

**IMPACT:** Nina Scholz is a German political commentator and writer on Islamism based in Vienna, Austria. Scholz is often presented as an expert on Islam and Islamism by the Austrian media and policy circles. She produces many texts with Heiko Heinisch, with whom she served as an expert for Operation Luxor, an unlawful raid targeting the homes of 60 prominent Austrian Muslims, carried out by the Austrian government in 2020.

- Nina Scholz grew up in the [German Democratic Republic](#), moved to West Germany, and [studied](#) political science at the Free University of Berlin. She currently lives in Vienna and works at the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for Historical Social Science. She has [published works on the subjects of National Socialism, antisemitism, and Islam](#).
- **Most of Scholz's publications have been co-authored with Heiko Heinisch, a German political commentator and fellow writer on Islamism. Despite neither having academic expertise on Islam, Islamic history, or Muslims in Europe, both write primarily on these topics.** Scholz and Heinisch have co-authored the books [Charlie versus Mohammed: Plea for freedom of expression](#) (Charlie versus Mohammed: sPlädoyer für die Meinungsfreiheit, 2015), and [All for Allah: How political Islam is changing our society](#) (Alles für Allah: Wie der politische Islam unsere Gesellschaft verändert, 2019). In 2015, Scholz edited a book titled [Violence In The Name of Honor](#) (Gewalt im Namen der Ehre).
- In April 2017, **Heinisch and Scholz co-authored "Combat Term 'Islamophobia'—'Science' in the Service of Political Islam?" for an Austrian think tank called MENA WATCH.** MENA WATCH focuses on Israel, antisemitism, and Iran, and has featured [content](#) by individuals such as [Hamed Abdel-Samad](#), a German-Egyptian journalist who frames Islam as a totalitarian ideology. In their piece, **Heinisch and Scholz argued that Islamophobia is "a combat term that is consistently used to ward off criticism of Islam or of problems and human rights violations within Muslim communities and to label it as 'anti-Muslim racism.'**" They also **claimed that anti-racist organizations like the [Collective against Islamophobia in France \(CCIF\)](#) are part of the "European network of the Muslim Brotherhood."** Accusing Muslim rights organizations of being affiliated with the "Muslim Brotherhood" is a common smear made by a number of individuals and organizations in Europe, especially those aligned with right-wing governments.
- In **November 2018, Scholz published a [piece](#) in the *Der Standard* outlining her support for the Austrian government's proposal for a hijab ban in primary schools.** Scholz argued, "unlike kippahs or religious chain pendants, the hijab restricts girls' freedom of movement. Behind this is an interpretation of Islam that wants to sexualize even little girls and get them used to having their hair, and necks covered. The headscarf is a visible sign of gender inequality and diametrically contradicts the teaching principle of 'education for equality between men and women.'"
- In April 2019, **Scholz wrote an [op-ed](#) in *Die Presse* titled "Where anti-Semitism among Muslims comes from," in which she argues that the Islamic faith promotes antisemitism.** However, antisemitism expert Andreas Peham of the Documentation Center Austrian Resistance (DÖW) [argues](#) that antisemitism amongst Muslims does not come from their faith, rather it comes from different manifestations of "European antisemitism" and has been "Islamized."
- In 2019, Scholz and Heinisch published an [article](#) in the German FAZ titled "Die europäische Mission des politischen Islam" (The European Mission of Political Islam). In the piece, **they claim that "Islamists" use a strategy of "legalistic Islamism," which is setting "out to transform our society from the inside, [and] while some take up arms to force their utopia, others embark on the famous march through the institutions."** They allege that "legalistic Islamists pursue the same utopia as militants by non-violent means: Abolishing democracy and establishing a worldwide Islamic state under a caliphate." The article was [shared](#) by anti-Muslim websites such as [PI-News](#).
- In a 2020 *Der Standard* [piece](#), **Scholz defended the idea of establishing the [Documentation Center Political Islam](#), arguing that it would be of help to journalists, experts, and politicians.** She further stated that it would also be a helpful tool for the Islamic Religious Community (IGGÖ) in

order “to identify and exclude Islamist positions from its umbrella organization.” However, the president of the IGGÖ, Ümit Vural, noted that the term “political Islam” stigmatizes and criminalizes “all Muslims living in Austria across the board.” **Scholz goes on to argue that “political Islam” is an important term because it is used to describe “fundamentalist ideological movements that want to establish Islam as a state and power structure.” She goes on to assert in her piece that a center is needed to tackle political Islam groups in the country.**

