

Stop Islamization of America (SIOA)

A version of this report was originally published in March 2011.

Introduction

"Wake up America!" With this cautionary phrase, Stop Islamization of America (SIOA) has sought to rouse public fears about a vast Islamic conspiracy to destroy American values.

The organization, created in 2009, warns of the encroachment of Shariah, or Islamic law, in the U.S. and encourages Muslims to renounce and leave the "falsity" of Islam. "The U.S. constitution is under attack from fundamentalist Islam and Shariah," reads SIOA's mission statement.

Consistently vilifying the Islamic faith under the guise of fighting radical Islam, the group has introduced a growing number of Americans to its conspiratorial anti-Muslim agenda.

Headed by Pamela Geller and Robert Spencer, SIOA operates under the auspices of the American Freedom Defense Initiative (AFDI). It is modeled after a European organization with the same agenda, Stop Islamisation of Europe (SIOE).

Through their blogs, books, ad campaigns and public events, Geller and Spencer promote the organization's goal of challenging a powerful and dangerous "Islamic machine" that threatens the security and cultural fabric of the United States.

The challenge facing America, as explained by Geller in her book, also called *Stop the Islamization of America*, "is not just immigrant Muslims, the problem is the doctrine of jihad and the ideology of Islamic supremacism, which any Muslim anywhere can hold."

Their ability to cultivate relationships with other like-minded anti-Muslim bigots and organizations internationally and domestically, including radical Dutch politician [Geert Wilders](#) and [David Yerushalmi](#), has further enabled them to reach broader audiences and expand their activity. Yerushalmi is one of the driving forces behind Shariah related conspiracy theories.

Furthermore, any organization or individual that opposes their efforts is dismissed as part of this Islamic conspiracy or compared to Nazi collaborators.



Stop Islamization of America



American Freedom Defense Initiative

Pamela Geller

"Before 9/11, I was not political," Pamela Geller has said. "I was utterly free and happy, a New York City career girl, always watching the Fashion Channel." A self-described "fashionista," Geller worked at *The New York Daily News* before becoming Associate Publisher of the *New York Observer* until the mid-90s. In late 2004, Geller created the AtlasShrugs blog, where she posts news and opinions on a range of political and other issues. Through the blog, Geller has also presented herself as an expert on Islam, promoting the theory that there is an Islamic conspiracy to destroy American values and culture. Much of her pseudo-expertise on Islam is built on exploiting public fears of a grand Muslim conspiracy that will reach every neighborhood across the country if left unchecked.

In her 2011 book, Geller explains that September 11 attacks led her to "set out to learn everything about the enemy who vowed to destroy America." Geller concluded that "the idea of a 'moderate' Islam does not exist... because the Koran says so and Muhammad said so." This conclusion has become the basis of her activism.

Her blog posts and speaking engagements give voice to Geller's belief that Muslims seek to impose what she terms as "the Sharia," or Islamic law, on the secular marketplace, schools and the American constitution. During a public speech in October 2011 in Houston, Geller characterized "the Islamization of America" as "imposing Islam on the secular marketplace... the mosqueing of the workplace, imposing Muslim prayer times on the union contracts, forcing non-Muslims to lengthen their day." This conspiracy, according to Geller, is aided by government officials and the media, which she accuses of collusion.

Another conspiracy Geller promotes is that Muslim American advocacy organizations not only seek to silence her voice, but strive to restrict freedom of speech for anyone questioning Islam. Geller responded to this perceived threat in her book with particular militancy, "...free speech is the line in the sand. Once free men have lost that basic human freedom, they have no other recourse but to resort to violence."

Geller has made significant inroads with some political movements, such as the Tea Party, which offers her another platform to disseminate her virulent anti-Muslim bigotry and conspiracy theories.

In an October 2011 speaking engagement with the Sugarland Tea Party in Texas, Geller primarily focused on attacking President Obama, who she has previously described as "the culmination of the Islamic-leftist alliance."

According to Geller, "Tea Party leadership" in Staten Island approached her in 2010 for "support and aid in fighting" a proposal to convert an old church and convent into a mosque by the Staten Island branch of [Muslim American Society \(MAS\)](#).

Geller, along with Robert Spencer, protested what they termed as a "mystery sale" and showed up at a community meeting to confront MAS organizers. In her book, Geller refers to this episode as "a case study"



Pamela Geller

for how to confront the [Muslim Brotherhood](#). The Archdiocese, the original owner of the church and convent, eventually withdrew from the sale agreement with MAS.

