



[740] NUPI Working Paper

Conditions for Hospitality or Defence of Identity? Writers in Need of Refuge – a Case of Denmark’s ‘Muslim relations’

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Utgiver: NUPI
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ISSN: 82-7002-201-2

ISBN: 978-82-7002-201-4

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Conditions for Hospitality or Defence of Identity? Writers in Need of Refuge – a Case of Denmark’s ‘Muslim relations’

*Intervention prepared for the symposium on
“The conditions of hospitality”,
Stavanger, 8-9 September 2008*

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As one of the last decisions before it broke for this year's summer recess, The Danish Parliament, *Folketinget*, passed two bills to facilitate the participation of Danish municipalities in the International Cities of Refuge Network.¹ On the face of it, it might be good news that yet another country opens its borders to writers targeted with threats and persecution.

As a condition for refuge in Denmark, however, a writer will need to sign a rather peculiar document – a "Declaration on recognition of the fundamental values of the Danish society" (appendix 1). The writer thereby declares to, i.a., "understand and accept the fundamental values of Danish society"; "protect the Danish democratic principles" including non-discrimination and the condemnation of terrorism; and finally declare to be aware that s/he is meant to leave again within two years. I would like to take this puzzling document as the point of departure for this intervention and relate it to the discursive situation which produced it. As a contribution to this symposium this should work as an analysis of the current strategic situation to which any ethico-political action must relate itself.

As it were, the debates in parliament and the detailed legal text framing this show of hospitality reveal that Danish hospitality is far from unconditional. More worrying is the fact that the debate, the legal regulation, and the very problematique of freedom of expression is in Denmark placed squarely within a discourse on 'Muslim relations'. And that is not a nice place to be.

I will present this analysis in three steps: First, I will focus on who the good and the bad guys are, when the Danish parliament discusses writers in need of refuge. Second, I will look at whose security is important. Thirdly, I will delve a moment at the difficulties involved in making the Muslim Other. I'll conclude by briefly considering the strategic task which faces any proponents of hospitality in Denmark and beyond.

¹ To facilitate the participation in the International Cities of Refuge Network, two bills were needed: One, presented by the Minister for Culture, amended the Literature Act to allow municipalities to spend money on hosting the writers; another, presented by the Minister of Refugee, Immigration and Integration Affairs, amended the Aliens Act to allow the writers in question into the country in the first place. This paper is based on an analysis of the government presentations of these bills, the parliamentary debates, and the reports of the parliamentary committees scrutinizing them including the consultative statements by NGO's etc. and answers by the ministers to the questions of the committee made public in the reports.

1.1 Who are the good guys?

In his initial presentation, the Minister for Culture explained that “This bill is presented to show that Denmark supports the struggle for freedom of expression and open, democratic societies which takes place outside the borders of our country.” In their contribution to the committee reports on the bills, the government parties claimed that “Denmark, after facilitating this arrangement, will be in the very front of spreading freedom of expression.”

Even if this is debatable it, obviously, poses Denmark as not only a nice place and, conversely, places evil oppression somewhere outside Denmark – more than that; it poses Denmark as a benevolent agent capable of doing good deeds abroad.

In many ways, there is general agreement in parliament on this picture of reality. Only few, minor problems (i.a. for civil servants disagreeing with their political bosses, cf. MP Ammitzbøll, 2008.04.15, 13:59) are mentioned: “Our freedom of expression is, on the whole, unlimited.” (MP Kjær, con., 2008.04.15, 14:08). At the very least, there is general agreement to describe Denmark as a “country which has many a time been pioneering exactly when it comes to freedom of expression” (MP Mortensen, soc.dem., 2008.04.15, 14:02).

1.2 ... and the bad guys?

So Denmark is at the side of Enlightenment. At first sight, the opposing dark side consists of oppressive *states*, since “the powers that be in many countries wants to control the opinion of the citizens of the country and how it is expressed” (MP Christensen, lib., 2008.04.15, 13:39), and, hence, “certain writers ... are persecuted for being critical towards the system ruling the country, they are living in” (MP Kjær, con., 2008.04.15, 14:08).

