

Curriculum Vitae

Mustafa Akyol

"A devout but liberal Muslim who set out... a forthright and elegant Muslim defence of freedom."

— *Financial Times*

"An advocate of reconciliation between Muslims and the West, who is much in demand at conferences on the future of Islam..."

— *The Economist*

"Words like that [of Akyol] might be as powerful as any drones in the war on the Islamic State."

— *Christian Science Monitor*

"He is one of Islam's leading voices for religious freedom and freedom in general, and has suffered at the hands not only of Malaysia but of several governments for his dissidence and his witness."

— Daniel Philpott, Professor of Political Science at the University of Notre Dame

Contacts

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Education Degrees

- Masters degree in History, Bosphorus University, Istanbul, 1999
- Bachelor's degree in Political Science & International Relations, Bosphorus University, Istanbul, 1996
- Pre-college education in TED Ankara College, Nisantasi Anadolu Lisesi and Private Tercüman Lisesi

• Employment Positions

- Senior Visiting Fellow at the Freedom Project at Wellesley College, Wellesley, MA, Jan 2017 - present
- Contributing monthly opinion writer, *The International New York Times*, Nov 2013 - present
- Columnist, *Al-Monitor.com: The Pulse of the Middle East*, 2012 – present
- Lecturer at Political Science Department, Fatih University, Istanbul, 2012 - 2016
- Columnist, *Hürriyet Daily News*, Turkey's oldest English-language daily, 2005 - present
- Columnist, *Star*, Turkish national daily, 2007 - 2014
- Columnist and opinion editor *Referans*, Turkish national daily, 2003-2006

Past Fellowships

- Visiting fellow, The Transatlantic Academy of the German Marshall Fund, Washington D.C., Jan- Feb 2015

Published Books

- *The Islamic Jesus: How the King of the Jews Became a Prophet of Muslims*, New York: St. Martin's, 2017
- *Islam without Extremes: A Muslim Case for Liberty*, New York: W.W. Norton, 2011
- *Özgürlüğün İslami Yolu* (The Islamic Path to Freedom), Istanbul: Dogan Books, 2013
- *Islam Tanpa Ekstremisme*, Jakarta: Elex Media Komputindo, 2014
- *Islam Tanpa Keekstreman: Berhujah Untuk Kebebasan*, Kuala Lumpur, Islamic Renaissance Front, 2016 (Banned by the Malaysian government in 2017)
- *Kürt Sorununu Yeniden Düşünmek* (Rethinking the Kurdish Question), Istanbul: Dogan Books, 2005

- *İslam'ın Unutulan Ekonomik Modeli: Ahlaki Kapitalizm* (The Ignored Economic Model of Islam: Moral Capitalism), co-authored by Murat Çızakça, Istanbul: Ufuk Books, 2012
- *Beyaz Türkler, Zenci Türkler ve 'Dağ Türkleri'* (White Turks, Black Turks and 'Mountain Turks'), Istanbul: Ufuk Books, 2011
- *Gayri Resmi Yakın Tarih* (Unofficial Near History), Istanbul: Nesil Books, 2010

Published Articles

- Hundreds of articles over the years in publications such as; *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Foreign Affairs*, *Foreign Policy*, *Newsweek*, *First Things*, *The Weekly Standard*, *The Guardian*, *The Financial Times*, *The Times*, *International Herald Tribune*, *The Washington Times*, *The Forward*, *Huffington Post*, *IslamOnline*.

Significant Presentations

- “Faith Versus Tradition in Islam,” TED talk filmed in March 2011, seen more than a million times.
- Many lectures over the years at universities around the world: Stanford University, Boston University, Harvard University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Georgetown University, Columbia University, Oxford University, London School of Economics, Birmingham University, London School of Oriental and African Studies, New York University, University of California, Concordia University, University of Denver, University of Kansas, University of Oklahoma, University of Central Oklahoma, Seattle University, University of Iowa, Iowa State University, Penn State, University of Georgia, Georgia State University, University of South Carolina, Emory University, University of Texas, University of Arkansas, Clemson University, Buena Vista University, Cleveland State University, University of Minnesota, Eckerd College, University of Miami, University of Florida, Amsterdam University, Hamburg University, and more.
- Many lectures over the years in institutes, think-tanks and other platforms: Council on Foreign Relations, Brookings Institution, Center for American Progress, Heritage Foundation, Atlantic Council, German Marshall Fund, Acton Institute, CATO Institute, World Affairs Councils (in various U.S. cities), Chatham House (London), European Parliament, House of Lords (UK), Oslo Freedom Forum, Mont Pelerin Society, Oasis Foundation (Milan), NATO Defense College (Rome), Columbia Center (Amman), Institute for Democracy and Economic Affairs (Malaysia), and more.

