

Federal Office for Migration and Refugees



Faith or extremism?

Advice Centre on Radicalisation

ENGLISCH





Has your son started calling his old friends infidels?

Does your child suddenly demonise their previous lifestyle, hobbies and music?

Do you suspect that your child is increasingly spending time in chat groups that might be described as 'Salafist'?



Your friend claims that 'dissenters will go to hell'?

Is your daughter becoming increasingly withdrawn, and are you afraid of losing contact?

Your girlfriend expresses radical views?

Does your pupil refuse to tolerate other opinions apart from his religion?

We are there for you if ...

- ... you are unsure whether your child's or friend's new religious devotion is an expression of profound faith or extremism.
- ... you fear that your child, student or friend has joined an Islamist group.
- ... you are afraid of losing contact with your child.
- ... you feel you have no-one to talk to about these problems.

We are your first point of contact if you are worried someone close to you is becoming religiously radicalised or if you have questions about this topic.

Our advice services are available in German, Turkish, English and Russian. We can also provide advice in other languages on request.

Our advice is free of charge and confidential.

How to contact us:

+49 911 943 43 43*

beratung@bamf.bund.de



* Monday or Friday, 9.00 (9am) to 15.00 (3pm) in person, otherwise we will call you back shortly. <u>www.beratungsstelle-radikalisierung.de</u> The **team at the Advice Centre on Radicalisation is your first point of contact** if you are concerned that a person close to you is turning to an Islamist group. We are there to offer support if you feel there is nowhere to turn to.



First contact



We listen to your story, answer your questions and help you decide how to proceed. We can also refer you to an advice centre in your vicinity. The experienced staff at these centres offer long-term, individual advice and practical tips.



Local contacts



Your first contact with us

During the first call, you will be invited to outline your situation, concerns and fears.

We listen to you.

Our advice centre staff will go through various points with you that according to experience have been shown to play a role in Islamist radicalisation. Should our conversation reveal that your child, friend or student is becoming radicalised, we then discuss the next steps.

If you wish, we can also refer you to an advice centre in your area. With your consent, we will forward your contact details to one of their councellors who will call you back shortly to schedule a meeting or phone call.



Confidentiality

is the core principle of our work. We treat your contact with us confidentially.



Calling the hotline of the Advice Centre on Radicalisation

Initial one-on-one conversation with the Advice Centre on Radicalisation and preparation of a potential plan of action

Referrals

at the request of the caller: further advice from one of our local cooperation partners, offering, among others:

- systemic counselling
- mediation
- communication coaching
- expert advice
- educational counselling

Support from the local advice centres

You discuss your personal situation with the counsellor. They will explain how you can proceed together and show you which courses of action are possible.

Counselling is provided either in face-to-face meetings, by telephone or even online in many places. You will receive practical tips on how to restore a close bond with your child, student or friend. Depending on the circumstances, third parties may be included in the councelling process, such as relatives, friends, teachers or imams – depending on the situation and developments.

Your child's, friend's or student's trust in you is key.

The common goal is to strengthen your bond of trust with the person concerned in order to show them routes away from radicalisation, or to prevent them from potentially radicalising.

Contacting others to share your experiences

At your request, we will – if possible – put you in touch with other people in your area who are experiencing a similar situation.

Sharing experiences helps: other people in the same situation are in a good position to understand your fears and doubts. You can benefit from each others' experiences in dealing with children, students or friends. Meetings are held in small groups of no more than five people, usually at the weekend.



Our advice experts are there for you nationwide

Our local partners and their teams form a nationwide network that has been providing advice services for families and friends of radicalised persons for many years. The following advice centres and exit programmes are active in the federal states:

- Aktion Neustart [Lower Saxony]
- API Aussteigerprogramm Islamismus
 [North Rhine-Westphalia]
- Aussteigerprogramm Sachsen [Saxony]
- Fach- und Beratungsstelle Legato [Bremen, Hamburg]
- beRATen e.V. [Lower Saxony]
- Beratungsstelle Leben -Grüner Vogel e.V. [nationwide]
- Beratungsnetzwerk Grenzgänger [North Rhine-Westphalia]
- Beratungsstelle Salam
 [Rhineland Palatinate]
- Fach- und Beratungsstelle ADERO Vaja e.V. [Bremen]
- Fachstelle Bidaya
 [Mecklenburg-Vorpommern]

- Fachstelle Islam [Brandenburg]
- konex Kompetenzzentrum gegen
 Extremismus [Baden-Wuerttemberg]
- Präventionsprogramm
 Wegweiser Gemeinsam gegen
 Islamismus
 [North Rhine-Westphalia]
- PROvention [Schleswig-Holstein]
- Violence Prevention Network gGmbH [Bavaria, Berlin, Hesse, Saxony, Thuringia]
- Yallah! Fach- und Präventionsstelle Islamismus [Saarland]
- SALAM [Saxony-Anhalt]
- Fach- und Beratungsstelle f
 ür Gewalt- und Radikalisierungsprävention SALAM [Saxony-Anhalt]



For more information on the German advice centres network, please scan this QR code or visit our website.