The opponents of freedom of expression, however, need not be states. The only reason for persecution is not a critical attitude towards the state; the reason may also be that “they write or in other ways express themselves about something that is not accepted where they live” (MP Kjær, con., 2008.04.15, 14:08). To the same effect; “the dictatorship [which] many writers are fighting” (MP Christensen, lib., 2008.04.15, 13:39) needs not be a state; it might be an ideology or another system of thought.

The Minister for Culture himself sets the context straight:

"We have seen it here at home too, most recently the plots to kill cartoonist Kurt Westergaard [who drew the angry bearded man with the bomb in the turban; the Jyllands-Posten cartoon provoking most to feel offended]. It is a shame, and terrible to think about, that even in this society we find forces who might want to eliminate a cartoonist just for expressing opinions diverging from their own. (2008.04.15, 14:27)



Or in the more radical formulation of a speaker for the Danish People's Party: "[T]he freedom of expression has within the last decades come under pressure in the Western World from especially extremist Muslims" (MP Henriksen, DPP, 2008.05.23, 11:34).

1.3 The discursive context: Muslims relations

With this framing of the Cities of Refuge as riding the wake of the Cartoon Crisis, it is clear that the debates are part of the ongoing struggle to define Denmark's 'Muslim relations'.

Some speakers for opposition parties try to correct this framing by distinguishing between good and bad expressions: "This is about freedom of expression where it means something, where people have been fighting state power, and not just ... trying to speak against people you dislike in a hateful way." (MP Ammitzbøll, soc.lib., 2008.04.15, 15:05). But as it is part of the government's platform to conduct 'Muslim relations' with the nationalist DPP, the attempts at reframing do not bear fruit.

The then secretary general of the United Nations took the cartoon incidents as occasion to characterize Denmark as a "country which has recently acquired a significant Muslim population, and is not yet sure how to adjust to it." (Anan 2006)² It would, however, be more precise to say that 'some in Denmark' are not yet sure, how to adjust to the new situation.

The present Danish government consists of a liberal and a conservative party – but relies on the right wing Danish People's Party for its parliamentary majority. At least this party, the DPP, seems quite sure, how Denmark should adjust to the new situation. Hints as to just how may be found in the above mentioned "declaration on recognition of fundamental values of the Danish society"; in the committee reports; and in the parliamentary debate. We will return to this in a moment.

The point to be made here is that the *rest* of the Danish political actors are – as Kofi Annan suggested – rather uncertain when it comes to the question of how to adjust to the recently acquired significant Muslim population. The liberal and conservative government parties have largely tried to keep their formulations sufficiently ambiguous as to be able to articulate DPP while insisting that their legal reforms are compatible with international standards and humanitarian norms. The opposition parties have oscillated between multiculturalism, liberal universalism, and concessions to the right. And meanwhile, the DPP has moved in and filled out the vacuum left by the ambiguity of the government parties and the bewilderment of the opposition parties. They have set the conditions for the debate – the conditions for hospitality. The conditions pertain to security; the security of the writers but more important; the security of Danes – and not only security of Danes in times of terror; also the security of Danish identity in times of global migration.

2.1 Security for writers ... or for Danes?

The Danish Security and Intelligence Service (*PET* is the Danish acronym) plays a double role in the parliamentary debate on the writers in need of refuge. For the opposition parties it is important to make sure that the intelligence service takes care of the security of writers who might need protection even in their Danish refuge – and that the state pays for their protection (i.a. MP Mortensen, soc.dem., 2008.04.15, 13:46). This, of course, is a relevant question for someone who wants to extend hospitality; the problems Ayaan Hirsi Ali had when going to live in the US is the obvious reference for this debate.

