of Europes European Commission against Racism and Intolerance similarly characterizes anti-Muslim racism and discrimination as encompassing hate speech, violence, and discriminatory acts targeting Muslims or those perceived to be Muslim. Anti-Islamism, by contrast, is employed here only as a tentative analytical category: a political framing that represents Islam, or Muslim identity as such, as incompatible with the European civic order. Criticism of religions, their leaders, or practices remains protected expression. Equally, states must counter terrorism, incitement, and violence. Yet neither principle permits collective guilt or religious profiling, which conflict with equality and freedom of religion.[2]

From Conduct-Based Security to Religious Generalization

Against this normative framework, two propositions must be kept distinct. States have the sovereign responsibility to manage their borders, examine asylum applications in accordance with applicable law, combat migrant smuggling and human trafficking,

prosecute terrorism and other criminal offenses, and pursue integration policies consistent with human rights. These responsibilities concern identifiable conduct, individual responsibility, and legally defined risks. A public statement that broadly treats persons with an Islamic background as a societal threat does not maintain that distinction. Islamic background is a religiously framed and potentially expansive category, not a description of unlawful conduct. Its use, therefore, risks converting legitimate concern over particular acts, organizations, or policies into a generalized suspicion of a religiously identified minority.

The concern should not be overstated as a settled Europe-wide transformation. Nevertheless, it merits scrutiny in light of existing indicators. The OSCEs Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights has warned that Muslims across the OSCE region are often associated with terrorism and extremism, portrayed as a monolithic group, or represented as incompatible with human rights and democracy.[3] AVİMs analyses have likewise noted how xenophobic populism, anti-Muslim discourse, and the historically embedded image of the Muslim Turk may reinforce exclusionary narratives.[4] When mainstream political actors employ comparable language, it may signal an emerging discursive shift rather than merely a dispute over migration policy.

European Implications: Equal Citizenship and Rights-Based Governance

If such rhetoric becomes normalized, its consequences may extend beyond a particular migration controversy. It may weaken equal citizenship by treating religious identity as a proxy for political loyalty or security risk; impair social cohesion and integration by deepening mistrust; and increase Muslims exposure to discrimination. It also blurs the boundary between democratic, rights-compliant security policy and identity-based exclusion. A further inconsistency arises when public authorities formally condemn anti-Muslim hatred while language employed in political debate homogenizes Muslims as a potential threat. European governments and institutions should therefore maintain a strictly conduct-based approach: assess individuals and organizations based on evidence and applicable law, reject collective religious attribution, apply legal standards equally, and safeguard freedom of religion. Such an approach protects public security without compromising the democratic pluralism it is intended to defend.[5]

Safeguarding Security Through Equal Protection

Accordingly, border management and counter-terrorism remain legitimate state responsibilities, but their democratic legitimacy depends on individualised evidence, proportionality, due process, and equal protection. The Danish remarks should therefore be monitored not merely as an episode in migration politics, but as a possible indication that Islamophobia is being recast into a more explicit anti-Islam political vocabulary. Preserving the distinction between unlawful conduct and religious identity remains indispensable to European pluralism and the rule of law

Picture: Youtube

[1] Danish PM Calls Migrants with Islamic Background the Greatest Threat as Europe Braces for Second Migrant Wave, Gazette, August 14, 2026,https://gazette.com/2026/08/14/danish-pm-calls-migrants-with-islamic-background-the-greatest-threat-as-europe-braces-for-second-migrant-wave/; Tyler Speicher, Denmarks Left-Wing PM Warns: Big Enemy Has Started to Grow from Within as Europe Faces Migrant Reckoning, Fox News, August 14, 2026, https://www.foxnews.com/world/denmarks-left-wing-pm-warns-big-enemy-has-started-grow-from-within-europe-faces-migrant-reckoning; Danish PM Warns of Enemy Within, Brussels Signal, August 14, 2026, https://brusselssignal.eu/2026/08/danish-pm-warns-of-enemy-within-as-she-links-migration-to-hamas-and-terrorism/ .

[2] European Union, Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, 2012/C 326/02, Official Journal of the European Union C 326 (October 26, 2012): 391 □□□□ arts. 10, 20, 21, and 52; European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), ECRI General Policy Recommendation No. 5 (Revised) on Preventing and Combating Anti-Muslim Racism and Discrimination (Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 2022), paras. 1–3

[3] Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, Anti-Muslim Hate Crime, Hate Crime Factsheet (Warsaw: OSCE/ODIHR, n.d.), accessed September 14, 2026, https://odihr.osce.org/odihr/373441

[4] Mehmet Oğuzhan Tulun, Rising Islamophobia in the Western World and the Turkish-Armenian Controversy, Center for Eurasian Studies (AVİM), 2019 / 4, March, 15, 2019, accessed September 15, 2026, https://avim.org.tr/en/Analiz/RISING-ISLAMOPHOBIA-IN-THE-WESTERN-WORLD-AND-THE-TURKISH-ARMENIAN-CONTROVERSY; Shada Islam, Europes Dangerous Art of Anti-Muslim Doublespeak , ; Center for Eurasian Studies (AVİM), August 19, 2026, https://avim.org.tr/en/Bulten/EUROPE-S-DANGEROUS-ART-OF-ANTI-MUSLIM-DOUBLESPEAK .

[5] European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), ECRI General Policy Recommendation No. 5 (Revised) on Preventing and Combating Anti-Muslim Racism and Discrimination (Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 2022), paras. 8, 16 □□□ European Commission, Combating Anti-Muslim Hatred, accessed September 14, 2026, https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combatting-discrimination/racism-and-xenophobia/combating-anti-muslim-hatred_en

About the Author :

Teoman Ertuğrul Tulun is an analyst at Ankara-based think-tank Center for Eurasian Studies. Dr. Teoman Ertuğrul Tulun received his Ph.D. in Political Science and Public Administration from İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent University in Ankara. His area of research include European Union Studies, Globalization, Xenophobia, Hate Speech Studies and International Relations.

To cite this article: TULUN, Teoman Ertuğrul. 2026. "DENMARK'S MIGRATION DISCOURSE AND THE RISK OF ANTI-ISLAM POLITICAL GENERALIZATION." Center For Eurasian Studies (AVİM), Commentary No.2026 / 52. September 16. Accessed October 27, 2026. https://www.avimbulten.org/public/en/Yorum/DENMARK-S-MIGRATION-DISCOURSE-AND-THE-RISK-OF-ANTI-ISLAM-POLITICAL-GENERALIZATION

Süleyman Nazif Sok. No: 12/B Daire 3-4 06550 Çankaya-ANKARA / TÜRKİYE
Tel: +90 (312) 438 50 23-24 • **Fax**: +90 (312) 438 50 26
@avimorgtr
https://www.facebook.com/avrasyaincelemelerimerkezi
E-Mail: info@avim.org.tr
http://avim.org.tr

© 2009-2025 Center for Eurasian Studies (AVİM) All Rights Reserved