

# DONALD TRUMP: PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE & PRESIDENT-ELECT

**IMPACT:** As a candidate and eventually the Republican nominee in the 2016 U.S. presidential elections, Donald Trump's campaign included anti-Muslim rhetoric and policy platforms, and praised anti-Muslim organizations and activists. Trump also repeatedly provided a platform to far-right, anti-immigrant, anti-Muslim, and racist activists, organizations, and news media.

- Donald Trump, who had never either held or run for elected office before, entered the 2016 U.S. presidential race in June 2015, and in July 2016 he became the Republican nominee. **A billionaire, reality television celebrity, and businessman of luxury chain hotels, Trump ran a campaign that made repeated use of racist, xenophobic, Islamophobic, and white nationalist rhetoric.**
- **In December 2015, Trump called for a “total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States” in a campaign press conference, citing a deeply flawed poll commissioned by the anti-Muslim organization Center for Security Policy (CSP). Later in the campaign, Trump called for an immigration halt from “the terror states” and “countries compromised by terrorism”—a position he sees as an “expansion” from his initial Muslim Ban. Trump has also called for an ideological test of immigrants. In October 2016, he explained that **the original “Muslim ban is something that in some form has morphed into extreme vetting from certain areas of the world.”****
- **During his campaign, Trump proposed a variety of surveillance programs on Muslims in America, suggested that law enforcement close mosques, and advocated a Muslim registry or database as a means to combat terrorism.**
- Trump drew criticism after not challenging a supporter who at a 2015 rally said, “We have a problem in this country. It’s called Muslims. Our current president is one.” **Trump also falsely claimed that “thousands” of Muslims in New Jersey celebrated the 9/11 attacks.**
- **Trump has lauded the work of the Center for Security Policy (CSP), an organization that at the time was run by Frank Gaffney and warns of a Muslim takeover of America.** CSP has been identified as an anti-Muslim hate group by the Southern Poverty Law Center.
- During the campaign and after, Trump was supported by leaders of white supremacist organizations like Richard Spencer and David Duke. Since the election, **ACT! For America, another group considered by the Southern Poverty Law Center to be anti-Muslim, expressed optimism about its “direct line” to the White House, since two of its board members—Michael Flynn and Walid Phares—were advisors to the President.**
- **Trump expressed admiration for an apocryphal story about General John J. Pershing, which claims that in the early 1900s Pershing executed Muslims in the Philippines with bullets dipped in pig blood. At a campaign rally in 2016 Trump told the story to help explain his support for waterboarding as an interrogation tactic.** This is a claim he would also make as president.
- On several occasions **Trump expressed doubt about the ability of Muslim immigrants and the children of Muslim immigrants to integrate into European or American society.** In a March 2016 interview with the *Today Show* he stated, “**Frankly there’s no assimilation. They are not assimilating for whatever reason . . . They don’t want laws that we have, they want Sharia Law.**” In a June 2016 interview with Sean Hannity on *Fox News* Trump said, “Assimilation has been very hard. It’s almost—I won’t say nonexistent, but it gets to be pretty close. And I’m talking about second and third generation. They come—they don’t—for some reason, there’s no real assimilation.”
- **During the election and after, several anti-Muslim incidents occurred in which the perpetrators expressed their support for Trump.** Data from the FBI and the Pew Research Center revealed the number of

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assaults against Muslims in America in 2016 surpassed “the modern peak reached in 2001.” A 2018 report released by South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT) found that **“of the 213 documented incidents [between November 8, 2016 and November 7, 2017] of hate violence post-election, perpetrators in approximately 1 out of every 5 incidents (21%) referenced President Trump, a Trump policy, or a Trump campaign slogan.”** American Muslim groups expressed concern about how Trump’s rhetoric about Muslims might be influencing his supporters’ views and actions.

- **During the campaign, Trump read a poem about a woman and a snake at various rallies and conferences.** While the poem was originally written in the 1960s by Oscar Brown Jr., a Black American activist, musician, poet, and playwright, Trump appropriated the text as anti-refugee and anti-immigration propaganda. Trump has continued to appropriate Brown’s poem as president.
- **As president-elect, Trump appointed to key cabinet positions Steve Bannon and Gen. Michael Flynn, who have amplified the falsified claims about Islam voiced by anti-Muslim groups. As a candidate and during his transition, Trump was advised on immigration and foreign policy by Kris Kobach and Clare Lopez, who have also advanced these claims.** According to former a Trump advisor, Kris Kobach, the **administration was considering a revival of the National Security Exit-Entry Registration System (NSEERS), a federal policy implemented from 2002 to 2011 that required non-immigrant teenage boys and men over the age of 16 to report for fingerprinting, photos, and interviews. The program, which was dismantled under the Obama Administration, targeted nationals from 24 Muslim-majority countries and North Korea. NSEERS functioned as a federal surveillance database in which over 80,000 people were registered, over 13,000 were placed in deportation proceedings, 1,000 were detained within the first two months that the program was in effect.**
- **Trump’s long history of anti-Muslim comments extends well before his 2016 presidential campaign.** In a March 2011 interview with Bill O’Reilly, Trump stated, **“There is a Muslim problem, absolutely. You just have to turn on your televisions.”** In an April 2011 interview on CBN News, which the Center for American Progress (CAP) has described as “a powerful amplifier of anti-Muslim views to Christian audiences,” Trump stated that **the Qur’an “teaches some very negative vibe [sic].”** He additionally stated, **“When you look at people blowing up all over the streets in some countries over in the Middle East ... when 250 people die in a supermarket that are shopping ... there’s a lot of hatred there someplace.”** In the wake of the Paris attacks in 2015, **Trump referred to Syrian refugees as a “Trojan horse”** for Da’esh fighters. In March 2016 during an interview on CNN with Anderson Cooper, Trump stated, **“I think Islam hates us.”**