

MIDDLE EAST FORUM

IMPACT: The Middle East Forum is a right-wing anti-Islam think tank that spreads misinformation, creates “watchlists” targeting academics, and advocates hawkish foreign policy. MEF provides funding to numerous anti-Muslim organizations and has provided legal services to a number of anti-Muslim activists including Geert Wilders and Tommy Robinson.

- The Middle East Forum (MEF) is a non-profit organization led by Daniel Pipes, that “**promotes American interests in the Middle East and protects Western values from Middle Eastern threats.**” It **views the Middle East as an amalgam of “dictatorships, radical ideologies, existential conflicts...”** and **focuses on ways to defeat “radical Islam” abroad and “lawful Islamism” domestically.** It pursues these goals through policy recommendations, public lectures, television appearances, and distributing \$1.5 million in grants.
- The **Center for American Progress** describes the MEF as a “**controversial far-right think-tank that is known for its anti-Islam views and hawkish foreign policy recommendations.**”
- According to 2015 tax filings, the total functional expenses for the MEF were \$3,472,821. Among **research grants that the MEF provided to peer institutions in 2015 were \$100,000 to Center for Security Policy (CSP) and \$10,000 to the David Horowitz Freedom Center (DHFC).** MEF has also provided grants to the Investigative Project on Terrorism and the American-Islamic Forum for Democracy (AIFD).
- The **MEF has received millions of dollars from Donors Capital Fund (\$6,768,000), William Rosenwald Family Fund, Middle Road Foundation, and Abstraction Fund (\$4,248,729).** These groups have also funded Investigative Project on Terrorism, Clarion Project, the DHFC, CSP, Jihad Watch and the AIFD.
- The MEF has a number of projects including Islamist Watch, Campus Watch, The Legal Project, Shillman/Ginsburg Writing Fellowship Program, Jihad Intel, Campus Speakers Bureau and Washington Project.
- Islamist Watch was created to stop “Islamists” in the West “quietly, lawfully, [and] peacefully ... [imposing] aspects of Islamic law, win[ning] special privileges for themselves, shut[ting] down criticism of Islam, creat[ing] Muslim-only zones, and depriv[ing] women and non-Muslims of their full civil rights.” It **seeks to “widen the ‘war on terror’ from violent extremists to non-violent extremists”** and pursues its goals through a number of avenues including “think tank research, textbooks, campus activities, the media, philanthropy, political lobbying, lawsuits, [and] feature movies.”
- **Islamist Watch contains a compilation of “extensive profiles of organizations, activists and clerics belonging [to] various Islamist networks.” Among the organizations listed are the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), the largest Muslim civil liberties organization, the Muslim Public Affairs Council, and the Muslims Student Association. CAIR has disputed such claims, but Islamist Watch continues to accuse it and other organizations of trying to infiltrate the U.S. and impose Islamic law,** perpetuating the anti-Muslim trope that Islam is a political ideology that seeks to dominate the West through “stealth jihad,” rather than a religion.
- **Campus Watch** “reviews and critiques Middle East studies in North America, with an aim to [improve] them” by critiquing the “teaching and scholarship of academic specialists.” The **project has been criticized by the Middle East Studies Association for its “defamatory attacks on educators and researchers in the field.”**

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- In November 2002, **Campus Watch was involved in a controversy over its “blacklisting project” whereby it “posted ‘dossiers’ on eight scholars who ... criticize US foreign policy and the Israeli occupation.”** In [response](#), approximately 100 professors asked to have their names added to the **list in opposition to the project**. The “dossiers” were subsequently [dropped](#) from the page. However, Campus Watch continues to keep a list of recommended “[Professors to Avoid](#)” and a list of the professors who stood against the dossiers in 2002 under the title “[Solidarity with Apologists](#)”
- The goal of [Jihad Intel](#) is to educate “law enforcement and the general public with intelligence on radical Islam and Islamic terrorist groups” and to provide “local and state police with tools to connect the dots before major terrorist incidents.”
- The **Legal Project seeks to “protect researchers and analysts who work on the topics of terrorism, terrorist funding, and radical Islam from lawsuits designed to silence their exercise of free speech.”** In 2006, **The Legal Project defended Steven Emerson** in a lawsuit mounted against them by The Islamic Society of Boston, which [alleged](#) he and 16 others “waged a media war against the project.” The lawsuit was later [withdrawn](#), however. In June 2011, Dutch anti-Islam politician, [Geert Wilders](#) was [acquitted](#) of inciting hatred against Muslims. Wilders [thanked](#) the Legal Project for their “help, advice and [assistance],” and the **Legal Project acknowledged that it “worked on Wilders’ behalf and has raised substantial funds for his defense.”**
- In 2018, **MEF stated it provided the funding for British anti-Muslim activist’s, [Tommy Robinson](#), legal defense** through its legal project. Additionally, **MEF organized two “Free Tommy” rallies**, one of which turned [violent](#). The **think-tank also covered the travel costs of Rep. Paul Gosar (R-AZ) who spoke at one of the rallies in London.**
- Washington Project [attempts](#) to influence “U.S. policy ... through intensive in-person contacts in the capital.” Its 2017 agenda [included](#) narrowing the definition of “Palestinian Refugee,” increasing extreme vetting of Muslim immigrants, “defeating radical Islam,” teaching law enforcement about Jihad, and improving [Countering Violent Extremism \(CVE\)](#) programs.
- The **MEF and Pipes were cited numerous times in Anders Breivik’s manifesto detailing the far-right mass murderer’s motivations for his July 2011 attack** that resulted in the death of more than 70 Norwegians. Other individuals cited in the manifesto were [Frank Gaffney](#), [Steven Emerson](#), [Pamela Geller](#) and [Robert Spencer](#).