



**PERMANENT DELEGATION  
OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE**

**STATEMENT BY METTE KONGSHEM,  
AMBASSADOR AND PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF NORWAY  
TO THE OSCE**

***ON THE ISSUE OF TOLERANCE IN NORWAY***

Agenda item : "Current issues"

OSCE Permanent Council, Vienna

Thursday 26 January 2006

**Mr. Chairman,**

**I would like to make some remarks in order to provide you with my Government's view concerning the printing of caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad in the Norwegian magazine *Magazinet*.**

**All people have the right to respect for their religion and the right to presume that neither their religion nor their religious affiliation will be subject to contempt.**

**It is understandable that the caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad in the Norwegian magazine *Magazinet* are perceived as offensive and that they have caused a stir in Muslim communities.**

**Islam constitutes the spiritual foundation for a large part of the world's population. Their religion is entitled to our respect.**

**Utterances such as these caricatures are not conducive to fostering trust and respect between people of different faiths and ethnic backgrounds. On the contrary, they encourage distrust and confrontation. This incident in a Norwegian magazine is unfortunate and deplorable.**

**Freedom of expression is a constitutional right and one of the mainstays of Norwegian society. This also entails tolerance for views that are not shared by everyone.**

**Let me add that none of the leading Norwegian media have published similar offensive illustrations or utterances.**

**The Norwegian government condemns any action or statement that expresses contempt for a person on the basis of his or her religion or ethnic background. Norway has always supported UN, as well as OSCE efforts to combat religious intolerance. We consider these efforts to be essential for preventing distrust and conflicts between people. Tolerance, mutual respect and dialogue are fundamental values both in Norwegian society and in our foreign policy.**

**Thank you, Mr. Chairman.**