Questions



Answers

How can I tell if someone is becoming radicalised or has joined an Islamist group?

There is no check list of signs that clearly show that a person is becoming radicalised. But there are some relevant indicators based on past experience. If many of these apply, it might be an indication that a person leans towards an extreme interpretation of Islam or radical Islamic groups. You are welcome to give us a call if you notice that your friend, child, student or employee has recently made significant changes to their previous way of life (e.g. clothing, appearance or hobbies) and describes their former way of life as objectionable. This may be connected with the person becoming increasingly withdrawn from their circle of friends, school and family, instead getting involved with a new circle of friends, websites or preachers who advocate extremist ideologies. It may also occur, that the person concerned does not allow criticism of their own interpretation of Islam and noticeably adopts a black-and-white mindset ("Everyone who sees things differently is wrong/evil/an infidel."), becomes increasingly aggressive when defending religion or even fantasises about fighting and dying for Islamist goals.

Is advice provided in languages other than German?

Yes, we offer counselling in English, Turkish and Russian. In addition, we can draw on a pool of professional interpreters.

Do I have to pay for the counselling?

No, the counselling is free of charge. No matter how long the counselling process takes or how long you wish to continue receiving support, you will not be required to pay anything at all.

I am afraid that my child may hurt other people, supposedly in the name of their religion – what should I do?

Call us as quickly as possible. Together with you, our experts will clarify whether the person in question or other persons are, indeed, in any danger. We will discuss the next steps with you.

Is professing Islamic faith already a sign of radicalisation?

No. As with many religions, there are moderate, radical and extremist tendencies within Islam as well. Even joining a fundamentalist faith community does not necessarily mean that the person will become a violent Islamist. Equally, a person can be a strict believer without becoming an extremist.

Will the advice centre also speak with my child, friend or student?

No. Our advisors speak with you. They help you not to loose contact with the person who is becoming radicalised. Even if contact is currently poor or has broken down, it is worth trying to slowly rebuild this bridge and to strengthen the bond of trust.

How long does an advisory process last?

The duration of any advisory process may vary. Sometimes the first contact can already help to shed light on important issues and to resolve uncertainties. Equally, counselling and support may continue for several months.

Who are the local advice experts?

The men and women who advise you in your area have a variety of qualifications and backgrounds. Among them are Islamic studies, political and religious scientists, psychologists, social pedagogues and social workers. They all have considerable in councelling the social environment of radicalised people.

How confidential is the advice? Will security authorities be notified if I contact the advice centre on radicalisation?

We treat all calls confidentially. Your contact details will be passed on to local advice experts with your consent only. If you do not consent, we will give you the addresses of local advice centres. The security authorities will not automatically be informed. Should it become apparent during the course of counselling that your friend or child, employee or student poses a danger to others or themself, we are obliged to contact security authorities – unless you have already done so. But this is the exception and security authorities will only be notified after careful review of all information. We will, of course, discuss this step with you.

Please find more questions and answers in the FAQ tab on our website: www.beratungsstelle-radikalisierung.de

Lukas and Mia

Two stories of successful support

Infidels and jihad: Is my pupil just being provocative?

Younger people are particularly at risk of becoming radicalised. They are often looking for guidance and a sense of belonging. Islamist groups, especially those in the Salafist scene, specifically target young people, offer them a clear moral compass, respect and a tight-knit community. When a pupil suddenly radically changes, this is often noticed in the classroom. How should a teacher deal with this? Teachers can seek advice on how to proceed from the Advice Centre on Radicalisation. This is precisely what Lukas'* teacher did.



Lukas spreads provocative hate speech

The teacher noticed Lukas during their very first class. The boy sat alone at a desk, right at the back of the room. An outsider, the teacher thought, someone who nobody wants to sit with. Or perhaps someone who disturbs classes a lot. While the teacher was doing his introductions, Lukas scribbled in his notebook, demonstratively bored. Indeed, Lukas did not seem interested at all until a few weeks later, when the class was discussing the conflict in Syria. What happened then was nerve-racking: Lukas would not stop interrupting his classmates to voice his opinion.

