

Denmark Briefing: April - May 2024

Reporting period: 1st April – 31st May 2024

Muslim leaders smeared for rejecting invitation from Zionist-led organisation

- Several prominent Muslim leaders and debaters declined an invitation to a Ramadan dinner hosted by the *Bridge Builders Association - Centre for Dialogue Coffee*, under the title "Where there is food, there is peace."

The rejection was due to deep concerns about the presence of the President of Bridge Builders, Chief Rabbi Jair Melchior, a self-proclaimed Zionist who has [defended Israel's brutal actions](#) against the Palestinians.

Melchior has also [told children at Danish primary schools](#) that a lawyer approves every bomb Israel sends, a statement that has been [criticised by Jewish peace activists](#).

- The rejection by the Muslim leaders and debaters was misrepresented by Secretary General of the organisation, and former parliamentarian, Özlem Cekiz.

On [her social media profiles](#), she wrote: "They believe that you can't share a meal with Danish Jews when Gaza is being bombed to pieces by Israel."

This, in turn, led to accusations of antisemitism against the Muslim leaders and debaters, including from the likes of Church Minister, Morten Dahlin, who stated in [an article in Berlingske](#): "If a religious leader simply says that because there is a conflict in the Middle East, you can't eat your food next to a Danish Jew, I have no understanding for that."

- In response to the accusations, the group of Muslims, all of whom have been active in interfaith work before, wrote an [op-ed clarifying their stance](#). They insisted that "the postulate is based on a false premise that attempts to equate Zionism with Judaism."

Xenophobic speech on immigrants by minister divides ruling party

- The Social Democratic spokesperson on immigration, Frederik Vad, gave a speech in parliament in which he argued that some people with minority ethnic backgrounds might appear well-integrated through work and education but use their positions to "undermine Danish society from within."
- His speech was [heavily criticised for being stigmatising](#) and promoting suspicion of Denmark's ethnic minorities.

Several Social Democratic mayors have publicly criticised Vad's statements, and a large number of local Social Democrats, including city council members, have sent a [letter to the party's executive](#) committee strongly rejecting Vad's remarks.

- However, Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen [has expressed full support for Vad](#), stating, "We will not defend the fact that there are a lot of people who are unsafe in their everyday lives today."

Danish university students join encampment movement, secure some victories

- On May 6th, a group of students joined the global student movement for Palestine and [established a camp at the University of Copenhagen](#) in solidarity with Palestine.
- Their demands include getting the University of Copenhagen to withdraw its multi-million dollar investments in companies with illegal settlements in Palestine, recognising and condemning the ongoing genocide, calling for an immediate ceasefire and for lifting of the siege on Gaza, committing to an academic boycott by ending institutional cooperation with Israeli academic institutions, and recognising the plight of their Palestinian students.



- The University of Copenhagen has [refused to engage](#) in dialogue with the student protesters.

Nevertheless, the university acknowledged on May 21st, 2024, that conversations with other students have prompted further reflection.

As a result, [the university will strive](#) to make its investment portfolio publicly available, ensure that its investments do not contradict Danish foreign policy, and review its procurement policy to ensure compliance with "common ethical and sustainability requirements and international law."

Additionally, the university will consider how students and staff might be affected by the war, both in Israel and Palestine.

- The [students responded](#) to these developments by affirming that they seek dialogue and will not stop their encampment until all their demands are met.

On May 28th, the University announced that it would no longer invest in funds listed by the UN as operating in the West Bank.

Consequently, [as of May 29th 2024](#), the university will divest from funds that include Airbnb, Booking.com, and the online travel company eDreams ODIGEO in their portfolios.