² Less polite characteristics by international organizations and media reports are summarized by political scientist Hans-Jørgen Nielsen in (2004:15-7, ch. 4, 7), who finds the picture painted too grim.

The DPP, however, in their contribution to the committee reports on the bills, find another use for the intelligence service. As a condition for backing the bill, they want to be sure that "the stranger in question is in advance security checked by the *PET*" and that "the stranger in question may be refused without further explanation if the *PET* finds that he constitutes a threat to Denmark." Furthermore, they insist that "the stranger in question is falling within provisions for expulsion ... if the stranger abuses the stay in Denmark ... i.a. by engaging in criminal activities".

2.2 The discursive context: The violence of Islam(ists)

Both threats make sense if your chosen danger is immediate and comes in the form of the violent Islamist: he might try to curb our freedom and way of life as an assassin killing a writer or as a terrorist blowing up a commuter train: "[W]e shall not just roll over and wait for others to take over our right to express ourselves and our democracy" (Minister for Culture, con., 2008.05.23, 11:20).

So the government assures that the *PET* will cater to both the security of the writers (Minister for Culture 2008.04.15, 14:41) and the Danes against potential violent attacks (Minister for Integration's answer to questions no. 8 & 9 reprinted in the report from Committee on Integration).

When it comes to the *duration* of hospitality, however, the security of Danish national identity wins over the security of the individual writers. They cannot stay and compromise the homogeneity of Denmark.

2.3 Refuge for ... refugees?

The International Cities of Refuge Network (ICORN) has members in a number of countries. But one cannot help noticing that Norway houses a greater number of writers than any other country. On top of the beauty of the landscape and the friendly locals, one reason might be that the hospitality which Norway extends to the writers in need of refuge is more generous than that of other countries: If a writer is accepted as threatened by ICORN and invited by a Norwegian city, s/he is granted asylum under Norwegian law. A couple of the opposition parties in the Danish parliament suggested, that Denmark should do the same (MP Krag, soc., 2008.04.15, 15:07; MP Ammitzbøll, soc.lib., s.d. 15:11; MP Clausen, red/green, s.d. 15:17).

In this matter, the government – as well as the leading oppositional party, the Social Democrats, one should note – chose to follow the DPP: Within two years, the new arrival should return home.

Actually, the character of the stay will be nothing like an asylum; "Writers etc. have under existing regulation the same possibilities as other foreigners to apply for and possibly attain asylum in this country if they have had to flee from their homeland due to persecution, but a special access to this should not be made." (Remarks to bill no. L 131, p. 3) The stay of the writer will rather be like a stay allowing time to work or educate oneself. And the writer is not a refugee – s/he has "more features in common with ... strangers coming to this country as workers or students and whose basis for residence is temporary and connected to a specific activity." (Ibid.) In conclusion;

I am warning against using the term persecution and against using it too much and overinterpreting it. We are after all not talking about asylum here ... We are talking about that you are granted permission to

stay according to a very fluffy [luftigt] criterion for very special reasons and when part of a very special group. (Minister for Integration, 2008.04.15, 15:22)

2.4 The discursive context: Limiting the influx of Muslims to secure homogeneity

Now in this question, Danish language comes to the aid of the government since a 'city of refuge', when translated, does not have any reference to 'refugee'. A refugee is a 'flygtning' in Danish, someone fleeing – while a city of refuge is a 'friby', a free city; connoting 'frirum', free space; and even 'fritid', spare time. In general when the Minister's speak, the writers to whom hospitality is granted are not 'persecuted writers' but 'writers whose freedom of expression is infringed in their homeland'. So their 'rights are infringed' but they are not 'prosecuted'. Especially the Minister for Integration takes care not to characterize the writers as 'persecuted'; an adjective too close to the language of international law on refugees. So the clash of concepts is not as acute as it might be in English.

