

The crisis of the Mohammed cartoons in the European Union and the Mediterranean: contexts, reactions and media¹

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- *In September 2006, EuroMeSCo carried out a survey on the cartoon crisis in eighteen countries of the Euro-Mediterranean Association. This article contains the key findings highlighted by the report drawn up by the European Mediterranean Institute of Barcelona. The attitudes of these countries are described concerning various factors (government reaction, the role of the media, the reaction of foreign communities, political, religious, cultural and academic debates, the role of the European Union and of the Euro-Mediterranean Association, etc.)*

Keywords

Caricatures, Euro-Mediterranean Association, European Institute of the Mediterranean, governments, media, foreign communities, religion, Islam, Mohammed, religious communities, cultural and academic debate, European Union, free speech, religious freedom, blasphemy, censorship, Denmark, discrimination, racism.

In September 2006, EuroMeSCo carried out a survey on the cartoon crisis in eighteen countries of the Euro-Mediterranean Association (France, Germany, Belgium, Denmark, Italy, Spain, Estonia, Lithuania, Hungary, Turkey, Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, the Palestine Authority, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Israel). The European Mediterranean Institute was responsible for drawing up a report summarising the reactions of the different countries according to various aspects (government reaction, the role of the media, the reaction of foreign communities, political, religious, cultural and academic debates, the role of the European Union and of the Euro-Mediterranean Association, etc.).² Before summarising the findings of this report, we should describe the context of the different countries before the cartoon crisis.

1. Political and social context of the different countries

The aim here is not to be exhaustive, as this is not the purpose of the article, but to present some of the most representative political and social characteristics of the countries examined in order to understand what led them to react in one way or another at the time of the cartoon crisis. Here we have the main countries, classified according to whether they belong to the European Union or to the south of the Euro-Mediterranean Association and, within these cate-

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1 This article, which contains an extensive reflection on the media, is a development of the article published in *Quaderns de la Mediterrània*, 2007.

2 The complete text of this report is available at: <http://www.euromesco.net/images//57caricaturesde mohammed.pdf>.

gories, according to their number of Muslims. Denmark appears first as it is where the crisis originated:

- 1. Denmark:** there was a general climate of hostility and discrimination against foreigners (at work, in leisure, etc.). This xenophobic and particularly Islamophobic atmosphere must be related to the influence of the Party of the Danish People, nationalist and racist in nature, in the government: some members of this party had compared Muslims to "cancerous cells"!
- 2. France:** at the end of 2005, this country had just gone through its serious riots in suburbs involving people of foreign extraction, mainly Muslims. This event, added to the presence of a large Muslim community (the largest in western Europe), encouraged the government to take a cautious approach to avoid an even greater crisis.
- 3. Germany:** also has a very large Muslim community (three million) that is discriminated against in education and work, a fact that led to great debate on the failure of its integration policy before the cartoon crisis. On the other hand, Germany had recently taken on the role of mediator in the Palestinian conflict and, for this reason, wanted to maintain good relations with the Muslim countries neighbouring Israel and support moderate Muslim voices.
- 4. Belgium:** was going through an electoral pre-campaign period, as the municipal elections were to be held in October 2006. For this reason, no party was interested in entering into controversial debates. On the other hand, a significant part of the Muslim population has Belgian nationality and it can be said that there is strong integration in Belgian institutions (schools, etc.) and Belgian politics, so radical postures tended to be avoided.
- 5. Italy:** was also going through an electoral pre-campaign as well as organising the Winter Olympic Games at Turin (starting on 10 February 2006). These national and international interests might suggest a prudent attitude on the part of Berlusconi's government in the cartoon crisis, although mistrust towards Muslims is relatively widespread.
- 6. Spain:** a bad image of Islam was also seen to be spreading, as well as less politically correct discourses than previously. This trend was reinforced during the years the Partido Popular was in government, as it associates growing immigration with insecurity and delinquency.

However, the current socialist government, which handled the cartoon crisis, has made dialogue its constant theme and the Alliance of Civilisations its international project, attempting to build bridges with the Muslim world.

