

AHMAD MANSOUR

IMPACT: Ahmad Mansour is an Arab-Israeli psychologist based in Germany. Mansour is a former program director and current advisor at the Brussels-based European Foundation for Democracy, and research associate at the Centre for Democratic Culture (*Gesellschaft Demokratische Kultur*, or ZDK) with a focus on ‘radicalization.’ Mansour is also the chairman of the Muslim Forum Germany (*Muslimisches Forum Deutschland*). From 2009 to 2013, Mansour was a member of the German Islam Conference, which was launched by Germany’s Interior Ministry. He is a frequent commentator in German news media, and has received several awards for his anti-Muslim work.

- **Ahmad Mansour is an Arab-Israeli psychologist who relocated to Germany in 2004. Mansour holds numerous titles and positions, including former program director and senior policy advisor at the Brussels-based think-tank European Foundation for Democracy (EFD).** EFD focuses on defaming Muslim civil society organizations and attempting to exclude them from the European political field and is also connected to the conservative Washington, D.C.-based think tank Foundation for the Defense of Democracies (FDD). **According to EFD, Mansour “works closely with European and German policy makers and different government ministries” and “has dedicated his career to preventing and countering Islamist extremism and anti-Semitism, particularly among Muslim youth in Germany.”**
- **Mansour is also a research associate at the Centre for Democratic Culture (Gesellschaft Demokratische Kultur or ZDK), an institution that “serve[s] to educate and protect against violence and extremism” through initiatives that focus on “radical ideas from right-wing extremists, Islamists and left-wing extremists.”** At the ZDK, **Mansour is in charge of HAYAT, which describes itself as a “counselling centre for relatives of young people who have joined radical Salafists.”** HAYAT is a local partner of **the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge or BAMF). Since January 2012, HAYAT has been a partner of the nationwide Radicalization Advice Hotline (Beratungshotline Radikalisierung) set up by BAMF.** HAYAT conducts counseling in the five re-established states of former East Germany, Berlin, and the Bonn region. In Berlin, HAYAT cooperates with the police. **Mansour has called for cooperation with police forces in “deradicalization” programs.**
- **Mansour presents himself as an expert on the ‘radicalization’ of Muslims, and is often invited to deliver talks as an expert on ‘deradicalization’ and ‘Islamism’—terms that are used globally to criminalize a wide spectrum of Muslims.** Ahmad is also the chairman of the Muslim Forum Germany (Muslimisches Forum Deutschland, MFD). MFD was established as an initiative of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation (Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, KAS), a political foundation related to Germany’s current ruling party, the Christian Democratic Union (Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands, CDU). Formally KAS shares the values of CDU but is informally an extended arm of the party.
- **Mansour has identified as a “former Islamist” and can be described as what the U.S. think tank Center for American Progress identifies as a validator—an individual who “claim[s] inside knowledge about the realities of radical Islam” and bolsters “the extreme views of the Islamophobia misinformation experts, right-wing media enablers and anti-Muslim politicians.”** Swiss religious studies scholar Oliver Wäckerlig has argued that there is a typology of “Islamism experts” who have “converted to ‘the West’” and present themselves as secular and former Islamists, attempting to “position themselves as alternative allies and interlocutors to European states.” **According to Wäckerlig, Mansour “appear[s] like defectors to the West” along with others such as Hamed Abdel-Samad, who also presents himself as an ex-Islamist.**
- **From 2009 to 2013, Mansour was a member of the German Islam Conference (Deutsche Islamkonferenz, DIK).** The Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building, and Community (*Bundesministerium des Innern, für Bau und Heimat*) launched DIK in September 2006 as the “first forum for dialogue between federal, state and local authorities and Muslims in Germany.” **According to sociologist Luis Manuel Hernández Aguilar, DIK’s stated goals, to “integrate”—but in fact control and regulate—Muslims in Germany operate with an “underlying racialization of Muslims that [is] central to the integration project of the German government.”**
- **Mansour has published two books on Islam and Muslims, including *Plain Text on Integration: Against False Tolerance and Scare Tactics* (Klartext zur Integration: Gegen falsche Toleranz und Panikmache) and *Generation Allah. Why We Need to Rethink the Fight against Religious Extremism* (Generation Allah. Warum wir im Kampf gegen religiösen Extremismus umdenken müssen).** **Mansour coined the term “Generation Allah” to describe a “general psychocultural problem for all Muslims.”** He claimed that “the threat