The point to be made here is that it is of urgent importance for the government not to undermine the efforts made to 'limit the influx of strangers'; an influx permitted by earlier liberal access to asylum and family reunification. Especially, the influx of Muslim strangers, as their assimilability is questioned by the DPP. They are represented as a threat to the identity of what the Danes perceive to be their uniquely homogenous nation state (Sjørølev 2007:144; cf. Haahr, 2003:27f; Gullestad 2002a).

Hence, the final point of the declaration put in front of the writer at arrival urging the writer to repeat that

I am aware that my stay in Denmark as part of the Cities of Refuge arrangement is temporary and that it is intended that I shall return to my homeland. The purpose of my stay is, hence, to allow me to practise my literary activities in Denmark for a period of time, while afterwards return to my homeland.³

The importance of making sure to get rid of the guest again warrants two considerations – one on the future, one on the past – together implying a narrative of defence:

First, Norwegian anthropologist Marianne Gullestad notes (2002b:100, n.57) that Derrida in *Of Hospitality* concentrates on the immediate reaction to a guest *as s/he arrives*. On the one hand, this is not entirely fair when taking into account the considerations on the necessity of having a law to distinguish guests from parasites (2000:59) does point to the way the quality and duration of the entire stay of the guest is condensed into the situation of the arrival. On the other hand, I think that the Danish 'show of hospitality' demonstrates that the shadow of the future sometimes entirely eclipses the moment of arrival; the moment of hospitality.

Second, it points to the rhetorical (?) question put by Derrida: "Perhaps only the one who endures the experience of being deprived of a home can offer hospitality?" (Dufourmantelle 2000:56). Denmark often prides itself of a 1000 years long history as a Kingdom. Its borders have moved – mainly to shrink the territory – but what today counts as 'Denmark' has, it is felt, served as a homeland for the Danes since time immemorial. So maybe Denmark is just not suited to offer hospitality. Denmark might only be suited to "*show* that Denmark supports the struggle for freedom of expression" (italics added) as the Minister for Culture introduced

³ Two notes on the translation of this excerpt: First, I have kept the passive form of "it is intended" since it is a way of camouflaging agency and responsibility typical of Danish bureaucracy. Second, the extension of the sentence "while afterwards return to my homeland" does not make grammatically sense in Danish, but serves the purpose of including the return in the purpose of the stay.

the law. If so, the list of values in the declarations is not meant to be the pretext to hospitality (i.e. the minimal recognition given by the stranger in return for an open door). It is simply meant to ward off the stranger by mis-identifying him; by Othering her.

3.1 Identifying ourselves as the good guys – by contrasting the vices of the bad guys

If you see yourself as the main character in a heroic narrative; defending yourself against Muslim terrorists and against floods of Muslim migrants, then it is, of course, important to know to whom you award hospitality. Derrida (2000:26f) insist that hospitality can only be conditional; you need at least to ask the name of the stranger in return for opening your home. In Denmark, a bit more than a name is asked for.

Actually, the declaration, which the writers need to sign upon arrival, is a caricature catalogue of the vices of Muslims, as they appear in Danish debates on integration. Denmark awards the immigrants the hospitality of permanent residence or citizenship on condition that they give up - *not* as Derrida finds in the Algerian case "what *they* thought of as their culture" (2000:145; italics added) – Denmark asks them to declare that they give up cultural traits that *we* identify them by. Why would you want someone to declare that he does not hit his children, unless you expect that he is actually inclined to doing so?

So Muslims are, according to the declaration, expected to

- violate Danish laws
- undermine the Danish democratic principles in every respect
- disrespect the freedom and personal integrity of the individual
- disrespect and oppress women
- disrespect freedom of expression and religion
- discriminate on the grounds of race and skin colour
- threat and scorn against other religious and sexually oriented groups
- disrespect and oppress children (especially girls) to make sure that they do not grow up to be capable of making their own decisions
- support acts of terrorism (or at least refrain from assisting the authorities in preventing them)
- have no commitment to the Danish society or democracy.

