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## **DANISH FAR-RIGHT PARTY CALLING FOR MUSLIM DEPORTATION TO STAND IN ELECTION**

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The Guardian (5 May 2019)

A far-right political party demanding the deportation of all Muslims and the preservation of the country for its ethnic community will be on the ballot paper in Denmark for the first time, in a general election due to be called within days.

The Stram Kurs, or Hard Line party, led by Rasmus Paludan – a lawyer who is currently appealing against a conviction for racism – is feared to be on track to gain MPs after recently passing a threshold of voter support needed to stand in the election.

A national election has to take place before 17 June under Danish law. Denmark's prime minister, Lars Løkke Rasmussen, is expected to launch the campaign early this week.

Paludan, whose videos on YouTube, eccentric fashion sense and penchant for stunts have long earned him a following among teenagers, has emerged in recent weeks from relative obscurity to become headline news in Denmark.

Stram Kurs received the required 20,000 signatures of endorsement from voters to stand in the elections after he played a central role in fomenting riots over Easter in the ethnically diverse Nørrebro district of Copenhagen.

Paludan, who has taken to regularly provoking unrest through anti-Islam demonstrations in areas of the Danish capital where large numbers of Muslims live, had tossed a book in the air he claimed was the Quran and let it fall to the ground.

He is currently banned from commenting on Facebook following the posting of a picture the platform said broke its rules, which include a prohibition on hate speech aimed at people of a particular religion or ethnicity. He is also appealing against a conviction from April for expressing racist views about Africans in a video recording.

Such are the concerns over Stram Kurss potential foothold in Danish politics that the leader of the Social Liberal party, Morten Østergaard, a former government minister, has called for the mainstream parties to rule out the prospect of the party forming part of a future governing coalition.

We need to point out that there is a distinction between us and those who want to cleanse selected communities based on their beliefs or race, Østergaard said. There must be something called right and wrong in the Danish society.

In order to be represented in the parliament, the party must now either pass a threshold of 2% of the national vote in the election, or gain a district seat. Stram Kurs is currently standing at 2.2% in the polls.

Rasmussens centre-right Venstre party has run a minority government since 2015 with the support of the far-right Danish Peoples party along with the Liberal Alliance and the Conservative Peoples party.

But Østergaard said there was a profound difference between the anti-immigration Danish Peoples party and Stram Kurs, which campaigns in favour of so-called ethnic Danes and the need to deport all Muslims.

Its not about them, but about myself, and what I want as a politician, Østergaard said. I do not want to legitimise people who point to Danish citizens and say that they must not be in our society because of their religious beliefs. I dont want to legitimise them by working with them.

Despite the controversy, some of the political parties appear loth to follow the example in Sweden, where the far-right party, the Swedish Democrats, were blocked out of coalition talks, leading to 133 days of party negotiations and the forming of an unstable minority administration earlier this year.

The Danish prime ministers spokesman, Britt Bager, when questioned over Rasmussens attitude towards Stram Kurss potential involvement in a government, has refused to rule it out.

Lars Løkke takes a position when we know the final election result, she told the Danish newspaper Politiken. Were not going to take a stand now.

The countrys justice minister, Søren Pape Poulsen, who is also leader of the Conservative Peoples party, suggested that it would be a mistake to ignore the new party on the scene, although he insisted that he did not see any potential areas of cooperation.

A party spokesman, Naser Khader, told reporters: You need to hear what he wants and what is to be negotiated.

Prof Rune Stubager, from the department of political science at Aarhus University, said Stram Kurs would have to stand in all 10 Danish constituencies to gain representation in parliament.

He said: One candidate from the party I saw is a pro-bono artist who makes his art by peeing in public. He has a conviction for peeing in public as the court didnt see the art in it. Many more candidates of this type and it will surely count against them.

Stubager said that Paludan was a different sort of creature in the circus of Danish politics.

He will have to compete against the Danish Peoples party and the New Right for the anti-immigrant vote and they are established parties, he said.

But Stubager said the two rivals would be unlikely to be able to match Paludans demand for the forced deportation of Muslims.

What will be really interesting will be to see how they respond: they will have to say that not all Muslims are criminals and that would be a new thing from them, he said.

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