- 7. Estonia:** has a historical relationship of exchanging political favours with Denmark, explained by Danish support for Estonia in political, financial and social spheres during the last decade. This situation, combined with a very small Muslim community, made it likely that Estonia, as well as Lithuania, would support the Danish position and the European position in general in the cartoon crisis.
- 8. Hungary:** is a country that has recently joined the European Union and, for this reason and also due to its lack of a large foreign community, was interested in aligning itself with the European position at the time of the cartoon crisis.
- 9. Turkey:** more than 98% of its population is Muslim and the party in government, sympathetic towards Muslims, is the co-promoter, together with the Spanish government, of the Alliance of Civilisations.
- 10. The countries of North Africa (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia), as well as Egypt:** all have a Muslim majority and hold religion and its symbols sacred, making it very difficult for the media to disseminate points of view that question these spiritual values. On the other hand, religious authority depends on the political power (either in the king of Morocco or whoever is in government in Tunisia or Egypt).
- 11. Lebanon:** since October 2004, it has undergone a wave of attacks attributed to Syria by the parliamentary majority. The country is in fact divided between pro-Syrians (Hezbollah, Palestinian organisations, Hamas and the Islamic Jihad) and anti-Syrians (close to the "Future" trend of the prime minister, Rafic Hariri).

2. Summary of the reactions of the different countries

Based on the survey carried out by EuroMeSCo, we can summarise the reactions and attitudes of the different countries with regard to the ten aspects covered:

2.1. Official reactions

Denmark showed a radical position of free speech, influenced by the Party of the Danish People, presenting the cartoon crisis as a threat to Danish values and identifying Muslims (not a specific group of radical Muslims) as enemies.

The other countries in the European Union also defended free speech but with many more distinctions: France added the need for responsibility and prudence (motivated by the fear of radicalisation in its numerous Muslim communities but also of this leading to national revolts and of it upsetting their international relations). Germany, as well as Estonia and Hungary, gave the same importance to religious freedom as free speech. Italy and Spain, for the aforementioned political reasons, demanded moderation and dialogue. With regard to the Belgian government, it preferred not to adopt any official position as the elections were approaching and the Muslim vote was starting to have a certain influence.

The countries from the south of the Euro-Mediterranean Association (Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, etc.) condemned all the cartoons and prioritised respect and moderation, defending that free speech has its limits. The Moroccan government even organised a protest with the slogan: "Yes to free speech, no to disrespect for religion". On the other hand, we should pay particular attention to Turkey and its committed attitude to non-violent dialogue, explained by its role as a co-promoter of the Alliance of Civilisations.

The Israeli government opted for prudence and avoided any official reaction so as not to get involved in the crisis.

2.2. Political debate

The same priorities are to be found in the political debate as in the official reactions.

We can see consensus concerning free speech among all the parties in the European Union, but each country could also have other priorities. Respect for religion in France and Estonia, responsibility and tolerance in Italy and Lithuania, etc. We have also sometimes observed different priorities within the same country, for political or religious reasons. For example, in Germany and Hungary, the non-secular parties emphasised respect for religious freedom more than free speech. In Spain, the conservative party in opposition (the Partido Popular) presented itself as a defender of wes-

tern values (i.e. free speech without concessions to Islam), while the government (socialist) was more moderate and sensitive to the limits of free speech. This same political debate occurred in Italy and those in favour of open discourse concerning Islam opposed those defending a closed discourse.

With regard to the countries in the south of the Euro-Mediterranean Association (Turkey, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, etc.), all parties agreed concerning their condemnation of the cartoons, respect for religion and limits to free speech. The only difference lay in its political possibilities, such as in the Lebanon, where the cartoon crisis led to opposition between pro-Syrians and anti-Syrians. We also find other differences, as in Egypt: e.g. the call to boycott Danish products demanded by the conservatives.

One important element, valid for all countries without exception, was that the cartoon crisis did not have any impact on party programmes nor any kind of influence on political debate after the crisis.

2.3. Religious debate

Firstly, we should note that, without exception, Muslim authorities in all the countries condemned the cartoons. It should also be noted that, even in those countries from the Association with a Muslim majority (Turkey, Tunisia, etc.), this condemnation was almost always accompanied by an attitude of moderation and rejection of violence on the part of religious authorities, although in some cases there were groups, such as in Egypt, that wished to toughen relations with Denmark and spread radical rhetoric. The protests organised in Europe (in London, Brussels, Paris, Berlin, Düsseldorf, Bern, Barcelona, etc.), on the initiative of Muslim communities, were peaceful and did not give rise to large demonstrations, unlike those organised in countries with a Muslim majority in the month of February 2006.

Other religious communities (Catholic, Protestant, Jewish) from all countries, including Israel, joined the Muslim position, demanding respect, sensitivity towards beliefs and a responsible use of free speech.

We can also observe a consensus concerning condemnation of violence on the part of religious authorities, principally in Germany, Italy, Lithuania, Turkey, Tunisia and Israel.

