

# SIGRID HERRMANN-MARSCHALL

IMPACT: Sigrid Herrmann-Marschall is a widely quoted German blogger, who is often invited as an expert on Islamism. She regularly argues that the government needs to take stricter measures to tackle Islamism in German society. She frequently lectures, trains, and publishes in a variety of newspapers and is referenced as an expert by many political parties including the far-right. More recently, she reportedly served as an expert on behalf of the far-right party, Alternative for Germany (AfD).

- A **trained biologist, Sigrid Herrmann-Marschall is characterized by media outlets as the “Islamist Hunter.”** A 2012 post by the Social Democratic Party (SPD) in Offenbach refers to her as a board member. According to journalist Samuel Schirmbeck, Herrmann-Marschall turned her attention to Islamism in 2012 following street activism of Salafi Muslims who were distributing copies of the Quran. **In a 2018 interview, she noted that she “noticed the increasing problem with Islamism early on,” and “decided to disclose these connections or refer others who do serious research.”** In an April 2019 interview, she said that she started becoming interested in Islamism in 2006 when she was focusing on religious sects.
- Herrmann-Marschall reportedly **appeared as an expert for the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) as a witness expert in the state parliament of North Rhine-Westphalia in 2019.** In an interview she denied being further involved with the AfD.
- A **June 2023 commissioned report by the Independent Expert Commission on Anti-Muslimism** (Unabhängiger Expertenkreises Muslimfeindlichkeit) for Germany’s Federal Ministry of Interior and Homeland, **describes Sigrid Herrmann-Marschall as an example of somebody who uses the “guilt by association” strategy of accusing Muslims of being Islamists by randomly linking them to others.** The authors of the report write: “In recent years, there has been an increase in the number of cases in which Muslims have been accused in public of being close to Islamist groups or of having corresponding attitudes. The people in question are usually accused of having contacts with extremist circles or of lacking a critical distance from anti-democratic positions. It is often irrelevant which positions the person himself holds - it is sufficient to be seen publicly (e.g. at a conference) together with certain persons from these groups.”
- The report **also notes that “Der Spiegel-journalist Gezer traces how, in 2016, a false accusation of extremism against several employees of a Hessian counseling center was picked up by serious media. The accusations were made by biologist Sigrid Herrmann-Marschall, who has been running a blog called Vorwärts und Nicht Vergessen for several years. Her allegations led to the provisional suspension of the employees in question and a repeat of security checks that had already been carried out. Herrmann-Marschall’s accusations subsequently proved to be untenable. The institution and its work suffered an immense loss of confidence and damage to its image - not least because a correction of the allegations was hardly noticed by the public.”**
- The **2023 report further argues that Herrmann-Marschall “researches social media profiles of Muslims with the goal of proving Muslims connections to the Muslim Brotherhood, anti-Semitic attitudes, and infiltration strategies. Their research is conjectural in nature and often fragmentary and contextless.** [...] Herrmann-Marschall assigns her observations to real individuals and institutions and publishes them regularly. [...] these accusations are perpetuated in right-wing conservative and Islamophobic blogs such as Henryk M. Broder’s The Axis of Good.

Moreover, they appeared in the Jüdische Rundschau, edited by entrepreneur Rafael Korenzecher, for which she regularly contributes. [...] What is worrying is that even parts of the serious media landscape are picking up on such investigations, thus upgrading them as reliable sources.” The **Independent Expert Commission on Anti-Muslimism further contends that many individuals like Herrmann-Marschall have no formal qualification in regard to Islamism, and yet despite this, authorities such as Germany’s intelligence service and other agencies still use them as academic sources.**