Geller routinely attacks organizations that oppose her agenda and views, often employing inappropriate Holocaust terminology and imagery to deride mainstream Jewish civil rights organizations. Geller, who is herself Jewish, frequently uses the terms "Nazi," "jewicidal" and "neo-kapo" to demonize these organizations.

In June 2012, Geller's scheduled event titled "Islamic Jew Hatred: The Root Cause of the Failure to Achieve Peace," sponsored by the Zionist Organization of America (ZOA), was forced to relocate when the Jewish Federation of Los Angeles pulled its support. Geller called the Federation's actions a "craven capitulation of the Jewish Federation to Islamic supremacist Jew-haters," adding that, "We expect that from kapos [sic], not from proud Jews..."

In response to criticism by several prominent Jewish organization in August 2012 over [divisive ads](#) she placed on San Francisco buses, Geller described the organizations as "Dhimmi Jewcidals," and said, "Even the Judenrat didn't protect and defend the Nazis' war on the Jews. They went along, but they didn't advance and promote it."

Geller also submitted the [controversial ad to the New York MTA](#) to counter an ad she alleged was anti-Israel. Geller's proposed ad read: "In any war between the civilized man and the savage, support the civilized man. Support Israel. Defeat Jihad." When MTA officials initially rejected the ad, Geller wrote, "the pro-jihad MTA is refusing my ad for the word 'savage' [...] I will say this until someone in those clueless ivory towers of the shariah-compliant MTA understand this. 'Savage' is accurate." Geller proceeded to file a lawsuit against the MTA for violation of her First Amendment rights, and was awarded a preliminary injunction by the judge in July 2012.



MTA ad

Robert Spencer

While Pamela Geller has become the public face of SIOA, in many ways Robert Spencer's established record of anti-Muslim activism serves as the group's foundation.

Prior to taking on his role with SIOA, Spencer made a name for himself through Jihad Watch, a blog dedicated to "bringing public attention to the role that jihad theology and ideology plays in the modern world." Jihad Watch is part of the David Horowitz Freedom Center, a right-wing conservative organization headed by activist David Horowitz.

A Melkite Greek Catholic, Spencer claims that his interest in Islam stems from his grandparents' forced exile from lands that became part of the Republic of Turkey following World War I. Spencer began studying Islamic theology, law and



Jihad Watch logo

history in college, and has used those credentials to present himself as an authority in Islamic doctrine and to legitimize his conspiratorial views.

Spencer has stated that he draws influence and inspiration for his work from Gisele Littman, a Jewish Egyptian writer and activist who writes under the pseudonym Bat Ye'or. Spencer has called Bat Ye'or a "pioneering scholar of dhimmitude," or the status of Jews and Christians under Islamic law, and the first person to make this subject into a field of academic study.

In a 2006 C-SPAN interview, Spencer singled out Islam as "the only religion in the world that has a developed doctrine, theology and legal system that mandates violence against unbelievers and mandates that Muslims must wage war in order to establish the hegemony of the Islamic social order all over the world."

In a September 12, 2011, interview with the conservative Canadian television station Sun TV, Spencer claimed the phenomenon of terrorism is wholly unique to the religion of Islam. "We don't see Christian groups, we don't see Jewish groups, we don't see Atheist groups, we don't see the kind of terrorist groups around the world on the scale that we see violent Islamic jihad groups all over the world."



Robert Spencer

In a follow-up interview on October 19, Spencer said that the Qur'an promotes violence, claiming, "The Qur'an is very clear that it is the responsibility of believers, as a whole in the aggregate, to make war against unbelievers and subjugate them under the rule of Islamic law..."

Although there are various forms of jihad in Islam – depending on the context – Spencer insisted during his 2011 speaking tour of Australia that "all these various forms of jihad – both violent and non-violent – are directed toward the same end: the Islamization of the world and the imposition of Islamic law over unbelieving societies."

Spencer routinely uses his knowledge of Islamic holy texts to broadly paint Islam as a religion promoting violence. For example, in an interview on December 2, 2011, during his "Inconvenient Truth Tour" in Australia, Spencer said that stories of Islam's prophet Muhammad were "fiction and elaborated" by Arab conquerors "in order to preserve and perpetuate their empire."

