

## **Why Sajid Tarar thinks Donald Trump is the leader Muslims need**

By Michele Manelis of [news.com.au](http://news.com.au)

While Donald Trump has been calling for a ban on Muslims entering the United States, it seems the Republican candidate is gaining supporters in some of the most unlikely places.

Sajid Tarar, founder of Muslims for Trump, spoke to *news.com.au* to discuss his endorsement. "Donald Trump is the first candidate to identify radical Islam as a threat," Mr Tarar says passionately.

"Everybody with any common sense knows that radical Islam is a threat not only to Western civilisation, but a threat to Islam itself.

"Our religion has been hijacked by radical Islamists, and Muslims have to stand up against them in their own countries.

"Al-Qaeda and the Taliban have killed more Muslims than anybody else. For this reason, we as American Muslims are looking for strong leadership."

None too impressed by the current administration, Mr Tarar laments that "the Middle East is burning and President Obama is worried about transgender bathroom policies. It's embarrassing."

He shakes off Trump's extreme immigration views and anti-Islam rhetoric.

"He never wanted to ban the 1.5 billion Muslims in the world. Trump is a victim of a liberal media," Tarar argues.

"He said there would be a ban - but with exceptions. Just like he's willing to build a wall, but there are doors [in that wall] but the media skip that last part and just say, "Trump wants to ban Muslims; he is anti-immigrant."

According to a poll taken by The Council on American-Islamic Relations, 11 per cent of Muslims in America support Trump. Tarar, like a growing number of his community, feels that Trump is equipped to fight IS.

"He's a leader, he's anti-establishment, anti-political correctness. He's unafraid, and yes I'm very confident he can fight IS. He's a doer, he's not scared of the polls. That's what we need: a true leader."

Sajid Tarar, Founder of American Muslims for Trump. Photo / AP

Mr Tarar, 56, who immigrated to the US from Pakistan in the mid-80s, doesn't merely give lip service to the billionaire businessman and his Republican party. He delivered a speech at the Republic National Convention last week in Cleveland, ending in a benediction that included the words " ... and God bless Donald Trump".

Although there were reportedly some hecklers in the crowd, Tarar insists, "There were 40,000 people clapping and there was just one [delegate] who screamed, 'No Islam!'

People were getting in line to hug me, take pictures with me and shake my hand, and that wasn't the first time. I've been travelling to rallies and people are telling me that I'm doing a wonderful job. I feel very humbled," he explains.

"I was successful in my objective last week to stand on the stage and send the message to America that not all Muslims are bad people. We love this country and we are Americans."

Curious to know what Trump makes of his number one fan, I ask Mr Tarar whether he's had any feedback from the former reality TV star himself.

"I've met Donald Trump a couple of times. I'm an adviser to the National Diversity Coalition for Trump. We are a group of about 30 members from different parts of the world and ethnic communities who advise on many issues. It was created by [Trump's lawyer] Mike Cohen.

"In that capacity I've met Donald Trump a couple of times, but these meetings were not to discuss Islam in particular; they were very general and casual. He told me that he appreciates what I'm doing."

Speaking of which, Tarar explains the objectives of Muslims For Trump, a group he began five months ago.

"My missions are as follows: Telling Muslims, you are the victims of your own people. Secondly, if you come to America, or any country and you are accepted with open arms, be loyal to that country, be patriotic. And my third goal is to educate young Muslim-Americans. Don't fall for this stuff going on with these Jihadist values."

As Europe continues to remain on high alert with IS attacks occurring with alarming regularity, Mr Tarar says one of the biggest problems lies in the inability of Muslims to assimilate.

"I'm not representing Muslims outside of America, but it's very different here in the US because Muslims are assimilated, and most Muslim-Americans are satisfied with [the outcome of] their migration.

"A very small proportion is disappointed, but it's a different set-up. In some countries, they are not integrated and are living in ghettos. They still identify themselves as Moroccan, for example, and will introduce themselves that way."

As for Australia's Muslim population, Mr Tarar says, "I love Australia, and yes, there is a huge Islamic community."

"I went to law school in Pakistan, and I have studied Islam. I've also studied Sharia and I've studied the Koran. We all have different interpretations of religion, but my take is that the Koran asks us to be loyal to the country you live in. If I were living in Australia, I wouldn't have any problem with singing their national anthem or whatever their laws dictated, and they need to be respected. I'm a Muslim and I practice Islam, but Judaism and Christianity are sister religions and we all need to be respected."

He is also of the view that shutting down mosques to combat Jihadist ideologies would be a counter-productive strategy to fight ISIS.

"That can bring anger, and it can be unconstitutional; however, if there is a threat coming from a mosque or radical group, then of course appropriate action should take place to save innocent lives."

Given Mr Tarar's outspoken views, it's not surprising that he has himself come under attack by both Republicans and those in his Muslim community. "I haven't had threats but I've had some very nasty messages from Muslims."

Living in Baltimore with his wife and four children, he says, "They show me their concern, but I say to them, 'Somebody has to do it. I'm serving my community. I'm serving my country very well.'"

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