

# VIKTOR ORBAN

**IMPACT:** Viktor Orbán, the Prime Minister of Hungary, is staunchly anti-immigration and has promoted anti-Semitic and Islamophobic conspiracy theories, including the belief that Muslim refugees are invading Europe to replace the white Christian population. Under Orbán's leadership, Hungary has shifted towards authoritarianism.

- Viktor Orbán is the **leader of Hungary's centrist-right political party Fidesz and has been the Prime Minister of Hungary since 2010**, when he won a landslide victory. In 2018, Orbán secured his third consecutive term as PM and described the victory as "an opportunity to 'defend Hungary.'" A senior Fidesz party member noted the **party's anti-migrant message was key in the 2018 campaign: "It is simply the fear of migrants. Fidesz did a single-issue campaign and it was successful."**
- Orbán is known for his social and national conservatism, as well as soft Euroscepticism. He openly supports a system of "illiberal democracy." **Orbán is often criticized for his shift towards authoritarianism as well as his anti-Semitism and Islamophobia.** Under Orbán's leadership, Fidesz has fully embraced an Islamophobic agenda.
- In 1988, Orbán became a member of the Central-Eastern Europe study group funded by the Soros Foundation. A year later, he received a Soros Foundation scholarship to study the history of British liberal political philosophy at Pembroke College, Oxford University. **Despite personally benefiting from George Soros's philanthropy, Orbán has led an anti-Semitic campaign targeting the Hungarian-American financier in recent years.**
- A 2019 BBC article stated that **Orbán and his government "claim Mr. Soros has a secret plot to flood Hungary with migrants and destroy their nation," echoing the anti-Semitic and Islamophobic "great replacement" conspiracy theory**, which was referenced by the Christchurch mosque gunman and the Tree of Life Synagogue shooter.
- A 2019 article in Politico recalled that during the 2017 parliamentary election, "Orbán promoted anti-Semitic imagery of powerful Jewish financiers scheming to control the world. Thousands of posters of a grinning Soros with the slogan 'Let's not allow Soros to have the last laugh!' were posted around the country."
- While propagating anti-Semitic stereotypes, **Orbán has also accused Soros and the EU of wanting to "Muslimise" Europe. In a July 2017 speech, Orbán said that the "Soros Empire" is using "money, people and institutions to transport migrants into Europe."** According to Orbán's rhetoric, Soros—and his alleged "co-conspirator" the EU—threaten the Christian character of Europe: "Europe is currently being prepared to hand its territory over to a new mixed, Islamised Europe. [...] In order for this to happen, for the territory to be ready to be handed over, it is necessary to continue the de-Christianisation of Europe - and we can see these attempts." **Fidesz officials have often linked immigrants and Islam to crimes and terrorism.**
- Following the Charlie Hebdo terrorist attacks in Paris on January 7, 2015, **Orbán called for an end to economic immigration as "migrants from other cultures bring only trouble and danger" and announced a plan to keep migrants out of Hungary.**
- In 2015, Orbán used the 'migrant-Islam-terrorism nexus' and 'Christian Europe must be saved from Islam' doctrines to justify a number of domestic and international measures. **Orbán rhetorically positioned himself as the sole defender of Christian Europe. He argued that the Hungarian people are unwilling to live with Muslims.** In support of this claim, he evoked the country's 150 years of experience under Ottoman rule. For Orbán, Islam is not a part of Europe and Muslims should be kept out of Europe to "keep Europe Christian."

