

<http://clemensheni.net/2012/02/07/german-university-of-tubingen-mustafa-ceric-islamism-and-antisemitism/>

## German University of Tübingen, Mustafa Cerić, Islamism and Antisemitism

Posted on 7. Februar 2012

### German University of Tübingen, Mustafa Cerić, Islamism and Antisemitism

*By Leslie Lebl, Connecticut (a former U.S. diplomat, she served in Bosnia in the late 1990s with the NATO Stabilization Force) and Dr. Clemens Heni, who lived in 2008/2009 in Connecticut while being employed at the Yale Initiative for the Interdisciplinary Study of Antisemitism (YIISA) at Yale University, who's head Dr. Charles Small introduced both authors one to another. Leslie invited Clemens to his first SuperBowl Party in the US in 2009.*

Mustafa Cerić, the Grand Mufti of Sarajevo, spoke on January 16, 2012, at the ceremonial opening of a new Center for Islamic Theology at the University of Tübingen based in an old and typical University town in the south-west of Germany. It will be the first of four such planned centers in Germany. With the German minister of education and research, Annette Schavan from the Conservative Party (CDU), the Baden-Württemberg minister of science Theresia Bauer (party of the Greens), the President ("Rektor") of Tübingen University, Bernd Engler, the General Director of Foreign Affairs of the Office for Religious Relations of Turkey, Mehmet Pacaci and the mayor of the city of Tübingen, Boris Palmer (party of the Greens) in attendance (see a picture of the event and these six persons below), he clearly has an official seal of approval and presumably represents the type of Islam that Germany and Turkey hope to foster in Germany.<sup>[1]</sup> Germany is in the middle of a debate about Islam, Islamism, terrorism, head scarves, 'honor' killings, Sharia law and antisemitism. So what theology does Cerić recognize as Islamic?



<sup>[2]</sup>

The day before, on January 15, 2012, Cerić was among a crowd of Islamists and Islamic scholars and representatives in Doha, the capital of Qatar, at the opening of the “Research Center for Islamic Legislations and Ethics.”<sup>[3]</sup> He was joined in Doha by resident antisemite and leading Islamist Youssef al-Qaradawi, among many other leading Islamic scholars and official representatives of the State of Qatar, and the Qatar Foundation, an official sponsor of the soccer team of F.C. Barcelona in Spain, which earns some 170 million € for a five-year contract.<sup>[4]</sup> The center is headed by “frère Tariq,” infamous Islamist leader Tariq Ramadan.



The events of January 15 and 16, 2012, reveal the importance of dealing with Islamism. Islamist institutions are on the rise, and the troubling story is: even and particularly western countries are becoming part of the problem.



Past interviews and media reports, as well as Cerić's 2006 proposed Declaration of European Muslims, cast doubt as to whether Cerić is truly a 'moderate' Muslim or whether the Islam that he represents is something the average German would find acceptable. In particular, his peaceful co-existence with radical Islam, his views on sharia (traditional Islamic law), his actions towards non-Muslims and his indifference to antisemitism are troubling.

### ***Dealing with Islamic radicalism***

For years now, Cerić has been campaigning for a European-wide organization for Muslims patterned on Bosnia's Islamic Community. The organization would control what is taught in Islamic schools and mosques. Cerić has argued that it would keep European Muslims from being "at the mercy of sometimes dubious imams who often preach radicalization."[\[5\]](#)

Yet neither Cerić nor Bosnia's Islamic Community has done a good job of protecting Bosnian Muslims from radical Islam. On the contrary, Bosnia has seen a steadily increasing presence of Muslims adhering to the strict Wahhabi form of Islam imported from Saudi Arabia despite its unpopularity. In a 2006 survey, 71% of those surveyed thought that Wahhabism was a threat to Muslims and to Bosnia-Herzegovina.[\[6\]](#) The response of the Islamic Community was to deny that there was any threat.[\[7\]](#)

When a US diplomat in Bosnia said in 2007 that there were 10–100 al-Qaeda-affiliated Muslim extremists in Bosnia, Cerić responded with anger and resentment, portraying Muslims as victims rather than perpetrators: "if there are Al-Qa'idah helpers in Bosnia- Hercegovina, it is the Office of the High Representative and NATO that are responsible for their existence."[\[8\]](#)