Actually the list in the declaration put in front of people seeking *permanent* residence in Denmark (after being granted family reunion) is even longer. These Muslims are expected to

- commit or at least threaten violence against their spouses
- circumcise their daughters
- use force to contract marriages for their children
- hit their children.

From the reports of the parliamentary committees we must expect that the DPP wanted to expand the list of the declaration put in front of the writers. S/he is expected to

- behave in a disorderly manner
- assume a brazen and disrespectful attitude to Denmark and the Danes

and, finally, from the list of serious problems known to come with Muslims, he(!) will

- bring more than one wife.

Let us leave the question of polygamy aside and attend to the DPP's demands for orderly manners, humility and respect for Danes. These demands were not included in the declaration. Because, as the Minister for Culture explained, the point of having freedom of expression is to *disturb* order. The Minister for Culture does not explicitly invite the stranger to commit *paricide* as does Derrida (2000:7). He is, however clear on the point:

[D]ictators hate art; they are afraid of it. ... They believed that they could eliminate the nuances and make people uniform.... But it is so that art and culture and writing insist on nuance, insist on the existence of things not just black and white. They insist on complexity, on showing us the ugly and the provoking and the things in our minds and hearts where the dictators have no access.

(Minister for Culture, con., 2008.04.15, 14:21)

A DPP member of the parliament Committee on Culture asks the Minister "how to secure that the persecuted writer when in this country is primarily occupied with literary activities directed towards his/her homeland – where the literary freedom is infringed – and not towards entirely different countries, e.g. Denmark, the USA, or a third country?" (additional committee report dated 28 May 2008, app. 11, p. 4).

The Minister in his answer reassured that "probably a persecuted writer invited to come to Denmark as a sanctuary with everything paid for will not feel occasioned to criticise his host country." But the Minister proceeds to instruct that

since the aim of the Cities of Refuge arrangement is to promote freedom of expression the writers must be able to speak and write freely, even if they might come up with criticizing conditions in Denmark or other third countries. To speak and write freely – even if the criticism hits ourselves. That is the essence; that is what freedom of expression is all about" (ibid.).

3.2 The discursive context: Making Muslims Other

For the Minister of Integration things are a bit more complicated. Due to the complexities, it is necessary to quote at length:

[W]e cannot demand from our citizens that they must love the law or that they must love democracy – and had we been talking about asylum seekers ... we could not have demanded this kind of declaration. Because in Denmark, you are allowed to be opposed to democracy. But here we are talking about a very specific, very fluffy [luftigt] and far-reaching basis for residence compared to the one we grant when dealing with refugees and family reunions et cetera. ...

[W]riters are people using the word as a weapon, and we might as well be honest and say: We are talking about a political agreement, and we are talking about not letting someone in who will use the word to break down the Danish society. ...

I have been eying through this declaration to make sure that there is no obligation to be a democrat, and we are not talking about that you have to love democracy – but you do have to respect and subject yourself to democracy when you are let in here on this far-reaching basis for residence. That is the reason why I can defend this and why I am of the opinion that it is right that we let the writer think for a moment if it is the right country he is coming to – and that we do not down right let in a fifth column who is after all not individually persecuted in the sense of the provisions for refugees under the Alien Act.

(Minister for Integration, 2008.04.15, 15:22).

Hence, the point of the list is not primarily to set the minimal conditions for hospitality. It is, at the first level, a defence against a fifth column entering to feed on the welfare state before finishing it off by turning it into a totalitarian *sharia* state. Not just *parasites* who feed on the host, as Derrida discussed (2000:59), but *parasitoids* who will in the end kill the host.