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- A July 2019 report from the *Brookings Institution* [found](#) that “Orbán advocates for keeping Hungary Hungarian, and Europe European. As a result, Fidesz excludes the possibility of Muslim immigrants’ integration in Europe and even the peaceful coexistence of Christian and Muslim civilizations as well.”
- After the **European Union agreed to relocate 120,000 refugees from war-torn Syria and Iraq across its member states, Orbán argued that the quota system would “redraw Hungary’s and Europe’s ethnic, cultural and religious identities, which no EU organ has the right to do.”** In response, the Hungarian government initiated a referendum against the EU proposal in 2016 and Orbán’s party [claimed](#) that major European cities, such as London, Brussels, Marseille, Berlin, Stockholm, and Malmö had become “no-go” areas due to high levels of immigration. **The party went on to claim that high levels of immigration produced a spike in terrorism and violent assault, and that authorities are unable to impose order in 900 such areas in Western Europe, implying that there was a Muslim take-over.** Orbán’s referendum gained parliamentary [support](#) not only from the governing Fidesz but also from KDNP (Christian Democratic) lawmakers, as well as MPs of the oppositional extreme-right, [Jobbik](#). [Amnesty International](#) described Orbán’s campaign rhetoric as one that “replaced the rule of law with the rule of fear”.
- **Members of Orbán’s Fidesz regularly broadcast their anti-Muslim positions online.** For instance, MEP György Schöpflin [suggested](#) in a tweet on 20 August 2016 that the government install pig heads on Hungary’s border fence to scare off Muslim refugees. This tweet was widely circulated in [media](#).
- As part of his fight against the rule of law, **Orbán shut down the country’s largest left-wing daily newspaper Népszabadság in October 2016. This was a serious attack against the media outlet, which also provided a counter-narrative to the government’s anti-Islam and anti-migrant rhetoric.** Other right-wing politicians have been inspired by Orbán’s actions. For example, [Heinz-Christian Strache](#), the leader of the Austrian right-wing party FPÖ, said he wanted [control over the media landscape](#) like Orbán had in Hungary.
- Orbán’s shift towards authoritarianism is also [visible](#) in his targeting of the country’s universities and intelligentsia. A June 2019 article in *The Atlantic* [stated](#) that Orbán’s “functionaries have descended on public universities, controlling them tightly. Research funding, once determined by an independent body of academics, is now primarily dispensed by an Orbán loyalist.
- Although Islam has been legally recognized as a religion in Hungary since 1916, **Fidesz’s Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly, Gergely Gulyás, revealed a government plan in 2017 to ban the building of mosques in the country. Gulyás described mosques as “problems”** which force “the government to treat the presence of Islam in a country as a matter of national security, not of freedom of religion.”
- During the 2017 presidential campaign, Orbán’s Fidesz ran a [defamation campaign](#) against Gábor Vona, the leader of the [right-wing extremist Jobbik party](#), calling citizens and telling them that Vona had converted to Islam. The party also distributed flyers that made false allegations that Vona wanted to build a mosque in the town of Miskolc.
- In 2017, **Orbán said that there is “no country, where the integration of Muslims has worked.”** In January 2018, Orbán said in an [interview with the German tabloid Bild](#) that “we [Hungarians] don’t see these humans as Muslim refugees, we see them as Muslim invaders.” He also [argued](#) “that a large number of Muslims inevitably leads to parallel societies, because Christian and Muslim society will never unite.”
- In May 2018, The Public Foundation for the Research of Central and East European History and Society (PFRCEEHS), [paid Steve Bannon](#) and [Milo Yiannopoulos](#), both known for their anti-Muslim rhetoric, for hour-long speeches in Budapest, with a reported budget of \$60,000 (\$20,000 speaking fee for each). The

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organization is [close to the Hungarian government](#) and led by Mária Schmidt, an ally of Orbán.

- During a 2019 meeting with the leader of Myanmar, **Orbán and Myanmar's Aung San Suu Kyi observed "that one of the greatest challenges at present for both countries and their respective regions - south-east Asia and Europe - is migration.** They noted that both regions have seen the emergence of the issue of co-existence with continuously growing Muslim populations."
- In August 2019, Orbán promoted orientalist and linguist Miklos Maroth to become head of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. [According to Maroth](#), Muslims are coming to Europe to overpopulate the continent. Maroth has also [said](#) that Muslims who make trouble should be wrapped up in porcine skin.
- Following a meeting with the leader of the Austrian right-wing party FPÖ in September 2019, Orbán [argued](#) that they both shared the fight against terrorism and 'political Islam.' He also [said](#) that he wishes for Austria to have a "stable government that rejects Political Islam," 'political Islam' meaning basically '[Islam](#).'

Bridge Initiative Factsheet