

SWEDEN DEMOCRATS (SVERIGEDEMOKRATERNA – SD)

Founded in 1988 by figures tied to the nazi movement in Sweden, the party has since attempted to moderate its public image but it remains nationalist and socially conservative. It's strongly anti-immigrant and its representatives have continued to express Islamophobia.

The party received 17.5 percent of the votes in the 2018 general election, up from 12.8 % in 2014 and 5.7 % in 2010. Below is an overview of their anti-Muslim ideas and links to far-right extremism.

ANTI-MUSLIM COMMENTS

There are many examples of dehumanizing, anti-Muslim rhetoric from SD representatives, including far-right conspiratorial ideas of an ongoing replacement of native Swedes. They have made efforts to soften their rhetoric in recent years and exclude some members who engage in racist speech, yet this practice has been inconsistent.

- Party leader Jimmie Åkesson wrote in an article from 2009 that as a “Sweden Democrat I see [the growing Muslim population] as our biggest foreign threat since the second world war”¹
- Richard Jomshof, current party secretary and MP, said in 2014 that “rape is an expression of Islamic culture”²



Jimmie Åkesson speaking on no-go zones in 2016



- The municipal board representative, Jimmy Lenander, tweeted in December 2018 that immigration to Sweden means “a replacement of people, ethnic cleansing, genocide” and that “the multicultural project is in reality a systematic replacement of peoples”.³
- At the Sweden Democrats’ yearly convention in 2017, the politician Martin Strid argued that Muslims are not fully human, saying: “In one end of the spectrum there are those who are 100 percent human and everything we mean by that. In the other end of the spectrum you’re 100% Muhammedan [...] all Muslims are somewhere on this spectrum. [IS members] are almost 100% Muhammedan.[...] If you’re an ex-Muslim then you’ve gotten pretty far towards becoming completely human”. No one in the audience reacted to what he was saying.⁴
- Jimmie Åkesson has on several occasions argued that Sweden has issues with “No-go zones” and used this as a talking point in public speeches. He recently spoke to Breitbart, arguing that the Prime Minister, Stefan Löfven, was wrong in saying that there are no such areas in the country.⁵
- Gunilla Schmidt, former municipal board representative in Åstorp, wrote on Facebook about immigrants coming into Sweden from Denmark in 2015: “Won’t someone get on the Öresund Bridge with a machine gun!”⁶
- Markus Palmheim, former municipal board representative in Danderyd wrote in 2016: “Let the Arabs get paid to rape feminists, then at least they’ll contribute a little bit”.⁷
- Kent Ekeroth wrote on his blog in 2009 that “[Arabs] are driven by hate, a wish for death”.⁸ Ekeroth also addressed the Free Tommy Robinson rally in London in 2018.⁹ Kent Ekeroth has also romanticised and expressed support for Viktor Orbán’s government in Hungary.
- The party-owned website Samtiden has on multiple occasions in recent years published articles making use of the replacement conspiracy myth. Its editor-in-chief, Dick Erixon, suggested politicians from other parties want to replace the indigenous population, and argued that “non-European anarchy and hate-filled polarisation are gaining a foothold in this country”.¹⁰
- Tommy Hansson, part of the board of Södertälje municipality argued in the wake of the Charlie Hebdo attack in 2015 that: “Islam as it looks today and for the foreseeable future will never be compatible with a democratic and liberal society. We must stop getting intimidated by being berated as ‘Islamophobes’. I don’t rule out that precisely Islamophobia may be the surest way of protecting ourselves from a satanic and inhuman ideology”.¹¹

ANTI-MUSLIM ADS

- The party produced a clearly Islamophobic election ad for the 2010 national election, showing a crowd of Muslim women pushing prams ‘racing’ to overtake a pensioner to receive money from the state.¹²

NAZI CONNECTIONS

In recent years there have been several revelations of representatives and members of the party having ties to other far-right groups and notably, nazi organisations like the Nordic Resistance Movement and the now defunct National Socialist Front.