On February 1, 2011, Cerić visited the memorial at the former extermination and concentration camp Auschwitz. He did not remember the Shoah as such; rather, Auschwitz served as a backdrop to portray Muslims as the 'new Jews.' Cerić "prayed for the victims and called for the World to sympathize with the Jewish victims of the Holocaust and prevent future genocides. He also condemned all forms of racism, including antisemitism and islamophobia," according to a pro-Cerić blog.[\[9\]](#) Equating massacres like Srebrenica with the unprecedented crimes of the Holocaust has been called by researchers a 'soft-core' denial of the Holocaust. The Shoah was not just a single massacre but the industrialized mass murder of European Jews. Nothing like that happened in Bosnia.

Cerić's response to three major terrorist attacks (the 2001 attacks on New York and Washington, the 2004 train bombs in Madrid and the 2005 bus and subway bombings in London) is also revelatory. In his Declaration, he condemns these as acts of violence against humanity which "have been attributed to 'Islamic terrorism'" and complains that European Muslims are being saddled with collective guilt for them. Often he uses the term "Islamophobia," a code word used to attack all those who criticize Islamism, Islamic terrorism, or Islamic antisemitism.

As Tawfik Hamid, himself a former Islamist, points out in his book, *Inside Jihad*, "In Arab culture, denouncing a crime is not taken seriously unless one denounces the criminal by name. Failure to ascribe responsibility for a criminal act is understood by the perpetrator to be not only a tacit approval of his deed, but cover for it."[\[10\]](#) Cerić is Bosnian, not Arab, but German authorities should at the least challenge him regarding his reluctance to state that Islamist terrorists carried out those attacks, especially given the continuing presence of Islamist terrorists in Bosnia and revelations of Bosnian plots aimed at Western Europe.

### ***Applying sharia***

In 2009 Cerić gave a speech at the Catholic Academy in Berlin in which he argued that sharia would not be contrary to the state constitution of Bosnia-Herzegovina; that it is merely "a moral

code for Muslims which encourages them to do good and to shun evil.” He neglects to mention that Islamists interpret this obligation as a requirement to keep everyone, Muslim or non-Muslim from, say, drinking alcohol, eating pork, or owning a dog. This very aggressive interpretation is causing tremendous friction today in many European cities. Cerić’s evasive description of sharia is simply not acceptable.

Similarly, when asked about the sharia requirement to kill apostates, or those who leave Islam, Cerić dodged the issue by referring to the Koranic statement that there is no compulsion in religion, and further opined that “Islamic civilization is too great to be paranoid about individuals who will leave their camp.” Again, he did not openly oppose the practice – a significant omission. Killing apostates is the antithesis of practicing freedom of religion. If Cerić states that he supports freedom of religion, as he does, then he should publicly condemn this practice.

Cerić’s statements appear even more disingenuous in light of a recent pronouncement by above mentioned Youssef al-Qaradawi, the spiritual leader of the Muslim Brotherhood and the head of the European Council for Fatwa and Research (ECFR).



Al-Qaradawi proposed that sharia be introduced gradually in Egypt: “We have to teach people the laws of the *shari’a* and explain them, before anything else. I think that in the first five years, there should be no chopping off of hands...A transitional phase...”[\[11\]](#) In other words, full sharia is eventually to be enforced, and that includes all the punishments and strictures that Cerić does not want to discuss.

### ***Living with non-Muslims***

Despite the acute need in Bosnia to respect ethnic and religious differences, Cerić called in late 2007 for Bosnia to be declared a Muslim majority state. A statement from the office of the High Representative, the most senior international official in Bosnia, criticized him for “provoking political instability in the country.”[\[12\]](#)

What is equally interesting is that Cerić’s proposal had little basis in fact or public opinion. According to a 2011 Pew survey, Muslims comprise only 41.6% of Bosnia’s population. This situation is unlikely to change in the coming years, as the Pew projection for 2030 shows only a modest increase to 42.7%. Nor could Cerić argue that he was responding to the wishes of most Bosnian Muslims, as many of them in 2010 voted for a secular, modernist party rather than for the Muslim-identity party.[\[13\]](#) Instead, it looks like a simple power play to advance the position of certain Muslims.

