

# Robert Spencer

- Robert Spencer is best known for his writing and media commentary on Islam and violence, and for organizing the opposition to the so-called **“Ground Zero Mosque” in 2010.**
- Along with **Pamela Geller**, Spencer leads the American Freedom Defense Initiative (AFDI) and Stop the Islamization of America (SIOA), both of which have been identified as **anti-Muslim groups** by the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC). In 2010, Spencer and Geller launched the protest movement against a planned Manhattan community center that included a Muslim prayer space.
- Spencer and Geller’s groups have funded more than a dozen **public transit ad campaigns that cast Islam as a source of violence** and intolerance. One poster read: “Islamic Jew Hatred: It’s in the Quran.” As a result of controversy over the ads’ content, some cities banned the ads.
- Through AFDI, Spencer and Geller held the **“Muhammad Art Exhibit and Contest”** in June 2015 in Garland, Texas, in which participants submitted crude and lewd caricatures of Islam’s last prophet, Muhammad. That event made headlines after two armed men with alleged ISIS sympathies attempted to attack the event and were killed by police.
- Spencer writes daily for **Jihad Watch**, a website he runs aimed at “exposing the role Islamic jihad theology and ideology play in modern global conflicts.” There, Spencer also critiques professors, politicians, and activists whom he sees as **“Islamic supremacists and their Leftist enablers.”** Jihad Watch is a project of the David Horowitz Freedom Center. Both the Freedom Center and Spencer’s website are considered hate groups by the SPLC.
- Trump Administration chief strategist **Steve Bannon has often praised Spencer and considers him an “expert,”** “probably the most renowned, or among the most renowned, of folks that are on the watch tower to make sure that we’re fully aware of this threat, this existential war...” Bannon has called Spencer’s website, Jihad Watch, a “go-to site.”
- As the *Boston Globe* has reported, **Spencer’s work depicts Islam as an inherently violent religion.** Spencer believes Islam is different from other religions in that it is a **“political religion,”** a position also espoused by others who work for anti-Muslim groups. Spencer claims that Islam is “the only major world religion with a developed doctrine and tradition of warfare against unbelievers.” In his 2003 book *Inside Islam*, published by a Catholic publishing house, Spencer wrote that **“Islam constitutes a threat to the world at large.”**
- Spencer made international news when his writings on Islam were cited 64 times by the Norwegian mass murderer Anders Breivik in his manifesto on what Breivik called the “Islamization of Europe.”
- Along with those who run anti-Muslim groups, Spencer **claims that American Muslim organizations and mosques are front groups for terrorists.** He has also given voice to unsubstantiated claims about **“no-go zones,”** and expressed unfounded concerns that U.S. law is at risk of being usurped by *sharia*, which he portrays as an unchanging and brutal legal code.
- Spencer has become an influential commentator on issues relating to Islam through his online articles, many books, media appearances on networks like Fox News and Christian Broadcasting Network. According to the *Washington Post*, Spencer is one of many “anti-Muslim speakers” who has trained law enforcement about Islam.
- Spencer’s speaking engagements have sparked controversy, and critics have claimed that his work and activities “incite hate.” At a 2015 rally against a nearby Islamic conference in Texas, **he stated that the “goal” of the American Muslims at the conference, and that of the Charlie Hebdo attackers, “is exactly the same.”**
- Amid anti-Muslim attacks and hate crimes in 2015, **Spencer said that there is “false narrative that Muslims are treated unjustly in this country.”** Downplaying acts of bigotry that have targeted Muslims in the West, he claims that “Islamophobia was a term designed as a weapon to stigmatize and silence anyone who opposed jihad terror.”
- A Catholic, Spencer has written about Islam for a U.S. Catholic audience, and some Catholic media outlets have cited him as an expert on Islam. As documented in the Bridge Initiative report, **“Danger and Dialogue: American Catholic Public Opinion and Portrayals of Islam,”** his work has also been sold by some mainstream Catholic publishers and bookstores.
- Numerous **non-Muslim groups and organizations, like the Anti-Defamation League, have criticized Spencer’s work.** The Center for American Progress has identified Spencer as one of the **“misinformation experts”** fueling Islamophobia, and former national security official Robert Crane described Spencer as “the principal leader... in the new academic field of Islam bashing.”

**IMPACT:** Though less well-known than his colleague, Pamela Geller, Robert Spencer heads anti-Muslim organizations and is one of the leading writers claiming that Islam promotes violence. Trump administration strategist Steve Bannon considers him an expert on Islam.