In that same interview, Spencer cites the Qur'an's description of Muslims as the 'best of people' as evidence that Muslims must subjugate non-Muslims, "According to the Qur'an 98:06... the Muslims have the responsibility to extend the rule of Islamic law over them [unbelievers] and to subjugate them as inferiors because of their rejection of Islam."

These ideas are the crux of his books, which include *Islam Unveiled*, *Onward Muslim Soldiers*, *Stealth Jihad*, and *The Truth About Muhammad*. Spencer also co-authored a controversial 2010 book with Geller, *The Post-American Presidency: The Obama Administration's War on America*, in which they accuse President Obama of doing the bidding of "Islamic overlords" and unfairly favoring Muslims.

In his 2008 book, *Stealth Jihad: How Radical Islam is Subverting America without Guns or Bombs*, Spencer claims that the key driving force behind the Islamization of America is the [Muslim Brotherhood](#). The Brotherhood, Spencer claims, along with the assistance of its front groups, has laid out "a plan to do nothing

less than conquer and Islamize the United States," with the ultimate goal of establishing of a global Caliphate.

This conspiracy that Spencer has described has been cited by a range of individuals from like-minded anti-Muslim activists such as [Brigitte Gabriel of ACT! for America](#) to national figures and elected officials like Representative [Michelle Bachmann](#).

In response to claims that he is an "Islamophobe," Spencer maintains that the term identifies someone "with a rational fear of Islam," but that it was "invented by the Muslims Brotherhood."

Pamela Geller & Robert Spencer Join Forces

Soon after Pamela Geller launched her Atlas Shrugs blog in late 2004, she began citing the works of Robert Spencer as the foremost authority on Islam. By 2007, as Geller began getting more vocal about her concerns regarding the threat of Islam, Spencer started promoting her outspoken views on his own blog as well. In January 2007, Spencer was featured on Geller's weekly *Atlas* radio show for the first time. They discussed a range of topics, including allegations of the exploitation of America's history of racism by Muslim Americans. Spencer said that Muslims "know that racism is the national trauma of the United States and if they can portray themselves as its victims, then they can gain an awful lot of traction in the mainstream media and even among government and law enforcement. And they've been doing very skillfully."

Their first joint public pursuit in 2007 focused on preventing the opening of a secular public Arabic-English charter school, the Khalil Gibran International Academy, in Brooklyn. A coalition, called "Stop the Madrassa," sought to shut down the school; Geller levied personal attacks against the school's principle, Debbie Almontaser, calling her "jihad loving," and a "documented Islamist...in the guise of a 'multicultural educator'."

Four years later, the Department of Education announced that it would close the school due to poor performance. Geller took credit for the closing, calling it a "victory." She has also alleged that teaching Arabic in public schools is the "spearhead in the Islamic imperialist project."

The relationship between Geller and Spencer was further solidified later in 2007 when they travelled to Belgium to attend an international conference in Brussels dedicated to creating a "network of activists from 14 nations to resist the increasing Islamisation of their countries." The Brussels conference, which included participants from around the world, likely helped set the stage for Geller and Spencer's future attempts to globalize their message.

Upon establishing SIOA in 2009, Geller and Spencer created a series of paid advertisement campaigns designed to expose Americans to what they consider the biggest threats posed by Islam.

In 2010, one set of bus ads called "Refuge From Islam," claimed that Muslim Americans who "long to be free" of their religion are in danger of being killed. The ad offered safe houses for those who want "out."

That same year, an ad created for New York City taxis, dubbed the



Honor Killing Awareness Campaign

"Honor Killing Awareness Campaign," purportedly addressed young Muslim women facing threats from their family for rejecting Muslim values or becoming "too Americanized." In an interview with World New Daily, a right-leaning conservative website, Geller said, "Our ad campaigns directed threatened girls to go to LeaveIslamSafely.com, and some Islamic supremacist taxi drivers defaced our signs by cutting out the word 'Leave,' so that the ad read, 'Islamsafely.com.' But not to worry, we bought the URL for that, too."

When the right of cab drivers to veto inappropriate ads was upheld by the city of New York, Geller remarked, "The idea that advertising must conform to the Shariah is part of the Islamization of America."

