



## In The Trump administration, Islamophobia Is Truly A Family Affair

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With the arrival of Sebastian Gorka at the White House, another Islamophobe has joined Team Trump. But first, some background on the significance of this latest personnel move.

As *The Intercept* noted in November, his wife, Katharine Gorka, a political commentator with well-established anti-Muslim views, would be joining the Trump administration's "DHS landing team"—the group responsible for vetting future Department of Homeland Security appointees. Like her husband, Gorka is a contributing writer at Breitbart, the far right media outlet previously run by Stephen Bannon. In her writings, Gorka has claimed that:

in September 2011 the White House initiated a far-reaching purge of all training materials used for the military and law enforcement, excising all reference to Islam and blacklisting many of the nation's top experts on the Islamist threat. Current training on Islam is now primarily carried out by the Department of Homeland Security's Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties, which puts the emphasis on Islam as a religion of peace.

For the record, DHS's Office of Civil Rights and Civil Liberties (CRCL) is charged with taking reports of civil rights violations by DHS elements against *all* citizens. If Gorka believes DHS is going easy on American Muslims, she's badly mistaken. Indeed as I have noted previously, DHS's "countering violent extremism" (CVE) programs, like other executive branch CVE programs, are inherently discriminatory against Arab- and Muslim-Americans.

Gorka has also claimed that "Islam's leading ideologues and spokespersons have openly and repeatedly declared ideological war on America"—ignoring the fact that tens of thousands of Islamic religious leaders from around the world have condemned terrorism as heresy and declared that those who engage in it are not legitimate Muslims.

The Trump administration, however, is bullish on the Gorka world-view of Islam. This week, Sebastian, was named Deputy Assistant to the President. So how does Sebastian Gorka view Islam and its adherents?

In a February 2015 Breitbart piece, Gorka's Manichean worldview was made clear:

America and her allies are in a war with people who do what they do to please their God and obtain salvation by serving him as warriors. Washington summits and more community outreach will not stop the next attack against the Homeland.

Translation: Muslims—all Muslims—are the enemy, whether they live in Raqqa or Dearborn. And for Gorka, that means mass surveillance of Arab- and Muslim-Americans in the United States. As the *International Business Times* noted in January 2017:

It is not just refugees Gorka has called for monitoring of. Gorka, who was born in Britain and was a founding member of the Council for Emerging National Security Affairs, has also mirrored Trump's call for surveillance of mosques. In 2014, he opposed the New York City Police Department's decision to disband its Muslim surveillance program. In 2011, the department was found to have violated the constitution in its infiltration of mosques and other predominantly Muslim areas.

“What was Osama bin Laden? Muslim. What is Ayman al-Zawahiri, the head of al-Qaeda today? Muslim. Major Nidal Hasan, the only executor of a mass-casualty attack after 9/11 – the Fort Hood shooting – he was also a Muslim, or said he was,” Gorka told Al Jazeera in 2014, falsely claiming that there have not been other mass-casualty attacks since the Sept. 11 attacks.

“Do we think these individuals hang out in Hindu ashrams or Catholic community centers? No, they hang out in mosques.”

Gorka's understanding of what motivates people to engage in terrorism is as tenuous as his grasp of the history and diversity of Islamic thought and culture.

Writing again for Breitbart (where he was “national security editor” at the media outlet, which Bannon himself called the “platform for the alt-right,” a movement that includes Neo-Nazis) in June, Gorka claimed

The idea that we have disparate individuals across America that just decide one day to kill their fellow Americans is utterly and absolutely fallacious. Whether it is the first nineteen terrorists responsible for the original September 11th attacks, whether it is Major Nidal Hassan, the Fort Hood Shooter; or the Tsarnaev brothers responsible for the Boston Marathon Bombing; Malik and Farook, the San Bernardino killers; or last weekend's attacker, Omar Mateen – these individuals are all connected. The connective tissue between them is the ideology of Global Jihadism, their belief that they are fighting for Allah (not “God,” as Loretta Lynch would have you believe, but Allah, the God of Islam).

American military cemeteries are the final resting place for Arab- and Muslim-Americans who gave their lives in service to this nation, fighting the very Salafist terrorists Gorka describes. One of those Muslim-American patriots was Army Captain Humayun Khan.

By Gorka's twisted logic, one could just as easily argue that every white, Christian male with prior military service is another Timothy McVeigh or Terry Nichols in waiting. But in the wake of the April 1995 Oklahoma City Bombing, we did not pass a PATRIOT Act to conduct

surveillance against every other white, Christian male with prior military service, or launch nation-wide FBI surveillance efforts of every Christian house of worship, or attempt to restrict the travel of Christians based on their religion, race, or place of origin. Our justice system treated McVeigh and Nichols as the individual criminals that they were, exactly as the Bill of Rights requires. But in the Gorka Family, every Arab- or Muslim-American is a potential ISIS terrorist—first, last, and always.

Thousands of Arab- and Muslim-Americans continue to serve honorably, and often heroically, in our armed forces today, shedding their blood when necessary even as Sebastian and Katherine Gorka demonize them and their faith. We don't yet know whether Katherine Gorka will be nominated for a position at DHS or elsewhere in the Trump administration. We do know her husband will be in the White House, bending the ear of a demonstrably paranoid and narcissistic Commander-in-Chief. Based on his track record, I think we can well imagine what Gorka is going to suggest to Trump.

The sky has indeed grown dark over America.

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