Other recent actions reinforce this impression. In 2008, Cerić insisted on introducing Islamic instruction for Muslim children in Sarajevo. In a 2009 interview[\[14\]](#) he argued that such instruction was optional; by 2011, he excoriated the Sarajevo canton minister for education for proposing that religious instruction be optional and not included in the overall rating of

students' success. Cerić accused the minister, himself a Muslim of "hating Muslims and Islam." He called on the minister to resign and warned a 'Sarajevo summer could happen'" similar to that in Egypt.[\[15\]](#)

Indeed, just several months prior to Cerić's pronouncement that sharia was not contrary to Bosnia's constitution, the directors of Sarajevo's day-care centers, kindergartens and nurseries banned Santa Claus, arguing that the city is predominantly Muslim and Santa Claus is not part of the Muslim tradition. Cerić does not appear to have opposed this decision which enraged many Bosnians for whom "Father Frost" was a fixture even under communist rule.[\[16\]](#) It should be noted that banning Santa Claus as an open, public display of Christianity is consistent with sharia requirements that Bosnians had traditionally set aside.



Omar Hamdan, a Sunni Israeli and scholar in the early Quran, will head the new Center for Islamic Theology at the University of Tübingen.[\[17\]](#) He wrote a doctoral dissertation under the auspices of Josef van Ess, a German scholar in Islamic Studies and board member of the journal "Spektrum Iran," which is published by the "cultural department" of the antisemitic, anti-Zionist, Holocaust denying regime of the "Islamic Republic of Iran."[\[18\]](#) Van Ess (born 1934) was also awarded a book price of Iran in 1999. He is member of the "Iranian Academy for Philosophy" as well as member of the "Medieval Academy of America."[\[19\]](#)



Ironically and sadly, an Israeli citizen like Hamdan with an affiliation to Cerić and therefore to al-Qaradawi appears to be using his Israeli education to teach Germans about Islamism, rather than 'moderate' Islam. A German TV report about his first class on campus shows mostly veiled female students.[\[20\]](#) And there were already accusations in January 2012 that he is promoting Sharia Law in Germany and Europe; the University repudiated these allegations.[\[21\]](#) What is clear is that there should be no place for religious extremists on Western campuses.

### ***Tolerating Islamic antisemitism***

So is Cerić a 'moderate' Muslim or is he an Islamist? His membership in the ECFR, a Muslim Brotherhood organization, suggests that he is in fact the latter. Another indicator is his tolerance for antisemitism, a core principle of all Islamist groups. In Sarajevo, an imam can thunder against Zionists and call for the obliteration of Israel at the King Fahd Mosque, the largest one in the country.[\[22\]](#) Presumably this kind of sermon would be acceptable within the Muslim organization Cerić wants to set up in Europe.

Al-Qaradawi's views are relevant, as Cerić is also a member of the ECFR and is even rumored to be a potential successor to Al-Qaradawi (born 1926).[\[23\]](#) On January 28, 2009, al-Qaradawi said on al-Jazeera TV that Allah installed leaders to punish the Jews. The last one installed by Allah was Hitler. Al-Qaradawi also told his audience, "I will shoot Allah's enemies, the Jews, and they

will throw a bomb at me, and thus I will seal my life with martyrdom.” In an earlier sermon on January 9, 2009, Qaradawi lashed out at Jews, including calling on God to “kill them, down to the very last one.”[\[24\]](#)

By closely working with al-Qaradawi in the ECFR Cerić is supporting this kind of antisemitism. This is a typical example of the Islamist movement portraying itself as harmless: one day Cerić visits Auschwitz, pretending to be sad about antisemitism, the next he works with al-Qaradawi who praised the Germans and Hitler who committed the Shoah in Auschwitz and other places, and who called the Egypt ‘revolutionaries’ in mid-February 2011 to organize a march on Jerusalem to ‘liberate’ it from ‘the Zionist occupiers.’ This is double-speak which Germans should not honor.

### ***Conclusion***

Mustafa Spahić, a prominent Bosnian Muslim leader, has criticized Cerić for “not fulfilling his duties. He travels to Germany and collects one award after another instead of dealing with the radicals here.”[\[25\]](#) Others are even less charitable; according to *Der Spiegel*, Cerić is known in Sarajevo as “homo duplex,” the man with two faces.[\[26\]](#) Germans should beware of entrusting the future of Islam in Germany to the hands of someone like Mustafa Cerić.