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Germany faces comes not from a few hundred fanatic Islamists, but from the entire generation of young Muslims—Generation Allah—who are all under threat of Islamic radicalization.” According to anthropologist Esra Özyürek, “by calling Muslims Generation Allah and focusing mainly on youth, Mansour depicts all Muslims as troubled youth, who need to be ruled and governed but who can also be seen as innocent and hence transformed through the right methods.”

- Mansour’s work has garnered numerous prestigious awards and honors from civil society organizations. In October 2019, Mansour received the Gerhart and Renate Baum Foundation’s (*Gerhart und Renate Baum-Stiftung*) Human Rights Award, which was presented by Prime Minister of North Rhine-Westphalia Armin Laschet (CDU). In the same month, he was also awarded the Theodor Lessing Prize by the German-Israeli Society of Hanover.
- **In April 2015, Mansour co-founded the Muslim Forum Germany (Muslimisches Forum Deutschland) KAS initiative.** The Forum claims to “create an understanding of Islam that goes hand in hand with the basic values and German reality.” Its founding document states that its members “stand for democracy and human rights and want to give a voice to the majority of Muslims in Germany, who have not been represented yet.” **The Forum has been criticized by numerous German Muslim organizations; critique is particularly levied against KAS for its affiliation with a governing political party.**
- In an November 2015 op-ed published in the weekly *Die Zeit*, **Mansour generalized Muslims’ unwillingness to take responsibility for Daesh, or ISIS, claiming that the “ideas of some elites, many imams and ordinary citizens in the Arab world are similar to the ideology of IS.”** Mansour erases Western colonialism, militarism, and violence in the Middle East and redeploys derogatory, European anti-Muslim tropes that position Arab Muslims as ‘irrational’ and ‘backwards,’ arguing, **“If modern Muslims want to change their communities or their countries, they must realize that they also have to critically reflect on their own customs, Hamas, Al-Qaida, Hizbullah, the Saudi Arabian regime as well as the Imam around the corner who blanketly rages against the West.”**
- In a July 2016 interview published in *Tagesspiegel*, Mansour argues that it is an “absolute stroke of luck” that Germany has not experienced terrorist attacks on par with those of France. **Mansour claims that ‘radicalization’—a theory that claims that Muslims have a propensity for violence and should be surveilled for ‘warning signs’—begins “with parents who demonize the European way of life and freedom as immoral and devilish.... We cannot say this [terrorist attacks] has nothing to do with our religion, when some Muslim associations and organizations cultivate these bogeymen.”** Following a statement by the interviewer that Muslim associations have condemned terrorist attacks, including in Nice, France, Mansour responded, **“Yes, but they also say: This is not related to our religion.... This is outrageous. They are not interested in the victims and the roots of violence! They want to protect their religion. But a religion that has to be protected is a weak religion.”**
- In a July 2016 op-ed in *Die Welt*, Mansour argued: **“Everyday traditional Islam cultivates many seedlings. In the appropriate greenhouse, an extreme interpretation can flourish. This concerns Daesh, but also the AKP and Hamas.”**
- **Mansour has furthered the anti-Muslim trope that Muslims are particularly antisemitic—in this case, that German Muslims and Muslim refugees are uniquely antisemitic in comparison to German society more broadly.** In a December 2017 op-ed, Mansour criticized former German State Secretary Sawan Chebli—who is of Palestinian descent—for calling for German Jewish-Muslim solidarity for similarities in anti-Jewish and anti-Muslim violence, rhetoric, and discrimination. **According to Mansour, Muslim-Jewish solidarity would require Muslims to first distance themselves from anti-Israel positions and antisemitism, thus conflating criticism of Israel with antisemitism.** He further argued, “Sometimes, I feel like one would have to put a sign at the routes of refugees coming to Europe, saying: ‘Welcome! You are now in Europe. We do not accept this and that.’ People have to know that there are consequences, if they for instance do not accept Israel’s right of existence, deny the Holocaust or intentionally spread antisemitic images. This is our historic German responsibility.”
- In a July 2020 interview, Mansour summarized many of the anti-Muslim stereotypes put forth in his books and talks, stating: **“One of the great challenges these people [from non-German cultures] face is when they encounter a society where patriarchal structures are not welcome, ... where women have certain rights, where sexual self-development is part of the constitution. This frightens some people and leads to certain conflicts in their interaction with society. We saw these conflicts on New Year’s Eve in Cologne, we have seen them in several cases of rape and we hear them in**