Other inflammatory ads created by SIOA include an ad protesting the proposed Islamic Center in downtown Manhattan that juxtaposed the burning World Trade Center next to another building labeled "WTC Mega Mosque." Another controversial ad, described by SIOA as pro-Israel, read, "In any war between the civilized man and the savage, support the civilized man. Support Israel. Defeat Jihad."



Ground Zero Mosque ad

In early 2013, Geller's AFDI organization escalated and intensified its anti-Muslim ad campaign when it unveiled a series of confrontational "My Jihad" ads featuring quotes and statements by Muslim extremists advocating violence. Geller's ads conclude with, "That's His Jihad. What's Yours?"

In the wake of the tragic Boston Marathon bombings in April 2013, Geller and AFDI unveiled an eighteen-point "Platform for Defending Freedom," an initiative replete with action points vilifying Muslims and Islam. While the threat of Islamic extremism is a legitimate concern, such a simplistic initiative fails to distinguish between the general Muslim population and extremists motivated by radical interpretations of Islam. For example, the platform calls for the U.S. to recognize Islam as "a political movement... that should be regarded as an authoritarian and supremacist political system as well as a region," and also calls for the "profiling of Muslims at airports" and an "immediate halt of immigration by Muslims into nations that do not currently have a Muslim majority population."

Geller and Spencer came under scrutiny in the wake of the July 2011 attack in Norway by Anders Behring Breivik, which killed 77 people. Each released statements disavowing any connection to Breivik, who cited their work in his manifesto. Geller's statement pointed out that she was cited once, while Spencer was mentioned over 50 times.

In an attempt to further distance herself from the Norwegian shooter, Geller described Breivik as "anti-government," and said that he had been planning his attack since 2000, well before she started blogging. Geller also declared that anti-jihad activists in America and Europe are not to blame for Breivik's radicalization: "If anyone incited him to violence, it was Islamic supremacists."

Several days after the incident, Geller portrayed the young victims who were killed on Utoya Island as anti-Semitic, terror-sympathizing political targets. "The jihad-loving media," Geller wrote on her blog, "never told us what anti-Semitic war games they were playing on that island. Utoya Island is a Community/Socialist campground, and they clearly had a pro-Islamic agenda."

She also posted a picture of the campers taken just days before the massacre with the caption, "Note the faces which are more Middle Eastern or mixed than pure Norwegian," implying that some of the young campers were possibly sympathizers of the Palestinian cause.

Ground Zero Mosque Controversy

SIOA attracted significant national attention during its campaign against the proposed Islamic center near the site of the World Trade Center attacks - a project Pamela Geller famously coined as the "Ground Zero mosque."

Geller and Spencer became the primary voices against the project, generating fierce public debate between proponents and opponents of the project throughout 2010. Geller, in particular, received national exposure for her conspiratorial views, including her theory that the project was an extension of the subversive nature of Islam, a process she describes as "stealth jihad."

In her book, *Stop the Islamization of America*, Geller declared that the Islamic center would be a "triumphal mosque, built on the site of an Islamic victory, no less unmistakable than the Dome of the Rock and the Al-Aqsa mosques [sic] on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, which assert the victory of Islam over Judaism." Geller also described the proposed Islamic center as "the ultimate flag of conquest" at a Tea Party convention in Tennessee.

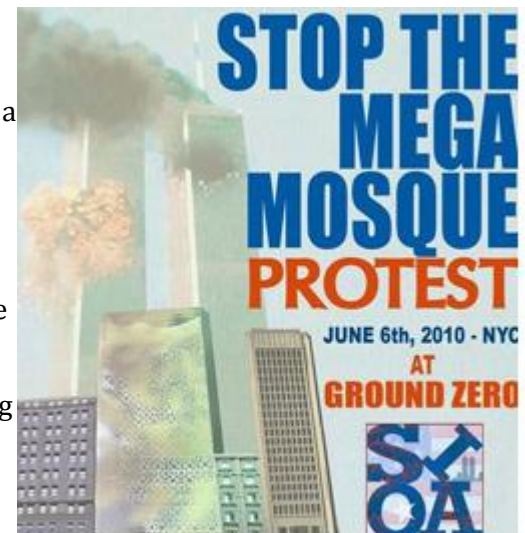
On June 6, 2010, Geller mobilized her supporters to stage a protest rally near the proposed building site. During the demonstration, which was symbolically held on D-Day and attracted thousands of people, Geller said, "It is unconscionable to build a shrine to the very ideology that inspired the jihadist attacks at ground zero."

