

<https://www.internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article1361>



Denmark

Red Green Alliance maintains parliamentary representation by narrow margin

- IV Online magazine - 2007 - IV394 - November 2007 -

Publication date: Monday 26 November 2007

Copyright © International Viewpoint - online socialist magazine - All rights reserved

In the national elections on 13th November the Red Green Alliance struggled to maintain parliamentary representation. With a result of 2,17 % of the vote it only passed the 2 % limit by a narrow margin.

[https://www.internationalviewpoint.org/IMG/jpg/180px-Asmaa_Abdol-Hamid-2.jpg]

Asmaa Abdol-Hamid

Red Green Alliance candidate

It is the worst result for the RGA since it entered parliament in 1994. It expresses a huge drop in support in comparison with the last national election in February 2005 where 3,4 % was achieved.

In the opinion polls the RGA mainly lost support after choosing [Asmaa Abdol-Hamid](#) as candidate in May 2007. Some former RGA voters give her candidacy as the reason for not voting for the RGA again. The RGA conference in May gave a position which meant she would be elected for parliament if RGA maintained its 6 seats.

She is a young Muslim woman who wears a [hijab](#) and who doesn't shake hands with men. Her religion and the way she expresses it has created doubt, to which the media has contributed, about the RGA's positions on religion and rights. The RGA has never had as much media coverage as in the last six months: it has been all about Asmaa and whether she is really against the death penalty and religious fundamentalism. The RGA has not been able to regain credibility.

Asmaa's candidacy nevertheless can not be seen as the only reason for the RGA's decline in votes. The left reformist [Socialist Peoples Party](#) (SPP) was the big winner of the elections. It more than doubled its votes, from 6 % to 13 %, for two reasons. The new chairman [Villy SÅ,vndal](#) seemed to be much clearer and more dynamic than former chairman Holger K. Nielsen in the 2005 elections. But it is also an expression of the radicalisation based on the big mobilisations for welfare in the last year and half. Furthermore, the RGA had no candidate with the same personal mass appeal as was the case with [Pernille Rosenkrantz-Theil](#) in 2005 elections.

However, Abdol-Hamid's candidature has provoked a combination of several arguments. In the [Red Green Alliance](#) constituency, and the general public, there is a tendency to identify her way of being Muslim (for example, wearing the hijab and not shaking hands with men) as being reactionary. There are several other Muslims who stood as candidates for parliament, including the leader of New Alliance [Naser Khader](#). However, they are not questioned because their religion is less noticeable in public. In so far as the forced wearing of the hijab is seen as being being reactionary then the hijab is an expression of women's oppression: a candidate wearing a hijab is then seen by some as promoting women's oppression.

Although the idea that Islam is a reactionary religion has been promoted in Denmark, and has some influence, more people have a problem with her not shaking hands than being Muslim. This is often seen as being strange, disrespectful and against gender equality by being discriminative towards men.

Several articles in the press quoted her in a way that suggested ambiguous positions on death penalty and other positions. She responded and made it very clear that she is against the death penalty, as she is also in favour of Gay-Lesbian rights. This contradiction has created an image of her being unclear and untrustworthy.

There is also some who think say the RGA should be an atheist party. Though this has never been the position of

RGA it came up in discussions when we chose a Muslim as a candidate.

Abdol-Hamid is also less experienced and politically educated than most candidates, which the press have exploited. Almost all press coverage about the RGA has been about her candidacy, something which seemed a catastrophe to many RGA members.

The situation continued with negative press coverage and internal debate about her candidacy. Leading members of the RGA like myself came to the conclusion that it would have been better to give her a less prominent position as had been proposed by a minority of delegates at the May conference. The National Leadership decided to call for an extraordinary conference to be held on 17th November. Just as the conference planning got underway, the Prime Minister decided to call for elections on the 13th November.

Looking ahead, the discussion is what the RGA could have done to avoid its loss of support. There is no doubt that the candidacy of Asmaa was the main reason of RGA's loss. With hindsight, it was a mistake to have given Abdol-Hamid such a high position on the RGA's candidates in this election. She should have been a candidate in a position where she would become an alternate MP. Most delegates at the RGA conference in May didn't get to know her or her points of view.

Being Muslim is not a reason in itself to become a candidate, though should it be no hindrance.

The RGA has the problem after the election that the reaction to Asmaa's candidacy is a sign of the division in the working class concerning ethnic and religious minorities. The candidacy of a Muslim believer happens in a situation where, on the national and international agenda of the rulers, the enemy has changed from communism to Islam: And the ruling ideas tend to be the ideas of the ruling class.

Furthermore to this general view two other factors are relevant when making the balance sheet of Asmaa's candidacy. First of all, a part of the core voters for the RGA asked if it's possible to be both deeply religious and socialist. That relevant question wasn't clearly answered. The other point was that the positions of Asmaa - those she actually expressed and those she was attributed to have - created further confusion. That's why it's not that surprising that the candidacy of Asmaa had a certain influence on the electoral result.

The RGA is faced with a difficult discussion about this background and it is decisive that it doesn't lead to a split of the party. Our position is that being religious is in itself not a reason to discard people as candidates for parliament or other positions in the RGA. But at the same time we underline that there is room in the RGA for members who disagree.

Electoral results %

Party	2007	2005
Liberal Party	26,2	29
Social Democrats	25,5	25,8
Danish Peoples Party	13,9	13,3
Socialist Peoples Party	13	6

Red Green Alliance maintains parliamentary representation by narrow margin

Conservative	10,4	10,3
Social Liberal Party	5,1	9,2
New Alliance	2,8	-
Red Green Alliance	2,2	3,4
Christian Democrats	0,9	1,7