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statements by young people. Because that's where the identity crisis starts. ... They want to show: I live in Germany, but I'm still Muslim, Syrian or Afghani."

- In a July 2017 op-ed, Mansour claimed that "talking [about terrorism] alone won't help." Rather, he called for more investment in surveillance against Muslims, including "security concepts, the improvement of secret services, background checks of personnel" and adding more security checks at airports. Mansour also discussed how to "deal with integration [of Muslims in Germany] and Islamism."
- In another July 2017 op-ed, Mansour presented a "ten-point plan" against 'Islamism.' Point seven fits within one of EFD's strategies to produce work identifying vocal and representative actors of Muslim civil society as potentially 'radical' and 'Islamist.' Mansour argued, "Muslim partners must be critically examined in terms of their ideology. Lip service or participation in candlelight vigils are not sufficient for being accepted as partners." Mansour also called for the creation of a new position in the German Chancellery that is "responsible for the coordination of all authorities and institutions for the prevention of radicalization."
- Mansour has a history of disparaging remarks and advocating discrimination against Muslim state employees who wear a hijab. In an op-ed published in February 2017, Mansour discusses the verdict of a Berlin court that ruled in the favor of a Muslim woman who was excluded from her work for wearing a hijab. Mansour wrote, "Are our judges following the laws of our country or the religious laws of a 1400-year-old book?" While he claims not to be opposed to Muslim women wearing a hijab in private businesses, he argues that no Muslim woman employed by the state should be allowed to wear the hijab. According to Mansour, "the Hijab is more than just a piece of garment....In many cases it is often, especially in our days, a clear religio-political symbol. It represents a system of thought for separating genders, for hypersexualization of women and girls that goes hand in hand with tabooing sexuality." In a June 2018 interview in the daily Austrian *Kurier*, Mansour declared that when worn by children, the hijab is "perverse and an abuse."
- In a November 2018 interview with *Die Zeit*, Mansour not only reiterated his opposition to Muslim state employees wearing a hijab, he expanded his position against all visible religious attire. Defending the so-called neutrality law in Berlin—a ban on religious clothing and symbols for civil servants that was introduced in 2005—he argued that "representatives of the state should wear no hijab, Christian crosses or kippahs." In August 2020, the German Federal Labour Court ruled that the law was illegal.
- In November 2018, Mansour was one of ten prominent anti-Muslim authors and commentators, including Seyran Ateş and Necla Kelek, to endorse the establishment of the "Initiative of Secular Islam." The initiative defines secularism as "the separation between religion and politics" and advocates that public servants, especially teachers and judges, refrain from wearing religious clothing, especially the headscarf. Islamic Studies professor Schirin Amir-Moazami has criticized the initiative's definition of secularism as working within a "scheme of good and bad Muslims when it makes its own version of Islam the yardstick for resolving social conflicts." Political scientist and Bridge Initiative Senior Research Fellow Farid Hafez argues, "The notion of secularism laid out in [the initiative's] document represents a totalitarian version of secularism. It is not a soft secularism that protects religion, but a hard secularism that seeks to banish religious expression from the public sphere."