Following the June rally, SIOA launched an advertising campaign promoting Geller's "September 11 Rally of Remembrance." The ad, which ran during the month of August on MTA buses and trains throughout New York City, juxtaposed an image of an airplane headed toward the burning World Trade Center with another building labeled "WTC Mega Mosque" and the words "Why There?"

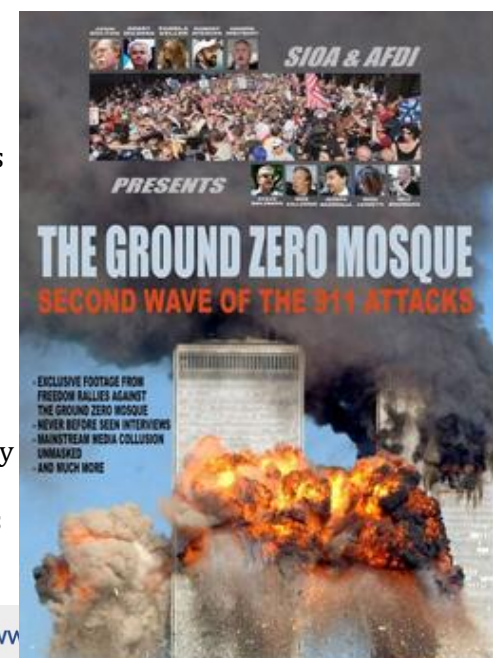
The September 11 rally featured a pre-taped message from former United Nations Ambassador John Bolton and a keynote address by radical Dutch politician [Geert Wilders](#), who Geller once described as "the Bravest Man in Europe." After a number of commemorative prayers, Geller told rally participants, including 9/11 victims' family members, "Only you can stop this triumphal mosque on the cherished site of conquered land."

Participants carried various banners and signs, including one that read, "No Obama's Mosque" and "Islam = 1400 years of Aggression, Murder! 'Peace' of Islam = Cutting Non-Muslims to Pieces! Never Submit to Sharia - Islam!"

SIOA's efforts against the Islamic center remained the group's primary focus throughout 2011. In February, SIOA released the film, "The Ground Zero Mosque: Second Wave of the 911 Attacks." The film, directed and produced by Geller, claims to "expose government collusion and media bias," which Geller says, "whitewash[es] the links to jihad terror and unsavory financial dealings



D-Day Rally ad



The Ground Zero Mosque: Second Wave of the 911 Attacks

of mosque organizers... and propagandiz[es] the objectives of America's enemies."

On the tenth anniversary of the attacks, SIOA held another rally called "9/11 Freedom Rally at Ground Zero." The rally, Geller said, was intended to "show the jihadists we are unbowed in the defense of freedom." Despite a smaller turnout, the rally demonstrated SIOA's increasing links to international groups.

Among the speakers were René Stadtkewits, founder and chairman of the German anti-Muslim *Die Freiheit* party, and Anders Gravers, the head of Stop Islamisation of Europe (SIOE). Both spoke of a current conflict between the Christian and Islamic worlds as an extension of the Crusades. Israeli Knesset member Arieh Eldad also spoke at the rally, saying, "It's time for the U.S. to understand that the conflict in the Middle East is not a local territorial conflict, but part of the global religious war, part of the global jihad."

In her book, Geller concludes that the protests and rallies against the "mosquestrosity" were a victory for SIOA. "The people were awake."

Allies

Geller and Spencer have cultivated strategic relationships with a network of like-minded individuals and organizations in the U.S and abroad that enable them to reach broader audiences and expand their activity.