But will demanding a declaration help in keeping the parasitoids out? In an earlier debate parliament discussed a suggested parallel to a 'Green Card' allowing you to work: a 'Love Card' allowing you to love. The idea was that if you as a Danish citizen solemnly declare that you love a partner whom you have met abroad, then your partner should be awarded a 'Love Card' allowing her/him temporary residence.⁴ In the debate on Cities of Refuge, the DPP speaker – now in favour of a declaration on fundamental values – was reminded that he had dismissed the declaration of love by the words "People will sign anything to get into Denmark." (MP Henriksen, DPP, quoted by MP Ammitzbøll, soc.lib., 2008.05.23, 11:38)

So rather than catching parasitoids listing values amounts to an example of the merging of identity politics with security politics: the construction of an existential threat – a radical Other – to legitimize extraordinary means to defend identity; an identity which paradoxically needs the Other to uphold itself (Wæver 1994). Even if the listing of Danish values is carefully monitored by a respectable liberal intellectual – which the Minister for Integration, admitted, is – *the very listing* works to make Muslims Other.

But as Derrida notes: "Ghosts haunt places that exist without them; they return to where they have been excluded from." (Dufourmantelle 2000:152).

3.3 The difficulty of Making Muslims Other

These declarations and lists are but one of the results of an obsession with 'fundamental values of Danish society' which Muslims are expected to disregard and even undermine.

The explication of such fundamental values as criteria for inclusion, however, implies a risk – the risk of excluding the wrong persons. During the debates on the Cities of Refuge, a recent parliamentary debate on the values of immigrants was brought to memory as a speaker for an opposition party exclaimed that "it would be a relief if the MPs from DPP would sign the declaration in question" (MP Ammitzbøll, soc.lib., 2008.04.15, 15:05; cf. MP Clausen, red/green, 2008.05.23, 11:41).

In this earlier debate (2007.04.26) special attention was awarded to one MP for Danish People's Party, theologian Søren Krarup. In the course of decades as a maverick right wing intellectual he had renounced or violated more than a couple of these fundamental Danish values. Mentioned were among other fundamental values infringed his book length showdowns with the concepts of human rights and democracy, but Krarup concentrated his defence on newspaper reports that he (when asked questions carefully crafted to the purpose) had failed the obligations to accept homosexuality and denounce the death penalty.

The problem is not new to Krarup; he has accustomed himself to explaining old radical formulations after he changed career from self-styled intellectual outcast to *de facto* responsible for government policies. One of his argumentative strategies is perfectly covered by the Lacanian concept of *jouissance* (re-introduced in English by Slavoj Žižek as 'enjoyment');

'pleasure in unpleasure'; ...the paradoxical satisfaction procured by a painful encounter with a Thing that perturbs the equilibrium of the 'pleasure principle' ... The hatred of the Other is the hatred of our

⁴ Currently this is not always possible even if you marry your beloved, since for family reunification be granted the Alien Act requires that the joint affiliation of the couple to Denmark be greater than to any other country – which it, by simple math, is not if you have met your partner in her/his home country and s/he has never been to Denmark.

own excess of enjoyment... [T]he fascinating image of the Other personifies ... what ... prevents us from achieving full identity with ourselves. (1992:194-6)

One of the clearest empirical illustrations of *jouissance*, I have seen, is in this quote by Krarup explaining his change in position on whether parents should be legally allowed to hit their children:

"What makes it so terribly difficult to talk about the right of chastisement today is, that we have been swamped by a culture for which violence – the holy right of the man to beat his wife and children black and blue – is natural. This means that the Danish tradition for the right of chastisement has been more or less compromised by a Muslim tradition which is so different." (*Politiken* 2005.11.13).

So in this case protection of Danish identity requires us painfully to give up a piece of Danish culture. In most cases, however, Krarup would argue that his digressions from the beaten path amounted to hairsplitting – or that they refer only to highly hypothetical situations. For instance he did not want to judge the re-installation of the death penalty after WWII.

