

Frankfurt Research Center on Global Islam, Goethe-University Frankfurt, Germany

Conference

Islamism in the West and Beyond. New Challenges for Democratic Societies

Friday, August 22nd 2025, Goethe-University, Germany

Islamism poses an existential threat to democratic societies of the West and beyond. In many countries in Asia and Africa Islamists have replaced moderate forms of popular Islam with Islamic fundamentalism, established normative orders that are contrary to human rights and in some cases have overthrown governments. Islamist regimes have destabilized entire regions and pose a particular threat to Israel, the only Jewish state, which they seek to completely eliminate. Since the beginning of the 21st century, Islamism is also undermining the freedom in Europe. In its most violent form, jihadism, it has led to significant restrictions on everyday life. We have known since the fatwa against Salman Rushdie, the Danish Muhammad cartoons, and the attacks on the editorial office of Charlie Hebdo that satire or even literary engagement with Islam can be life threatening. The murder of priests and teachers like Samuel Paty, as well as bystanders, shows that Islamism and its advocates can affect anyone. This is especially true for critics of Islamism, such as liberal Muslims, who are denounced as heretics. Freedom ends where Islamism begins. Islamism now permeates various areas of social life. In many European countries, Islamist pupils and parents sabotage teaching topics that they consider non-Islamic, and at universities, Muslim student organizations are introducing gender segregation. A serious problem is Muslim anti-Semitism, which - often combined with left-wing anti-Semitism - makes life unsafe for Jews in Europe.

Islamism is largely supported by left-wing activists who use Muslims as allies to fight against their own society, which they reject as capitalist, racist and exploitative. By constructing a supposed anti-Muslim racism, they delegitimize any criticism, and through cooperation with Islamists on state and civil society level, they jeopardize freedom of expression and academic freedom.

Islamism is promoted by international organizations, which are controlled by governments in the Islamic world and held together by a common ideology, which is totalitarian and anti-democratic. Islamists try to impose a fundamentalist Sharia-based orthodoxy in Muslim communities, divide societies and destroy the foundations of liberal democracy. Unfortunately, they are quite successful.

At the conference "Islamism in the West and Beyond: New Challenges for Democratic Societies," we want to bring together international expertise on the various forms of Islamism and discuss possible countermeasures.

Venue: Goethe-University, Campus Westend, Max-Horkheimer-Str. 2,
Haus Normative Ordnungen, 60323 Frankfurt, Germany

Organizer: Prof. Dr. Susanne Schröter, Director of the Frankfurt Research Center on Global Islam

Registration is only valid upon confirmation.

Please send to: s.schroeter@em.uni-frankfurt.de

Program

- 10.00-10.30 Prof. Dr. Susanne Schröter (Goethe-University Frankfurt): Opening remarks
All time slots include 20 minutes of presentation time and 10 minutes of discussion
- 10.30-11.00 Prof. Dr. Ebrahim Afsah (Denmark):
Self-Victimisation and Violence. Liberal Constitutionalism and Islamic Assertion
- 11.00-11.30 Dr. Marwan Abou-Taam (Germany):
The Inextricable Interweaving of Islamic Orthodoxy and Islamism – a Risk for Western Societies
- 11.30-12.00 Prof. Dr. Susanne Schröter (Germany):
Islamism and the Elimination of Women's Rights
- 12.00-12.30 Prof. Dr. Florence Bergeaud-Blackler (France):
How Useful is the Concept of Brotherhood for Understanding the Legacy of the Muslim Brotherhood in Europe?
- 12.30-13.30 **Lunch Break**
- 13.30-14.00 Prof. Dr. Ronald S. Stade (Sweden):
Democracy or Peace. Jordan and the Muslim Brotherhood
- 14.00-14.30 Prof. Dr. Ednan Aslan (Austria):
Islamist Antisemitism in Europe – Theological and Societal Backgrounds
- 14.30-15.00 Dr. Ferdinand Haberl (Austria):
Islamist Ideologies as Challenges for Democratic Societies. The Work of the Documentation Centre Political Islam
- 15.00-15.30 **Coffee Break**
- 15.30-16.00 Dr. Omar Adam Sayfo (Hungary):
Monitoring Islamophobia: Who Claims the Right to Define and Observe?
- 16.00-16.30 Rebecca Schönenbach (Switzerland):
Modern Threats, Old Methods: Challenges in Countering the Financing of Terrorism
- 16.30-17.00 Dr. Thomas Gugler (Germany):
Jihad without Borders: Islamist Radicalization in Afghanistan and Pakistan as a Global Threat
- 17.00-18.00 Final discussion
- 18.00 **Get Together**