

Ayaan Hirsi Ali

- Ayaan Hirsi Ali is a **Somali-born American activist, former Dutch politician, and a former Muslim**. The author of four books, she advocates against “honor killings,” forced marriages, and female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C), and calls for Islamic “reformation.” **She has said that Islam is “a destructive, nihilistic cult of death” that must be “defeated.”**
- In 2016, the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) included Hirsi Ali in its list of “anti-Muslim extremists” for “position[ing] herself as an ex-Muslim champion of women’s rights.” SPLC describes her “anti-Muslim rhetoric” as “remarkably toxic.” **Critics have called her a “native informant,”** and journalists have raised concerns over the truthfulness of her backstory about growing up Muslim in East Africa. The Center for American Progress (CAP) identifies Hirsi Ali as **a leading activist in the “Islamophobia network.”**
- Hirsi Ali **believes Islamic “religious doctrines” are to blame for the mistreatment of women**. When discussing honor killings, Hirsi Ali cites examples solely committed by Muslims. In 2007, Hirsi Ali started the AHA Foundation, a nonprofit advocacy group addressing honor killings, forced marriages, and FGM/C.
- In a 2007 interview with the online magazine *Reason*, Hirsi Ali said, **“I think that we are at war with Islam. And there’s no middle ground in wars. Islam can be defeated in many ways.”** When asked if “radical Islam” is what must be defeated, she said, “No. Islam, period. Once it’s defeated, it can mutate into something peaceful. It’s very difficult to even talk about peace now. They’re not interested in peace.” When pressed further, she agreed that Islam must be defeated militarily.
- In the same interview, Hirsi Ali said, **“There is infiltration of Islam in the schools and universities of the West.”** She advocated “clos[ing]” of “all” Muslims schools in the United States. In another 2007 interview, with *The London Evening Standard*, Hirsi Ali called Islam **“a destructive, nihilistic cult of death”** and **“the new fascism.”**
- During a 2015 appearance on the Daily Show to promote her book, *Heretic: Why Islam Needs a Reformation Now*, Hirsi Ali claimed that “70% of global violence in the world today -- Muslims are responsible.” Critics note a lack of evidence for this claim. **Many Muslims have challenged the notion that Islam needs the “reformation” she calls for.**
- In 2015, Hirsi Ali gave the keynote address at **ACT for America’s national conference**. ACT has been designated a hate group by the Southern Poverty Law Center. In 2017, Hirsi Ali testified in a Senate committee hearing on “Ideology and Terror: Understanding the Tools, Tactics, and Techniques of Violent Extremism.”
- In 2004, Hirsi Ali collaborated with Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh to produce a controversial short film about Islam called *Submission*. Van Gogh was murdered in the aftermath of the film’s airing, and Hirsi Ali’s life was threatened.
- While a Member of Parliament in the Netherlands, Hirsi Ali also **worked with Geert Wilders**, who believes that “Islam is not a religion, it’s an ideology, the ideology of a retarded culture.” He also wants to ban the Qur’an in the Netherlands.
- Appearing on *Real Time with Bill Maher* in 2012, Hirsi Ali asserted that **“Islam is not a religion of peace.”** She also compared the “Holocaust in Germany” to the “suppression of the Dhimmis...in the Middle East.” Scholars have challenged similar mischaracterizations of the status of religious minorities under Muslim rule.
- In March 2017, 270 Australian Muslim writers, academics, and activists launched a petition to protest Hirsi Ali’s invitation to speak in Australia, claiming that she benefits from “an industry that exists to dehumanize Muslim women.” In addition to this sign-on letter, six female activists released a video, which went viral, to assert that Hirsi Ali “doesn’t speak for us.” Hirsi Ali cancelled her tour citing security concerns and said her female critics were “carrying water” for the “Islamists.”
- In 2016, Ayaan Hirsi Ali appeared in two short videos for the conservative media organization, PragerU: “Why Don’t Feminists Fight for Muslim Women?” and “Is Islam a Religion of Peace?”. **The videos have garnered a combined 15 million views.** Hirsi Ali also holds fellowships at Harvard and Stanford; critics have characterized these appointments as providing “an academic veneer” that validates her controversial positions.

IMPACT: Describing herself as a human rights advocate for women and girls, Ayaan Hirsi Ali is a public figure who frequently appears in the media to discuss Islam. She calls for Islamic “reformation” and believes that violence against women is inherently Islamic. Hirsi Ali has worked with politicians and anti-Muslim activists, both in the U.S. and abroad.