

# EUROPEAN FOUNDATION FOR DEMOCRACY

**IMPACT:** The European Foundation for Democracy (EFD) is a European think tank that whose content focuses on defaming Muslim civil society organizations and attempting to exclude such organizations from the European political field. The EFD is based in Brussels and is linked to the Washington D.C.-based Foundation for the Defense of Democracy.

- Scholars affiliated with the Brussels-based EFD systematically **produce work identifying vocal and representative actors of the Muslim civil society as potentially radical and Islamist.** EFD suggests that Muslim civil society organizations are often affiliates of the Muslim Brotherhood in an effort to exclude them from the public and political arena.
- The EFD was **founded in 2005 by Roberta Bonazzi, a political scientist.** The organization **describes itself as a policy institute that works with civil society, academic, government and other stakeholders on the “prevention of radicalisation.”** Beyond conferences, panel debates, workshops, policy briefings, advocacy work and publications, the EFD has also established a ‘Network for a New European Generation’ to empower leaders who are working with - and within - communities of Muslim heritage in Europe to engage in radicalisation prevention initiatives.
- EFD’s team includes a number of academics and experts from around the world who write articles warning about the threat of Sharia and “parallel legal systems,” political Islam, “Islamist extremism,” honor crimes, and the global reach of the Muslim Brotherhood.
- Individuals affiliated with **EFD not only warn of violent extremism, but also highlight “non-violent extremism.”** During a May 2017 panel event titled “Antidotes to Islamist Extremism” held at the European Parliament, **director Bonazzi stated the “key challenge” when it comes to working with Muslim civil society is to “identify the right partners.”** She argued: “For too long, we have seen the wrong organizations being empowered, being funded by national governments and European institutions [...] For too long we have seen that ideological groups have become the official representatives [...] ignoring the diversity we have within Islam [...] Some ideological organizations have taken over the whole debate.” She advocates better screening and vetting of the Muslim organizations European governments choose to work with.
- EFD **scholars identify the Muslim Brotherhood as a threat to Western countries and institutions.** The EFD employs a tactic to identify Muslim organizations in the West that are critical of government policy as aligned with or even possibly affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood or political Islam. This is done to exclude such organizations from the political space. Describing an organization as “Islamist” implies to non-experts that it is a potential threat to society.
- In a May 2014 article published by the Gatestone Institute, a right-wing platform which publishes articles “focused on stoking fears about immigrants and Muslims,” **EFD senior fellow Valentina Colombo argued that the Muslim Brotherhood is connected to terrorist organizations.** In another May 2015 Gatestone piece, **Colombo wrote, “Islamist movements have different tactics... but their goal is always the same: Get in and impose sharia law to establish an Islamic state.”**
- Prior to joining EFD as an advisor, Lorenzo Vidino, the current director of the Program on Extremism at George Washington University, published a piece in the Middle East Quarterly, a journal run by the right-wing anti-Islam think tank Middle East Forum (MEF). The piece stated, “What most European politicians fail to understand is that by meeting with radical organizations, they empower them and grant the Muslim Brotherhood legitimacy. There is an implied endorsement to any meeting, especially when the same politicians ignore moderate voices that do not have access to generous

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Saudi funding. This creates a self-perpetuating cycle of radicalization because the greater the political legitimacy of the Muslim Brotherhood, the more opportunity it and its proxy groups will have to influence and radicalize various European Muslim communities.” [Anders Behring Breivik](#), who killed 77 people in a terrorist attack on Utoya island/Norway, quoted [Lenzo Vidino](#) twice to support his argument about the alleged threat of “[Islamization](#) of Europe.”