Finally, it should be emphasised that the country where the controversy occurred (Denmark) underwent a debate in the heart of its Muslim community: numerous Danish Muslims considered that the debate was being monopolised by the Imams and, as they did not feel represented, created a new organisation: "Democratic Muslims".

2.4. Attitude of the population

Within the European Union, we could say that the population of some countries (such as France) disapproved quite generally of the cartoons, considering them to be aggressive, but public opinion in many countries (such as Denmark, Estonia, Lithuania and Spain) was quite mitigated, not to say divided, between people (especially Catholics) who opposed the debasing of religion on the one hand, and those in favour of free speech on the other. Often these feelings were combined, more than might be necessary, with a bad image of Islam, extended throughout society (as in the case of Denmark, Italy and Spain, where reticent attitudes have developed given the huge arrival of foreigners).

In the other Association countries (Turkey, Algeria, Tunisia, etc.), the general feeling was one of an offence to religion, although the tone of this reaction differed, sometimes depending on the level of education, social level or political leanings. This indignation led to demonstrations (in Turkey, Morocco, Egypt, Palestine, Jordan and the Lebanon), sometimes accompanied by violent acts against the embassies of Denmark and Norway.

2.5. Foreign communities

In those countries of the European Union where there are Muslim communities, condemnation of the cartoons and the lack of respect for Islam were unanimous by these communities (of Northern African origin or other).

On the other hand, we must also take into account the fact that, in a lot of countries (France, Germany, Denmark, Italy and Spain), foreign communities are or feel they are victims of social discrimination and prejudice. On the other hand, in Belgium it seems that the fact that Muslims are more integrated within the country's structures explains, in part, the moderate stances shown during the crisis.

Finally, in most cases the controversy of the cartoons did not lead to any political measure regarding these commu-

nities, except in Italy, where the Muslim Council was created during the crisis.

2.6. Media debate

The first finding is that, while the newspapers from some countries (naturally from Denmark, but also from France, Germany, Spain, Italy, Hungary, etc.) decided to publish the cartoons, or at least some of them, in the name of free speech and freedom of information, the newspapers from other countries expressly refused to reproduce them (Estonia, Turkey, Morocco, Tunisia, etc.). There was also the case of countries where the government banned their publication but where some newspapers defied the ban, as in the case of Jordan and especially Algeria, where the directors or editors in chief were imprisoned, based on an article in the penal code that prohibits offending the Prophet.

The second finding is that, in some countries (for example in France, Germany, Denmark and Spain), there was a difference between how television and radio handled the crisis and its handling by the press. The former were generally more sensationalist (insisting on the violence in countries with a Muslim majority, often making an analogy between the radicals and all Muslims). On the other hand, the press was, on the whole, more prudent, for example with more emphasis on analysing the crisis. It should be noted that, on occasions, any differences in media resided more in those associated with the government (as in Italy and Algeria) and the independent media. In other countries there was no kind of difference in the media (Estonia, Turkey, Morocco, Tunisia, Israel, etc.).

Thirdly, with regard to the themes tackled by the media, the most frequent (no matter which country) were free speech and its limits, respect for religion, Middle East conflict, the theory of the clash of civilisations or dialogue between civilisations and also, in some countries with a Muslim majority such as Egypt, how the West does not understand Islam. More rarely, as in the Lebanon, the themes of the political use of religion or of the racist nature of the cartoons were mentioned. In Jordan mention was also made of the "new anti-Muslim crusade".

2.7. Cultural debate

A debate between artists and writers only occurred in some countries such as France (concerning free speech and blasphemy), Germany (on free speech), Morocco (on the inappropriate violent reaction), Turkey, Egypt and Jordan (on limits to free speech and respect for religious beliefs), etc. In Denmark, writers were very active and they reminded people, in a protest, that ethnic minorities had been discriminated against for years.

On the other hand, in numerous countries (Italy, Spain, Lithuania, Algeria, Palestine, etc.), there was no kind of debate in artistic circles, or at least artists were not invited to participate in the media debate (as in the case of Tunisia).

2.8. Academic debate

Those countries where academic debate had an influence on public opinion were very rare: Germany (for the objective and international view of its experts), Spain (where they were widely publicised in the media) and Egypt (where lecturers from the University of Al-Azhar were very active in this crisis). But academic debate had very little influence in most countries.

With regard to the themes tackled by academic debate, we may cite, among others, blasphemy, freedom, the limits to free speech, the representation of Mohammed, secularism, the theory of the clash of civilisations and violence in the Middle East.