- In an **article published in June 2015, Herrmann-Marschall supported the hijab ban for judges.** In July 2015, she published an article criticizing a burger house for welcoming individuals she described as “Islamists.” In November 2018, following an experiment where non-Muslim girls wore a hijab for one week to experience how it is living as a visible Muslim, Herrmann-Marschall remarked that why not have the Muslim girls go without wearing a hijab for one week. She wrote “The religious seriousness, the component of family pressure or the social control of the community, which is often still oriented towards the region of origin - these are all things that young Muslim women often experience. They are not allowed to simply take off the headscarf, not even for a school experiment.” In February 2017, she criticized the Frankfurt-based Office for Multicultural Affairs (Amt für Multikulturelle Angelegenheiten) for not speaking out against extremism, stating that the office should “act more in the spirit of liberal society.”
- In December 2019, she was invited to an event organized by the Gronauer Association for Exchange and Integration (Gronauer Verein Austausch und Integration) and the German-Alevi Community. The Gronauer Association described Herrmann-Marschall as follows: “Ideologies that refer to the Koran, the Holy Book of the Muslims, are enriched with criminal energies and often lead to events that Sigrid Herrmann-Marschall sets out to analyze. Her research focuses on Salafi and Islamist organizations and actors.”
- In November 2021, she published an article in which she urged the German Intelligence Service to again include the Islamic Center of Aachen in its annual report of organizations under surveillance, because it participated in a conference organized by the Turkish Presidency of Religious Affairs (Diyanet). **Herrmann-Marschall prouids herself of having successfully “excluded association, in which Muslim Brothers and Salafis are involved, from public funding and placed under observation by the Hessian Office for the Protection of the Constitution.”** In 2021, Herrmann-Marschall accused a member of the newly installed Berlin State Commission on Anti-Muslim Racism of being a “mediator between the majority society and the network of actions of the Muslim Brotherhood.”
- **Herrmann-Marschall also criticizes state agencies for choosing certain Muslim organizations as allies in the fight against extremism.** In September 2021, far-right media outlets used alleged relations of German Christian Democratic Union Chancellor Candidate Chancellor Armin Laschet with Islamist organizations. Herrmann-Marschall was amongst the sources and she criticized Laschet as a “door opener for Islamists.” Presenting herself as a member of the Social Democratic Party (SPD), she has criticized the SPD harshly, writing in January 2019 that “Muslim Brothers and other Islamists are awarded medals and their structures are given prizes for integration. SPD mayors stand in front of Muslim Brotherhood organizations.” Some SPD members have offered her space to share her views. She has criticized several political office holders from the SPD for their stance towards alleged Islamism including vice mayor of New Cologne, Franziska Giffey, Federal Minister for Women Affairs Manuela Schwesig, or MP Helge Lindh. **Herrmann-Marschall argued in August 2021 that “the SPD and the Greens have left**

**the issue of Islamism to the AfD virtually without a fight.”**

- In 2016, Jusos (the youth chapter of the SPD,) **described Herrmann-Marschall as a “right-wing populist social democrat,” who is a “self-declared Islam expert...spreading the fear of an alleged Islamization of the Occident.”** In September 2016, she lectured at local chapters of the Christian Democratic Union. In May of 2018, she lectured during an event organized by the Liberal Party (FDP). In May 2019, Herrmann-Marschall lectured alongside the former head of the German Federal Intelligence Service (BVT) at a conference organized by the CDU in the German Federal Parliament.
- As late as 2023, Herrmann-Marschall argued at a talk for a regional CDU chapter that actors of “legalistic Islamism” have managed to obtain public funds through “clever and smooth marketing,” behind which the “evil reality” is obscured to obtain public funds. **Herrmann-Marschall sees most Islamic organizations including the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat as “important Muslim organizations and groups acting in a legalistic manner,” i.e. hiding behind the public promotion of democracy.** Islamic organizations thus are viewed as suspicious as their ‘real’ motives are dangerous and they are only promoting democracy as a cover up.
- According to an inquiry submitted to the Ministry of Interior on Herrmann-Marschall in 2018, **the Berlin MP Susanna Kahlfeld (Greens) found that the Intelligence Service shared Herrmann-Marschall’s contact details with media outlets who reported on alleged Islamist organizations.** Herrmann-Marschall is often quoted by Die Welt.
- Following her appearance as an expert witness on behalf of the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD), former member of the Hessian state parliament Gerhard Merz said: “that she (Herrmann-Marschall) would do anything to express her Islamophobia.” Additionally, Joachim Valentin, director of the Catholic Center Haus am Dom in Frankfurt, felt reconfirmed in having “broken off all contact with Sigrid Herrmann-Marschall years ago.”
- Since 2021, Sigrid Herrmann-Marschall has been publishing for European Eye on Radicalization (EER), a platform that brings together analysts, scholars, and practitioners from all over the world to examine issues around radicalization and extremism affecting Europe. EER notes that Herrmann-Marschall’s research has “led to Islamist associations in Germany being withdrawn from public funding.” **In May 2023, she published an article for EER where she called for “better designation of Muslim Brotherhood actors in Western Societies to combat extremist currents.”** In July 2021, she endorsed Austria’s Symbol Act, which outlawed the use of several logos of non-violent organizations including of the Muslim Brotherhood. In September 2021, she also endorsed Austria’s expanded anti-terrorism legislation that was heavily criticized by human rights organizations such as Amnesty International and the European Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ECNL). In October 2021, she framed the legalization of the call to prayer in Cologne as wrong, saying that “conservative and fundamentalist Muslims will see this as a victory of their faith over Christianity, and they will note how easy it was to advance their cause under the colorful diversity rhetoric.” **In December 2021, she hailed the policies of the French government for taking “up the fight against political Islam and social separatism.”**