Key Domestic Allies

- [David Yerushalmi](#), an attorney with a record of anti-Muslim, anti-immigrant and anti-black bigotry, is a close ally of Geller and Spencer, and is one of the driving forces behind efforts to ban or restrict the use of Shariah law in American courts. In addition to being on the board of SIOA, Yerushalmi provides the legal representation for Geller and Spencer in their various lawsuits against public transportation agencies.
- Frank Gaffney, a prominent SIOA board member, is founder of the Center for Security Policy, a neo-conservative think tank that has pioneered the anti-Shariah hysteria by publishing materials regarding the threat of an Islamic takeover of the U.S. In a 2009 *Washington Times* article, in a reaction to President Obama's endorsement of the proposed Islamic center in New York, Gaffney claimed that "there is mounting evidence that the president not only identifies with Muslims, but actually may still be one himself." In 2010, the Center for Security Policy published the book, *Shari'ah: The Threat To America, An Exercise in Competitive Analysis, Report of Team 'B' II*, which was co-authored by Yerushalmi. The book repeated Yerushalmi's theories about a vast Shariah conspiracy threatening the U.S.
- James Lafferty is an SIOA board member and chairman and founder of the Virginia Anti-Shariah Taskforce (VAST), a coalition of anti-Shariah, anti-Muslim people committed to stopping the spread of Shariah in Virginia and across the U.S. Geller has called Lafferty "an early warrior to the fight, a pioneer in activism against Islamic supremacism." Geller has also acknowledged on her blog that Lafferty was one of the first to enter the fight against Islamization in America.




David Yerushalmi



- David Horowitz, founder of the right-wing conservative David Horowitz Freedom Center, provides Geller and Spencer with some financial support, including the sponsorship of Spencer's Jihad Watch blog. In recent years Horowitz has sponsored "Islamofascism Awareness Week," a project on college campuses that promotes anti-Muslim views and features events with anti-Muslim activists.

Key International Allies

In January 2012, Geller and Spencer created a new organization, Stop Islamization of Nations (SION), an international network of "stop the Islamization" groups, largely from Europe, that purports to "stand for freedom and oppose the advance of Islamic law, Sharia." The group says it will offer "diversity and sensitivity training to corporations and government agencies...to help these entities understand the jihad threat." In August 2012, SION held its first counter jihad rally in Stockholm, Sweden, and featured speeches by Geller, Spencer and European anti-Muslim leaders.

- Anti-Muslim Dutch parliamentarian [Geert Wilders](#) is SIOA's most well known and controversial ally. Geller has described Wilders as "the Bravest Man in Europe" and personally financed Wilders' February 2009 trip to speak at the Conservative Political Action Conference in Washington, DC. A few months later, Wilders was honored at the "Freedom of Speech Summit" held at a South Florida synagogue. Wilders told the audience that "Islam is not a religion," "the right to religious freedom should not apply to this totalitarian ideology called Islam," and called the Qur'an an inspirational tool for "jihadists all over the world to slaughter innocent people..." Wilders has made appearances and similar speeches at other synagogues in the U.S. with Geller's support. Wilders also spoke at SIOA's "September 11 Rally of Remembrance" in 2010 and said, "As we all know, America, New York and Sharia are incompatible...A tolerant society, like your city New York, must defend itself against the powers of darkness."
 

Geert Wilders
- René Stadtkewitz, founder and chairman of *Die Freiheit*, the Freedom Party, and member of the German parliament, attended SIOA's 2011 "Freedom Rally" in New York City. Stadtkewitz said, "Ten years ago the totalitarian ideology of Islam has shown its most terrible face here. We should have known that the source of Islam, the Qur'an, demands violence and even the murder of people of other beliefs."
- SIOA's European "sister" organization, Stop Islamisation of Europe (SIOE), is led by Danish anti-Muslim activist Anders Gravers. SIOE not only warns the public of the encroachment of Shariah, but also calls for the halt to all mosque construction in Europe. SIOE runs under the motto "Racism is the lowest form of human stupidity, but Islamophobia is the height of common sense." At SIOA's 2011 "Freedom Rally," Gravers said, "We must never forget why the terror attacks took place. This happened because attempts are made to impose Islamic law in the United States. Terror attacks are Islamic tactics to terrify people until they submit to Islam."
- Geller and Spencer publically support the English Defence League (EDL), a self-described "Counter Jihad movement" based in England that has been linked to various [racist English groups](#). Geller describes the group as Europe's "movement for freedom" and promotes EDL events, including a March 2010 rally organized in support of Geert Wilders. Following an August 2010 clash between EDL members and police, Geller posted the following message to her blog: "The stated goal of the EDL is to oppose militant Islam and the sharia. What's wrong with that? Everything to the PC, leftist slaves in the media and the government." Days later, she defended the group against accusations



that it features a neo-Nazi and racist ideology, instead accusing the media of attacking "any and all counter jihad activists." During her keynote speech at SION's August 2012 rally in Stockholm, Geller reaffirmed her support for EDL, stating, "I salute the EDL and I stand with the EDL."