2.9. Function of the Euro-Mediterranean Association and of the European Union

We can state that almost no country in the European Union or from the Euro-Mediterranean Association made any reference to this Association.

The European Union was perceived by the countries as a whole as weak, divided and absent in the cartoon crisis.

2.10. Implications and solutions for the future

Here are some of the conclusions deduced from the crisis and some suggestions proposed by experts interviewed for this report:

- need for more efficacy and unity in European Union foreign policy;
- need for larger presence of institutions and more trans-

parent management of this kind of crisis;

- need for reflection on the part of the European Union on the notion of free speech and on its possible limits;
- need for interreligious dialogue between the "West" and the Muslim world;
- need to combat racism and stereotypes;
- preparation of televised school programmes to combat stereotypes, aimed at raising awareness of the Arab world;
- need for ethical accountability on the part of the media and politicians;
- preparation of crisis communication plans for the media;
- better integration policies for Muslim communities in European countries;
- need for or ineffectiveness of censorship and legal restrictions to protect religious beliefs.

3. The media

Although the media debate has been summarised in the above paragraph, in a journal dedicated to the media it is worth analysing in detail the media's reaction in the eighteen countries interviewed from the European Union and the Mediterranean.

3.1. Denmark

As the cartoon crisis originated in Denmark, it appeared in the headlines of the media. News items on Muslims were often treated with a conflictive focus, as "them against us". With regard to the themes tackled, most of all was the anger against Denmark, the safety of Danish citizens in the Arab world and the consequences of the boycott of Danish products.

The television news tended to show more sensationalist events (burning the Danish flag and setting fire to Danish embassies) rather than really explaining what was happening. For this reason, many Danes continued to think after the crisis that it was the Middle East that had risen up and become an enemy of Denmark.

In the press, which often had editorials on the front page, the crisis led to a great diversity of points of view. Various newspapers mentioned the errors committed in handling the crisis, while others insisted on Denmark's image in the

Middle East. The newspaper *Jyllands-posten* was particularly prominent, as it had published the cartoons that started the controversy. Throughout the crisis, this newspaper defended the argument of free speech but, on 30 January 2006, the editor in chief published a statement apologising for having published the cartoons, which had been perceived as an insult. The government, for its part, did not react towards the media coverage.

3.2. France

The media supported the cartoonists in the name of free speech. Many of them reproduced the cartoons and were highly critical of politicians who condemned publication.

We should point out a difference in how the crisis was handled between television and radio, on the one hand, and the press on the other. In the first case, coverage focused on Muslims' reactions in the world, while the newspapers dedicated themselves more to analysing this reaction and defending the cartoonists.

The media took into account the point of view of the president of the Republic, who had personally called "for maximum spirit of responsibility, of respect and of measure to avoid anything that might hurt another's beliefs". As from this moment, the media debate revolved around two main themes: not only free speech but also respect for religion.

Behind the generalised caution (the newspaper *Libération* did not publish the cartoons, *France-Soir* published them but its director was fired) a fear could be detected of the consequences of free speech in the area of national security.

3.3. Germany

The German newspapers that published the cartoons were *Taz*, *Der Tagesspiegel* and *Die Berliner Zeitung*, which may be considered as the quality papers, and the newspaper *Die Welt*, which is more sensationalist in nature. With regard to weeklies, *Focus* and *Der Spiegel* reproduced a part of the drawings. Most of the rest of the newspapers refused to publish the cartoons, as they felt they deliberately injured religious beliefs. On the other hand, the editor in chief of *Taz* saw a need to inform in publishing them.

There was a big difference in how the sensationalist media treated the issue, insisting a great deal on the violence

against Danish or western institutions in Muslim countries and, on the other hand, the "quality" media, which analysed the political and cultural reasons for the crisis.

With regard to the arguments used by the media, the theory of the clash of civilisations was rejected by most. It was more likely to be the link between violence in Muslim countries, in particular Iraq and Palestine, that was emphasised. Publications more aimed at the economy widely covered the Iranian boycott of German goods.

3.4. Belgium

All the quality media covered the cartoon crisis and various daily and weekly newspapers published the cartoons, but more to inform rather than to express a controversial position.

On the other hand, the press differed little from the television or radio. Their attitude particularly consisted of: 1) providing information; 2) highlighting the extremes reached in some countries; 3) informing quite discretely about the Belgian situation, undoubtedly for fear of causing controversy. For this reason, the government did not have to react concerning how the media handled the issue.