So it is difficult to make the Muslim Other by listing values. The point to be made here is, however, that it works. Even if Søren Krarup's values may be pointed out as un-Danish, nobody seriously wants to deport him or take away his citizenship. But when young women with brown skin, wearing a *hijab* or not, born and raised in Denmark do not renounce the death penalty in the most hypothetical society of all hypothetical societies (e.g. in an Islamic Utopia, where everyone lives in perfect adherence to the will of *Allah*)... If such a person does not oppose death penalty unconditionally, she is not Danish. She is Muslim. She is Other (Hervik 2002; Larsen 2007).

4. Hospitality as a strategic task

Anne Dufourmantelle, in her invitation to Derrida's lectures "Of Hospitality" (2000:66), stresses the political role of philosophy in giving purposeless place to philosophizing about absolute, utopian hospitality. I agree; if we want to keep the political debate high-ceilinged, someone needs to keep the pillars supporting the ceiling erect and tall. So there is a role for philosophy.

But we need also to follow up on Derrida's call for giving "*place* to a determined, limitable, and delimitable – in a word, to a calculable – right or law ... to a concrete politics and ethics" of hospitality (2000:147-8). To do so, we need to know the strategic terrain. In the words of Anthropologist Daniel Miller in a different context: "Having shown that we can be philosophers, we need the courage to refuse this ambition and return to ethnographic empathy and ordinary language." (2005:15).

So, there is also an important role for what might be termed 'strategic studies' in identifying openings in the discourses of politics, of media, of everyday life – openings for articulating just a little more real life hospitality. We need to analyse the present processes of othering – to identify opportunities for turning the Other into a Stranger, towards whom hospitality can be offered.

This means a general preference for hybridity over essentializations: We need to insist that it is possible to be both Danish and Muslim at the same time; simultaneously a democrat and a Muslim. But as Sociologist Birgitta Frello warns: "if the concept of hybridity gives rise to an indifferent celebration of difference it creates blindness to the unequal power relations always

involved" (2005:101, my transl.). So it also means prioritizing some forms of hybridity over other forms: we need to include democratic Muslim Danes, *and* exclude Danish non-Muslim non-democrats. Again; this needs to be based on analysis of the specific strategic terrain into which you intervene; of which fears and defensive strategies are forming the terrain. Utopian laws and principles will not do on their own.

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Appendix 1⁵

Declaration on recognition of the fundamental values of the Danish society

Name:

Foreign national's ID/Civil registry number:

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that I understand and accept the fundamental values of Danish society.

I thus declare as follows:

- I shall comply with Danish legislation and protect the Danish democratic principles in every respect.
- I respect the freedom and personal integrity of the individual, equal opportunities for men and women, and freedom of speech and religion which are fundamental constitutional rights in Denmark.
- I understand and accept that discrimination on the grounds of race and skin colour and threats and scorn against groups on the grounds of religion or sexual orientation is illegal in Denmark.
- I understand and accept that men and women have equal obligations and rights in Denmark and that both men and women shall contribute to society.
- I understand and accept that in Denmark all children shall be given equal respect and self-expression – be they boys or girls – in order for them to grow up and become active and responsible citizens who are capable of making their own decisions
- I understand and accept that Danish society strongly condemns acts of terrorism and that any citizen has an obligation to fight terrorism amongst others by assisting the authorities through prevention and investigation.
- I understand and accept that active commitment to the Danish society is a precondition for democracy.

I also declare that I am aware that my stay in Denmark as part of the Cities of Refuge arrangement is temporary and that it is intended that I shall return to my homeland. The purpose of my stay is, hence, to allow me to practise my literary activities in Denmark for a period of time, while afterwards return to my homeland.

Date:

Signature:

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⁵ The translation from the Danish is partly copy-pasted from the "Declaration on integration and active citizenship in Danish society" on the official home-page of the Ministry of Refugee, Immigration, and Integration Affairs. Where the "Declaration on recognition of the fundamental values of the Danish society" differs from this original declaration, the author has done the translation. 'Recognize' would be a translation which in a more precise way carried the central ambiguity of the Danish 'anerkende'; the official English version has 'understand and accept'.