- In a video dated 2011, released in 2016, Oscar Sjöstedt, the party’s spokesperson on economic issues at the time, said he had old colleagues who were nazis. In the video he pretends to kick something on the ground while saying “Die Juden” (“the Jews”), laughing.¹³
- During the 2018 election Expo and tabloid Expressen found 24 SD candidates with connections to nazi groups, mainly the National Socialist Front.¹⁴

IRON PIPE SCANDAL

Although this event took place in 2010 it remains well known and frequently discussed in Sweden. Erik Almqvist and Kent Ekeroth, both MPs at the time, as well as Christian Westling, ended up in an altercation with well-known comedian Soran Ismail. Footage filmed by Ekeroth shows Almqvist telling Ismail, who is of Kurdish descent, that he “acts like a wog”, argues “like a little pussy” and that Sweden is “my country, not yours”. He also called a woman who intervened “little whore” and a man a “blatte” lover, a deeply racist, anti-Muslim slur. Later they armed themselves with iron pipes from a construction site nearby which gave the incident its name.

Almqvist resigned from all of his party duties in 2012 when footage of the incident leaked and he later left the party. He did however for years continue to manage the party-owned media outlet, Samtiden.

POLICY

The party has been inconsistent in its position on the headscarf. At the national level the party has proposed laws forbidding the use of burqa and niqab. On local and regional levels the party has proposed laws against the headscarf in specific professions and has often opposed the construction of mosques.¹⁵ There are cases



Photo: Expo. (Left) Kent Ekeroth

where SD has created local petitions to stop the construction of mosques.¹⁶ SD's latest election manifesto makes no mention of issues relating to Islam, Muslims or related topics such as Sharia or mosques. It does however argue that Sweden should provide aid to stop the persecution of Christians in the Middle East and by the Islamic State, while removing other forms of aid.

Their current immigration policy includes stopping the reception of asylum seekers and, more generally, since 2010 they have stated that they want to reduce immigration “by 90 percent”, though have been less specific in the last general election. On their website they say they want to make strong, but unspecified, reductions, and put in place policies to encourage the “remigration” of people who are already here.¹⁷ They also maintain an extreme position that people have an “inherited essence”. In their current “principprogram” (program of principles), the closest document they have to a party program or basic manifesto, they assert that there exists “an inherited essence in every human being” that is in part “unique to certain groups of humans”, and that “most humans primarily identify with other individuals who remind them of themselves”, something which SD says justifies pursuing nationalism and “a minimum of cultural and religious differences”.¹⁸

NOTES

- 1 <https://www.aftonbladet.se/debatt/a/VRx8zd/akessonmuslimerna-ar-vart-storsta-utlandska-hot>
- 2 <https://www.svt.se/nyheter/inrikes/jomshof-valdtaktjdjupt-rotat-i-islamsk-kultur>
- 3 <https://expo.se/2018/12/sd-politiker-i-vellinge%C3%A4mst%C3%A4ller-invandring-med-folk-mord>
- 4 <https://www.svt.se/nyheter/inrikes/sd-politikermuslim-inte-fullt-ut-manniskor-1>
- 5 <https://www.breitbart.com/europe/2018/03/06/exclusivesweden-democrats-refute-pms-no-go-zone-denial-fakenews/>
- 6 <https://www.aftonbladet.se/nyheter/a/Ona0yO/kaningen-stalla-sig-pa-oresundsbron-med-kulspruta>
- 7 <https://www.svt.se/nyheter/lokalt/stockholm/sdledamot-betala-araber-for-att-valdta-feminister>
- 8 <https://expo.se/2013/09/ekeroth-anm%C3%A4ld-f%C3%B6r-hets-mot-folkgrupp>
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- 10 <https://expo.se/2019/03/det-stora-utbyttet-sprids-avb%C3%A5de-politiker-och-terrorister>
- 11 <https://expo.se/2018/09/s%C3%A5-gick-det-med-%C3%A5kessons-nolltolerans-%E2%80%93-en-skandal-iveckan>
- 12 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XkRRdth8AHc>
- 13 <https://www.facebook.com/irm.se/videos/852536058180503/>
- 14 <https://www.expressen.se/nyheter/ex-nazisterna-somkandiderar-for-sd/>
- 15 <https://www.expressen.se/kvp/ledare/csaba-perlenberg/sds-muslimhatarfantasier-maste-upphora/>
- 16 <https://www.vt.se/nyheter/sd-sager-helt-nej-till-mosk-ikarlstad-ntm11863830.aspx>
- 17 <https://sd.se/vad-vi-vill/migrationspolitik/>; <https://sd.se/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Valmanifest-2018-1.pdf>
- 18 https://sverigedemokraterna.se/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/principprogrammet2014_webb.pdf