3.5. Italy

All the media covered the cartoon crisis, without any great differences in how they treated the issue, and some newspapers such as *La Stampa* published them, but there was also a difference in how the sensationalist newspapers and "quality" press handled the issue, or more precisely between the press associated with the parties in power, tending to analyse the crisis through prejudices towards Islam, and the press associated with the opposition. In any case, there was no kind of conflict between the media and the government.

With regard to the arguments used by the media, the most frequent was that of associating the crisis with conflict in the Middle East.

3.6. Spain

The large majority of the Spanish press covered the cartoon crisis and some newspapers such as *El País*, *El Periódico de Catalunya* and *ABC* reproduced them. The press handled this controversy as an international crisis in which

Spain was indirectly affected as a member of the European Union, but also because it has troops in Afghanistan and a Muslim community. With regard to differences in how the press and television and radio handled the issue, we can say that the latter insisted on the violent episodes, tending to present them as a reaction of all Muslims and not a few radicals, while newspapers offered a more critical and global analysis.

With regard to the arguments used by the media, we can principally cite free speech, the theory of the clash of civilisations (or the need to avoid it) and the international context in the Middle East.

In addition to this, the cartoon crisis was also used by Spanish newspapers to position themselves with respect to the government. *El País* showed the virtues of the Alliance of Civilisations, while conservative and Catholic newspapers used the crisis to show how the socialist focus had eroded the areas of foreign policy and religious affairs.

The government did not react to the media, apart from a call for caution and dialogue aimed at all society.

3.7. Estonia

There was no significant difference between the quality and sensationalist press in how they handled the cartoon crisis. The press avoided publishing them, except for one small magazine, *KesKus*, which published them after the crisis. With regard to how different media handled the issue, the press took a more cautious approach than television and did not reproduce the cartoons.

The arguments used in the media debate were essentially the need for religious respect, the preservation of free speech and the independence of the press.

3.8. Lithuania

The press' reactions were varied. While most of the media adopted the line of free speech and defended European values, i.e. they mentioned the theory of the clash of civilisations, some expressed the need for self-regulation of the country's press.

3.9. Hungary

The crisis was broadly covered by the media, although no great difference was detected in how it was handled by the press.

Two newspapers, *Népszabadság* (associated with the Socialist Party, the large party in the coalition), and *Magyar Hírlap* (associated with the Liberal Party, the smaller party in the coalition), published two cartoons. They did so in the name of free speech and in sympathy for their colleagues in Western Europe, rather than for the cartoons per se.

The debate in the media insisted on two main themes: free speech and a refusal to be sarcastic about religious symbols, as well as the impression of growing Muslim hostility with regard to the west.

3.10. Turkey

No Turkish medium reproduced the cartoons, which were only available on the Internet.

The main media, press, television and radio, were generally critical towards the cartoons and considered that they insulted religious beliefs and that free speech is not absolute. However, the violence occurring in other Muslim countries was severely criticised and placed within the broader context of the Middle East conflict.

The government did not react at all to the attitude of the media, seeing as it did not differ from its own attitude.

3.11. Algeria

The press and the broadcasting media, of any leaning, refused to publish the cartoons. The only distinction was that the public media, such as radio and television, controlled by the government, reacted much more moderately and in a controlled manner than the press, mostly in private hands.

The government condemned two newspapers (*Emissala* and *Essafir*) which, in spite of denouncing the cartoons, published some of them. The directors of these two weeklies were imprisoned for one month based on an article in the penal code that punishes anyone offending the Prophet with three to five months' imprisonment.

With regard to the arguments used in the debate, the government made sure the prevalent thesis was that of the dialogue of civilisations.

3.12. Morocco

The cartoons were not reproduced in the broadcasting media. In fact, the judicial police interrogated two journalists from the pro-Arab newspaper *Annahar Almaghribia* for

having published one of the cartoons. Moreover, the minister of Communication officially banned the circulation of the newspaper *France-Soir*, which reproduced the dozen cartoons, and also refused the request by another French newspaper, *Le Monde*, stating that it was impossible to permit the distribution of any publication in Morocco likely to offend "the sacred nature of the nation and its spiritual values". However, two Moroccan newspapers started up a debate by asking why Jesus could be caricatured and not Mohammed.

The press as a whole condemned the publication of the cartoons and the act was defined as provocative and irresponsible, the main arguments being limits to free speech and the dialogue of civilisations, as well as the international context.

