

## **Integrating Muslims into Modern Political Life**

Distinguished Delegates, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Henrik Clausen, speaking on behalf of Wiener Akademikerbund in Austria.

The Annotated Agenda for this session stresses the need for all groups in society to participate fully in the political and public life of the society. While countries West of Vienna have generally created conditions that permit all citizens to fully enjoy their human rights and fundamental freedoms, some groups still have disproportionately low participation rates.

One specific problem is the participation of Muslim voters, which remains dramatically lower than that of other religious or ethnic groups. In Denmark, where typically only 10 percent abstain from voting at general elections, in immigration-heavy areas it is normal that over 30 percent of registered voters not showing up at the polls. This is a very challenging category of voters.

There can be a wide variety of reasons for this, including literacy problems, lack of confidence in candidates of a different ethnicity than their own, distrust of government due to experience from their countries of origin, lack of understanding about how democracy works, or radical imams preaching that democracy is 'haram' (forbidden) for Muslims.

Then, democracy is much more than just casting a vote once every four years. The beef of democracy is to elect representatives that care for the citizens between elections, and then address them when grievances arise. Not understanding or appreciating this leads to frustration with democracy or even rejection of it. This must be prevented.

Since speaking against democracy and "man-made law" is essentially a political act, persons and organisations doing so must be categorized as political acti, not religious. Therefore, doing so should cause any organisation registered as 'religious' to lose that status. Doing so would remove significant impediments to participation and prevent anti-democratic preachers from usurping undue political power under the guise of religion.

Wiener Akademikerbund therefore recommends:

- That religious organisations workgng against democracy be recategorized as political.
- That efforts to replace constitutional law with Sharia be considered a punishable offense.
- That foreign preachers advocating non-constituational law shall not be granted religious status.