- In 2006, **Vidino published another article for the Hudson Institute discussing “Europe’s Muslim Brotherhood,”** arguing, **“It is not unreasonable to assume ... the ever-flexible Brotherhood would embrace violent tactics in the West as well.”** Vidino has a reputation of being an expert on the Muslim Brotherhood. He has discussed the [Muslim Brotherhood in London](#), the ‘[Muslim world](#)’, and the [West](#) in general.
- In 2017, Vidino authored a [report](#) on the Muslim Brotherhood in Austria with support from the Austrian Integration Fund and the University of Vienna. In the report he **argues that a wide range of Muslim organizations—even those competing amongst each other—in one way or another are linked to the Muslim Brotherhood:** “Organizations and individuals [...] can be summarily divided in three categories according to the intensity of their links to the mother group: Pure Brothers, Brotherhood Spawns, and Organizations influenced by the Brotherhood.” The report was harshly [criticized](#) by Muslim institutions, but served as a new security policy under the leadership of Austria’s right-wing minister of interior from the Freedom Party.
- EFD-senior fellow Ahmad Mansour is connected to German politicians and served as a member of the German Ministry of Interior’s [Islam Conference](#) from 2009 to 2013. **Mansour is head of a project tackling prevention of violence for people of color, which otherizes Muslim masculinity. The project assumes that young Muslims discriminate against women, since they are brought up in a “culture of honor,” which devalues women.** Mansour runs an institution that organizes anti-radicalization programs funded by the [Bavarian government](#). In a September 2015 piece for the German FAZ, Mansour [argued](#) that there are three tiers of radicalization: first is Al-Qaida and Daesh, followed by the Muslim Brotherhood including Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, and finally the ‘Generation Allah’, who are vulnerable to a radical version of Islam. In 2016, **Mansour described a child wearing a Hijab as “abuse.” He has also called for a ban on the headscarf for teachers.** Mansour often identifies Muslim civil society actors – especially young and vocal ones – as radical and connected to MB ideology.
- The idea of a Muslim Brotherhood takeover of Europe is perpetuated by a number of EFD fellows. In 2016, Italy-based EFD fellow **Valentina Colombo claimed that the Muslim Brotherhood was “silently carrying out its invasion even in Milan’s local election.”** The 2016 local election in Milan featured a Muslim woman, Maryan Ismail. According to [Colombo](#), “The Muslim Brotherhood is ‘infiltrating’ European societies in order to conquer the world ideologically and politically.” She **argued that the Muslim Brotherhood aims to “seek power and fully integrate into the institutions and become a political actor.”** Colombo also [argued](#) in German newspapers that one of the most vocal and known Muslim representatives in media, [Ayman Mazyek](#) of the Zentralrat der Muslime, has an ideological affinity to the Muslim Brotherhood.
- In Sweden, **EFD senior fellow Magnus Norell co-edited a report entitled “The Muslim Brotherhood in Sweden” together with Aje Carlbom and Pierre Durrani.** Durrani claimed to be a former member of the Muslim Brotherhood and thus to [possess](#) “considerable inside information.” The report was published in February 2017 by the [Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency](#) (Myndigheten för samhällsskydd och beredskap, MSB), which is a Swedish administrative authority, organised under the Ministry of Defence. The **report was also published in English by the Clarion Project**, an organization that advances anti-Muslim content and is closely tied to with American anti-Muslim

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figures such as [Frank Gaffney](#) and [Daniel Pipes](#).

- The **FDD is linked to the EFD through numerous persons and institutions** such as [Walid Phares](#), who worked for FDD from 2001 to 2010 and for the EFD from 2006 to 2010. Also, Wahied Wahdat-Hagh was a fellow of both organizations for many years. According to social scientist Sarah Marusek, who searched through the annual tax documents of registered charities and foundations in the US and UK, the Foundation for Defense of Democracies (FDD) ranks among the [ten most influential](#) in media and policy debates. According to the Center for American Progress, William Rosenwald Family Fund both gave a total of \$2,818,229 from 2001 to 2008 and is thus among the top seven funders of the '[Islamophobia Network](#)', a network of foundations, think tanks and terrorism experts that are spreading Islamophobia. FDD is a recipient of the William Rosenwald Family fund.
- Between 2009 and 2013, the Marcus Foundation, which [according to CAIR](#) is another foundation that supports the 'Islamophobia Network,' gave \$12,155,000 to different anti-Muslim think tanks, amongst them the [European Foundation for Democracy](#) (EFD). The EFD was granted \$1,475,000 by Paul E. Singer Foundations along with NGO Monitor and [MEMRI](#). Singer is the [third largest political donor](#) in the United States, giving more than \$10 million to the Republicans through various super PACs.
- In their book, [What is Islamophobia?](#) **scholars Narzanin Massoumi, Tom Mills and David Miller identify institutions like the EFD as a driving force of elite social movements in the production of Islamophobia.** Given their connections and relationships with politicians and those in power, institutions like the EFD have privileged access to financial resources and political decision making.