3.13. Tunisia

The Tunisian media did not have any attitude of their own: they were merely spokespeople for the government's position and insisted on censorship or closing down western newspapers as a consequence of the cartoons being published. This attitude was general throughout the broadcasting media.

Various newspapers, principally Francophone, paid tribute by inviting some intellectuals to react to the event, but the intention was fundamentally one of responding to Robert Ménard (secretary general of "Reporters without borders"), a critic of the Tunisian regime and firm defender of free speech, that "insult is not a form of speech".

3.14. Palestinian Authority

There was no debate on the official television channel in Palestine. The three newspapers that represent the "quality" press reflected the protests and the Danish boycott. One of the other themes mentioned was the theory of the clash of civilisations.

3.15. Egypt

All broadcasting media covered the crisis, both television and radio, and we should particularly note the newspaper *Al Fagr*, which published six cartoons in the middle of October 2005. The sensationalist press talked of a conspiracy against Islam and made repeated references to the clash of civilisations.

The quality press abstained from any sensationalism and asked intellectuals for their opinion on how to end the crisis. Most of the solutions insisted on the need for dialogue with the west.

3.16. Jordan

The media all had the same reaction as the population and the political and religious classes in Jordan: they presented the publication of the cartoons as an attack on the Prophet and therefore an unacceptable offence. For this reason the cartoons were not reproduced in the media, except by the editors from two newspapers (*Shihane* and *Al-Mehwar*) who were condemned and imprisoned for offending religious feeling.

With regard to the arguments cited to explain the crisis, mention was made of the international context, as well as the theory of the clash of civilisations and the idea that it was a new anti-Muslim crusade.

3.17. Lebanon

In the "quality press", principally *Safir* and *Nahar*, analytical articles did not appear that were sufficiently critical of Muslims' reactions in the world until after the violent demonstration of 5 February.

In one article, a journalist considered that the condemnation should have highlighted the racist nature of the cartoons and not the argument of offending the person of the Prophet. Another article insinuated that the anger of the masses had been manipulated by some political regimes.

3.18. Israel

The broadcasting media were the most active in the Israeli debate of the cartoons.

The arguments of the debate present in the media were as follows:

- Many Muslims in Europe and in the world had reacted to the insult with violence, against Jews;
- The Muslim world had adopted a dual discourse and hypocritical attitude, as the media in Arab countries and Iran are slanderous towards Islam (as was a cartoon that showed Anna Frank in bed with Hitler!);

- The message of the cartoons simply meant that some Muslims invoked the name of the Prophet to kill;
- Free European societies showed weakness towards the violent intimidation of an intolerant Islam;
- The clash of cultures or civilisations is not a threat but already present.

4. Conclusions

To summarise the Mohammed cartoon crisis we can highlight the main features that characterised the behaviour of the different countries in the Euro-Mediterranean Association:

- Free speech was the key word in political debate in all countries of the European Union but, although this position was defended without concession by the Danish government, the governments from other countries defended it with more nuances, combining it with other priorities such as respect for others, religious freedom and dialogue (depending on the political trends of the different parties and especially religious beliefs). With regard to the attitudes of the populations of Europe, these were divided between those in favour of respect for religion and those in favour of unlimited free speech. This last point of view could be related to the prejudices towards Muslims in various European countries that have a significant minority of Muslims (between 1% and 10%).
- Limits to free speech and respect for religion were the key words in all countries in the southern Mediterranean. Both governments as well as Muslim authorities expressed this point of view, as well as refusing to publish the cartoons (apart from the odd exception) and condemning violence. With regard to the attitudes of Mediterranean populations, these were generally also in favour of respect for religion (with more or less indifference or indignation).
- A third point to make is the dominant role of the political class and the media in the crisis, with a big difference between the quality and sensationalist press in Europe, the latter tending to insist on the violence and to put radical Muslims and Muslims as a whole into the same

box. On the other hand, the academic and cultural world generally had very little influence on the debate.

- Fourthly, it should be made very clear that, in all the countries consulted, the European Union and the instruments of the Euro-Mediterranean Association were hardly noticed in the controversy of the cartoons and were not considered capable of playing any role in handling the crisis.
- Finally, since the cartoon crisis it seems that hostility towards Muslims has increased in Europe. In Denmark, 45% of the population say they are less sympathetic towards Muslims since this controversy. The European Observatory on Racism has recently confirmed that Muslims feel threatened and misunderstood, they suffer from continual attacks and have difficulties in finding rented accommodation, employment or a place in education.