

# MAGNUS RANSTROP

**IMPACT:** Magnus Ranstorp is an associate professor of political science. Since 2022, he has been the head of research at the Center for Total Defense and Societal Security (CTSS). He regularly publishes opinion pieces and is invited to media outlets as an expert on various subjects. Ranstorp has promoted conspiracy theories accusing European Muslim organizations of being tied to the Muslim Brotherhood, and is a leading voice against Muslim civil society in Sweden.

- Magnus Ranstorp is a **Swedish scholar** who graduated from Gustavus Adolphus College in Saint Peter, Minnesota and submitted his Ph.D. in 1985 at the University of St Andrews. **He has written extensively on Islamist movements including Hezbollah, Hamas, Al-Qaeda and other militant organizations**. He was the Director of the world-renowned Centre for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence at the University of St Andrews. **In 2003, he testified before the first hearing of the 9/11 commission in the United States, where he described himself as a “scholar of militant Islamism and terrorism issues.”**
- Ranstorp is a **political commentator for the Swedish daily newspaper, Svenska Dagbladet's editorial page**. Since 2022, he has been the head of research at the Center for Total Defense and Societal Security (CTSS).
- Ranstorp has **consistently repeated a claim on all of his platforms (both social and print media) that Swedish society, and above all the leftist and green parties, and associations working close to these, have been infiltrated by the Muslim Brotherhood (MB)**. He has claimed on different occasions that the MB permeates Muslim civil society in Sweden, raises large sums of money, and has held influence in the Swedish government. Ranstorp alleges that the MB has been successful in doing this because the clandestine network is aided by left-wing academics, cultural relativists, journalists, and identity politics activists, who pave the way for the infiltration through anti-racism that makes it difficult or impossible for critics to stop the development.
- **According to Ranstorp, Swedish society is gradually being infiltrated by alleged Islamists who demand increasing rights at the expense of Western democracy**. He builds on previous work by Magnus Norell, a fellow at the European Foundation for Democracy. Andreas Önnarfors, Professor of Intellectual History with a focus on conspiracy theories, has long been a critic of the reports on the Muslim Brotherhood written for the Swedish Civil Contingencies Authority, including one of the first authored by Magnus Norell, Aje Carlbom and Pierre Durrani. He notes that this kind of conspiracy theory has become increasingly common, and appears in many different guises. **Önnarfors describes how the theory of an “Islamist infiltration” is a Swedish variant of the Great Replacement/White Genocide theory**. This variant claims that there is an external threat in the form of Muslims changing Europe's demographics and terrorizing its white population, along with an internal disintegration in the form of progressive academics and politicians questioning old truths and values. The first study authored by Norell, Carlbom, and Durrani was translated into English by the Clarion Project, an organization that advances anti-Muslim content.
- In a June 2020 article in the right-wing magazine, Kvartal, Ranstorp claims that “if an organization is part of the circle around the Islamic association [IFIS] and Federation of Islamic Organizations, it is part of the European Muslim Brotherhood...” By widely defining affiliation as being “part of the circle” around these organizations, many Swedish Islamic movements can be labeled as part of the Muslim Brotherhood.
- **Ranstorp routinely criticizes anti-racism work and/or research on Islam and the situation of Muslims**. In an April 2021 tweet, he repeated the false claim that the term ‘Islamophobia’ was invented by Islamists to prevent any critique of Islam. Ranstorp does not recognize the existence of Islamophobia, despite the fact that Islamophobia Studies have become an established field of research.
- In a June 2022 tweet, **Ranstorp criticized the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe for inviting British civil society organizations MEND and CAGE, calling them “problematic** as they work to undermine prevention work against violent extremism under the guise of action against islamophobia.”