Significant References

- “Akyol excels in [his] last chapter, which will doubtless raise some eyebrows with its title alone: “What Jesus Can Teach Muslims Today.” In it, he makes a forceful argument for Jesus as the expression of the spirit instead of the letter of the law, and against the soulless legalism of both first-century Pharisees and 21st-century Islamic fundamentalists.” (*New York Times Book Review*, March 3, 2017)
- “Mr Akyol shares with writers like Karen Armstrong and Reza Aslan an aptitude for writing in an engaging way about arcane theology.” (*The Economist*, March 26, 2017)
- “If there is a book for which this tumultuous moment in history cries out, *The Islamic Jesus: How the King of the Jews Became a Prophet of the Muslims* [by Mustafa Akyol] certainly would be a contender.” (*Chicago Tribune*, July 6, 2017)
- “Anyone who can liberate the Malay Muslim mind is a dangerous threat. That is why the authorities had to censure Mustafa Akyol. They detained him, interrogated him and made his immediate future uncertain.... [Yet] he had already done much harm by putting the seed of critical analysis into Malay Muslim minds.” (Op-ed in *Malaysiakini*, “Malaysia Today,” by columnist Mariam Mokhtar, Oct 2, 2017)
- “The debate about Locke goes on; and some Turks are doing more than laugh. Mustafa Akyol, a writer on Islam, has proposed that a Lockean spirit of freedom is exactly the corrective influence that today's Muslim world, mired in dreams of a caliphate, badly needs. As he notes approvingly, "Locke...argued that the Bible does not propose a system of government (like the divine right of kings)...he emphasised that the religious faith of the individual is meaningful only when based on the 'inward persuasion of the mind' which cannot be compelled by outside force." In Mr Akyol's reading of Locke, it is not only governance that would be healthier if it were separated from religion; religion would be healthier too. Muslims as well as Christians should take note, in the Turkish writer's view. (*The Economist*, Feb 3, 2015)
- “Mustafa Akyol, a Turkish commenter and author of a recent book, ‘Islam without Extremes: A Muslim Case for Liberty,’ says the world must first understand the ideology of IS [Islamic State] in order to defeat it. In a recent column in the Turkey publication *Hurriyet*, he writes: ‘We should agree that God’s authority over men cannot be the basis of men’s authority over men – and over women, for that matter.’ Words like that might be as powerful as any drones in the war on IS.” (*Christian Science Monitor* editorial, Nov 6, 2014)
- “Mustafa Akyol, a Turkish columnist and academic, argues for openness and tolerance in his 2011 book.” (David Ignatius column, *Washington Post*, July 12, 2013)
- “Why did reason and freedom eventually flourish in Christendom while it declined in the lands of Islam, where in the early Muslim centuries there had been a brilliant civilisation, scientifically advanced, commercially dynamic, literate, urban and cosmopolitan in a way a Europe trapped in the dark ages could scarcely comprehend? That is part of the question Mustafa Akyol sets himself in *Islam Without Extremes*. Others have done that before. But few contemporary Muslims have set out in their answer such a forthright

and elegant Muslim defence of freedom. Read this book and you will realise that Islamic liberalism is not the oxymoron so many Islamophobes in the west, as well as Islamists in the east, suppose it to be.

(*Financial Times*, December 17, 2011)

- “Mr. Akyol offers a delightfully original take on Turkey and on the prospects for liberal democracy in the broader Islamic Middle East.” (*Wall Street Journal*, August 12, 2011)
- “Mustafa Akyol, a bright young columnist for the English-language Turkish Daily News makes a very convincing case for the moderate traditional religiosity.” (US News & World Report, May 27, 2007)
- Also quoted many times in news stories in publications such as *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Christian Science Monitor*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Houston Chronicle*, *Dallas Morning News*, *First Things*, *Reuters*, *Nature*, and more.
- Appeared on political TV shows: *BBC Hardtalk*, *GPS by Fareed Zakaria on CNN*, *BBC World TV*, *BBC World Radio*, *Al Jazeera English*, *National Public Radio*, *Voice of America*, and many Turkish news channels.

Awards

- Mustafa Akyol’s 2011 title, *Islam Without Extremes: A Muslim Case For Liberty*, was long-listed for the 2012 Lioner Gelber Prize, a Toronto-based literary award for the world’s best non-fiction book in English on foreign affairs that seeks to deepen public debate on significant international issues. The other nine titles on the same long list included books by Henry Kissinger, Francis Fukuyama and Niall Ferguson.