- In an October 2020 piece, Scholz wrote, “If we bow to radical Islam, soon nowhere will be free to speak.” In the same month, she distributed a leaked edited video to the daily Der Standard claiming that a Muslim member of the Greens had allegedly criticized Austria’s matrimonial law. The Muslim candidate felt misinterpreted by the cut video and his Green party leader Birgit Hebein spoke of “Dirty Campaigning.”
- Scholz is **often invited to speak on the topic of Islam and Muslims alongside a number of individuals who are also known for their work in promoting anti-Muslim stereotypes and conspiracy theories.** In November 2013, Scholz shared a podium together with Ahmad Mansour and Ercan Nik Nafs. In November 2016, Scholz served as a photographer for a podium on Sharia Courts that was organized by Ednan Aslan, Elham Manea, and others. **The Austrian Integration Fund (ÖIF), which is known for giving anti-Muslim voices a platform, organized multiple panels where it gave people with anti-Muslim views space to disseminate their positions. It organized several panels with Nina Scholz.** In September 2017, Scholz was invited alongside Seyran Ates, Karin Kneissl (later Foreign Minister for the far-right FPÖ), and Muslim spokesperson Carla Amina Baghajati to talk about ‘Muslims between Tradition and Modernity.’
- In January 2018, a panel on “The Influence of Political Islam” took place featuring Mouhanad Khorchide, Oliver Henhapel, Minister Susanne Raab, and Scholz. **Scholz argued that Muslim women wearing the hijab while positioning themselves as feminists “would mostly be in close relationship with the conservative Islamic associations and the Muslim Brotherhood.”** On February 4, 2020, during another panel organized by the Austrian Integration Fund, French author Pascal Bruckner, who wrote the book, *An Imaginary Racism: The Quarrel over Islamophobia* (*Un racisme imaginaire – La Querelle de l’islamophobie*), claimed that the “term Islamophobia was invented to silence the critiques of a religion” and that “a society has to distinguish between moderate, liberal Muslims, and radical ones. And we have to support enlightened preachers, imams, and intellectuals with interpreting the Koran in a sophisticated way.” **According to Scholz, Islamophobia was a means of political Islam to prevent liberal Muslims’ reforms. Scholz argued that “political Islam strives to take over the Muslim community in Europe. In the process, ideas for reform or justified criticism are immediately dismissed wholesale as ‘Islamophobic’.** According to Dr. Farid Hafez, Professor of International Studies, Scholz is an important voice for the support of anti-Muslim policies in Austria. Scholz’s arguments and claims are part of a larger discourse that has paved the ground for the criminalization of Islamophobia Studies in Austrian intelligence circles and the justice system.
- Following the November 4, 2020, militant attack carried out by a Muslim gunman in Vienna, **Chancellor Sebastian Kurz did not mobilize against the former ISIS-sympathizer who ended up killing four individuals but instead framed the government’s response as one against political Islam.** Kurz stated, “The EU must fight political Islam, which is the basis of this terrorism, and Islamist terrorism much more resolutely.” **In the same week, Scholz published an op-ed in *Der Standard*, where she argued that along with “Jihadists”, the government also needs to fight against “legalistic Islamists, who dominate organized Muslims, separate the world into Muslims and non-Muslims, idealize an Islamic world community, propagate Islamist supremacy, and refuse liberal democracy, general human rights and the separation of religion and state. Jihadists can build on this propaganda.”**
- On November 9, 2020, the **Austrian authorities carried out Operation Luxor, the country’s largest peacetime police raid, which involved almost a thousand police officers who stormed over 60**

**houses and apartments of people accused of belonging to the Muslim Brotherhood.** The raid had devastating effects on the targeted families and children and was **declared unlawful by the Graz Higher Regional Court in July 2021.** It was **revealed that Scholz and Heinisch were invited by the Styrian state prosecutor Johannes Winkelhofer as experts for a report on the Muslim Brotherhood that served as the catalyst for a November 9, 2020 raid on alleged “Islamist terrorists.”** Following many court appeals, the Appellate Court removed both Heinisch and Scholz as experts due to bias in June 2022. Political scientist Thomas Schmidinger has harshly criticized the report of Heinisch and Scholz for its numerous errors.

- In July 2023, the Ministry of Interior published a report focusing on immigrant communities from Türkiye, the West Balkans, the North Caucasus, and Arab communities that it had commissioned. The authors of the report included Heinisch, Scholz, Peter Neumann, and Nicolas Stockhammer. The report titled, ‘Situation Report on Extremism and Migration: Case Studies from Four Austrian Migration Communities’ (Lagebild Extremismus und Migration: Fallstudien aus vier österreichischen Migrations-Communitys), introduced what they call a “new innovative theoretical model,” which “first, in addition to violent and activist extremism, captures a third form of extremist activity, namely passive extremism. This involves anti-pluralist efforts that do not manifest themselves through violence or active infiltration of the democratic political system, but rather through the establishment of formal and informal structures, which serve as an alternative - or counter-design - to the democratic constitutional state. As a result, certain groups of people are disenfranchised and can no longer exercise the rights and freedoms they are and freedoms vested in them.”