- **Until 2022, Ranstorp was the head of research at CATS (Center for Asymmetrical Threats and Terror Studies), a think tank within the Swedish Defense University (FHS).** CATS received large parts of its funding from the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency. An independent evaluation of this state agency described the think tank's "media dominance" with Ranstorp as the only publicly known face. The Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency expresses appreciation for this media dominance, stating in the evaluation that the think tank they are sponsoring is capable of making statements to the media that they, as a government authority, cannot themselves.
- Ranstorp is well-connected to leading individuals and institutions that criticize and undermine the study and reality of Islamophobia. **In the 2021 European Islamophobia report, Ranstorp is described as part of a group of European "academics who have long been supporting anti-Muslim initiatives by several governments."** In **June 2019, Ranstorp participated in a conference dedicated to countering Islamism with Lorenzo Vidino, whom Ranstorp described as a leading expert on the Muslim Brotherhood in Europe.** Ranstorp also participated in the "Vienna Forum on countering segregation and extremism," which is part of an effort by the Austrian government to export its anti-Muslim policies and forge new ties with other European states that have enacted anti-Muslim policies, including France and Denmark."
- **Like Vidino, Ranstorp also has a personal connection to the United Arab Emirates.** In 2017, Ranstorp was **elected into the advisory board of the Hedayah Center, a think tank initiated by the United Arab Emirates' Ministry of Foreign Affairs** and directed since its inception in 2012 by the Chairman of the Defense, Interior and Foreign Affairs Committee of the UAE Federal National Council, Ali Rashid al-Nuaimi. Ranstorp held a position at Hedayah Center for several years until at least spring 2022. The Hedayah center is described by several security analysts at King's College as an important actor in improving the regime's image and strategically promoting the UAE's political goals – mainly contributing to the regime's branding as the "guarantor of moderate Islam" and "tolerance." For this purpose, they associate with high-profile academics to gain credibility.
- When Ranstorp has reported on his side jobs, which he is obliged to do as a public employee, he has omitted his involvement with the Hedayah Center. In 2017, he reported he had no additional positions or occupations. His commitment with Hedayah was only added in March 2022, after the position at the center had been publicly contested on the Swedish Public service radio program, Människor och tro (People and Faith). Ranstorp has defended his work with Hedayah and categorically rejected accusations that the center was a front for the Emirati government.
- In 2017, he was elected to become an international advisor to the Hedayah Center. It appears this is around the time he began using his Twitter to spread accusations about the Muslim Brotherhood. **An analysis of his Twitter account shows that he did not mention the Muslim Brotherhood before 2012, a few times between 2012-2016, but from 2017, he frequently targets them, without having conducted or published any research into this group.**
- While Ranstorp is heavily featured and presented as a politically impartial, scientific expert in Swedish media, his **social media channels show how he regularly highlights far-right sites, think tanks, and individuals, such as the Swedish far-right populist newspaper, *Bulletin*.**
- In 2021, Magnus Ranstorp shared on his twitter a link to an image published by the Bulletin. The picture showed a mosque possessed by a frightening mythological creature. The image, titled "The islamist hydra," was tweeted without comment by Ranstorp.
- Ranstorp is often featured in mainstream news outlets and is very active on social media. Still, he has been criticized for his work, especially his use of sources, for not being transparent, and for drawing extremely far-reaching conclusions from insufficient or outright misleading material. Critical questions have also been raised about his claims about the Muslim Brotherhood in Sweden.
- In response to Ranstorp's January 2009 report on 'Islamist extremism' for Swedish authorities, the 'Rosengård report', a group of researchers at Lund University summarized it with the words "balderdash" and "a scientific scandal,"

warning that it is “important to avoid casual stereotypes and hearsay, in order to avoid a growing Islamophobia.” **In the report, Ranstorp provides a list of warning signs of radicalization, including starting to grow a beard, watching the news channel AlJazeera, praying, wearing traditional clothing or starting to practice martial arts.** Leif Stenberg, associate professor of Islamology in Lund and director of the Center for Middle Eastern Studies, called for the report to be reviewed, but this was not possible, as CATS refused to share the sources Ranstorp claimed to have used – citing that it had been destroyed for reasons of confidentiality.

- The handling of the Rosengård report was criticized in sharp terms by the Swedish Parliamentary Ombudsman (JO, a core legislative function of Sweden to ensure that public authorities and their staff comply with the laws and other statutes governing their actions): “The fact that the University of Defense destroyed the material made it impossible to correctly apply the regulations on the preservation of public documents. [...] I am very critical of the University of Defense's handling of the matter.”
- In July 2011, Anders Behring Breivik carried out a violent attack in Norway, which included detonating a truck bomb in Oslo that killed eight, and then carrying out a mass shooting on Utoya Island, murdering an additional 69 individuals, mostly teenagers. Breivik held xenophobic, racist, and Islamophobic views. As news of the attacks spread, Ranstorp falsely claimed that the attack was perpetrated by Al-Qaeda.
- Ranstorp participates in discussions beyond his expertise. He made a high-profile attack on Swedish popular education in Sweden's largest morning newspaper DN (Dagens Nyheter), claiming that 60% of their activities were fake as a part of systematic fraud. To support this claim, he and his colleagues had no empirical evidence but interviews with two anonymous sources.