What is clear is that students must accommodate Islamic practices. When a journalist spoke to Hamdan on a normal weekday at 5 p.m., Hamdan’s cell phone message said that it is time to pray. Just think, a center on Islamic theology, run according to Islamic prayer times, paid for by German taxpayers and supported by the German non-Muslim elite.



[1] <http://www.swr.de/swr4/bw/regional/tuebingen/-/id=259458/nid=259458/did=9147722/pv=gallery/jxjg04/index.html>

[2] (source: <http://www.swr.de/-/id=9149756/property=gallery/width=512/height=288/pubVersion=3/z3rn4y/index.jpg>, all URLs quoted in this piece have been visited on February 3, 2012)

[3] <http://www.islamonline.net/eng/article/1304971294818> ;  
<http://www.cilecenter.org/media-center/event-detail?item=4>

[4] <http://arxiu.fcbarcelona.cat/web/english/noticies/club/temporada10-11/12/10/n101210114494.html> Barcelona is also promoting UNICEF, and NIKE.

[5] Cited in "Bosnian Muslim Leader Wants European Organization to Control Islam in Europe." *Global Muslim Brotherhood Report*, Jul. 30, 2007.

[6] "Vast majority of Bosnian Federation TV viewers see Wahhabism as a threat," *BBC*, Dec. 10, 2006.

[7] Nidzara Ahmetasevic, "Investigation: Emissaries of Militant Islam Make Headway in Bosnia." *BIRN* Mar. 21, 2007.

[8] BBC Monitoring International Reports August 19, 2007 Sunday "BOSNIAN GRAND MUFTI ACCUSES OHR OFFICIAL OF SPREADING ISLAMOPHOBIA" Text of report in English by Croatian news agency HINA

[9] <http://srebrenica-genocide.blogspot.com/2011/02/dr-mustafa-ceric-visits-auschwitz.html>

[10] Tawfik Hamid, *Inside Jihad*, Mar. 2008, p. 98.

[11] "Sunni Scholar Yousuf Al-Qaradhwawi: Islamic Law Should Be Implemented Gradually in Egypt; There Should Be No Chopping Off of Hands in the First Five Years." *MEMRI*, Clip No. 3287, Jan. 26, 2012.

[12] Suggested in “Bosnian Grand Mufti Criticized for Calling for Bosnian Muslim Majority State.” *Global Muslim Brotherhood Report*, Nov. 10, 2007.

[13] Stephen Schwartz, “Islam in Europe Destroyed by Radicalism?” *WeeklyStandard.com*, Oct. 11, 2010.

[14] “Interview: Bosnia’s Grand Mufti Defends Religious Freedom.” *RFE/RL*, Jul. 16, 2009.

[15] “Bosnia: International envoy and chief mufti clash over religious education.” *Adnkronos*, May 26, 2011.

[16] “Father Christmas banned in kindergartens in Bosnia.” *The Telegraph*, Dec. 28, 2008.

[17] <http://en.qantara.de/The-First-of-His-Kind/18379c19096i0p/index.html>

[18] <http://berlin.icro.ir/index.aspx?siteid=191&pageid=11681&newsview=574979>

[19] <http://www.uni-tuebingen.de/uni/aos/vaness.htm>

[20] <http://www.zdf.de/ZDFmediathek/beitrag/video/1551982/Islam-im-Hoersaal?setTime=50#/beitrag/video/1551982/Islam-im-Hoersaal>

[21] [http://davidboehme.eu/Stellungnahme\\_17012012.pdf](http://davidboehme.eu/Stellungnahme_17012012.pdf)

[22] Walter Mayr, “Islamists Gain Ground in Sarajevo,” *Der Spiegel*, Feb. 25, 2009.

[23] Suggested in “Bosnian Grand Mufti Criticized for Calling for Bosnian Muslim Majority State.” *Global Muslim Brotherhood Report*, Nov. 10, 2007.

[24] [http://www.adl.org/main\\_Arab\\_World/al\\_Qaradawi\\_report\\_20041110.htm](http://www.adl.org/main_Arab_World/al_Qaradawi_report_20041110.htm)

[25] Quoted in Mayr, *op. cit.*

[26] *Ibid.*