He repeatedly emphasised that Muslims in Syria were finally fulfilling their religious duty and engaging in jihad to support their oppressed fellow believers. The warriors of the "Islamic State" did well to kill kuffar, infidels. And anyway, he said, the West was waging war against Islam – even here in Germany, in a society where Islam was discriminated against and Muslims were forced to assimilate. His teacher attempted to ask critical questions about his beliefs, which only enraged the boy even more.

Aggressive teenager or extremist?

Incidents like these happened again. Lukas repeatedly disturbed class with provocative and hateful remarks. His teacher was worried. He had often experienced provocative behaviour – a normal occurrence among adolescents – but Lukas' aggression and claim to hold the truth were extreme. So how was he to respond? Should he notify his superiors? Would it be good simply to ask the student if he had friends who shared his views or perhaps even belonged to a Salafist group? How was he to offer assistance without exacerbating the situation and causing the boy to withdraw even more? Lukas' teacher was caught in two minds. He barely knew the student and had not had his first parent-teacher meeting. After much thought, he decided to continue observing Lukas for the time being.

Lukas threatens his fellow student

Not long after, a boy from Lukas' class appeared at the staffroom door. The teacher noticed immediately that the boy was angry. Lukas had again pestered him with his religious views. He was on his case in particular, the boy said, because he was also a Muslim, but did not maintain a lifestyle that reflected the 'one true Islam'. The discussion had become increasingly heated. At some point Lukas had started to insult and threaten him.

Advice on radicalisation for teachers

Lukas' teacher then thought about what to do next. First of all he spoke to a colleague about his student's behaviour and the situation it was causing. She drew his attention to the services offered by the Advice Centre on Radicalisation she had recently found online. He could get support from there to answer his questions, she said. At the end of classes, he spontaneously sat down in an empty classroom and called the advice centre. The staff on the advice centre hotline explained that what he had experienced might suggest that Lukas was becoming radicalised. Together they assessed the situation and then discussed what to do next. Lukas' teacher was advised to continue discussing the matter with a local advice expert. He could find the address on the website or leave his contact details and the Advice Centre on Radicalisation would put him in touch.

The school is now working together with the local advice centre to get the boy out of the Islamist circles. The student had indeed joined an extremist group online. Based on the advice he received, hte teacher now finds it easier to respond to Lukas and integrate him into everyday school life.

* Lukas' case is based on experience from advisory work but is not a real case.







My child is becoming radicalised

Even parents can be slow to notice when their child becomes involved with Islamist groups. Initial contacts are often seemingly harmless and happen in the digital worlds young people inhabit. The internet and social media are awash with inoccuously designed content from the Islamist spectrum that do not break any laws and are not immediately recognisable for what they are. Initially, Mia's* mother only noticed that her daughter seemed dissatisfied. Visits from the girl's best friend became less frequent, and Mia, who used to talk at length about school and her circle of friends, was unusually quiet. She spent more and more time in her room, sitting in front of the computer, and appeared to avoid talking with her parents.

Mia attempts to convert her parents

Then came the 'sermons', the term that Mia's father used to describe the monologues about Islam. They were about how the numerous enemies of Islam in the West were oppressing Muslims, treating them with hate and disdain, while disregarding Allah's commandments. Every objection from her Muslim father seemed to just bounce off Mia. The mother, in Mia's view, was 'clueless anyway', a Christian infidel, and should finally understand that the only way to save her soul would be to embrace Islam. And not just any Islam, but the "true Islam" of her "sisters" and "brothers", whom she had met online. Not what her father was practising. He shouldn't even be calling himself a Muslim. Mia's mother watched her daughter sitting at the dining table and getting increasingly enraged as she spoke. What had become of her girl? Her Mia, who loved laughing and was usually so affectionate and inquisitive?

Belief or extremism?

Worst of all was the fear – the unbearable concern – that her daughter might gradually disappear into Islamist circles. Was it faith or extremism? What could she do? All attempts to speak with her daughter failed. Every discussion ended in mutual accusations, and Mia withdrew even more. She only took off her head scarf at home.

Growing concern for the daughter

Mia's mother eventually realised that things could not go on like this, with her worries, powerlessness and endless questions. She needed professional help from someone who was able to assess her daughter's behaviour and was familiar with both radical Islam and Islamist extremism. She found the telephone number of the Advice Centre on Radicalisation online. It took some effort to tell an outsider about the problems with her daughter, but her concerns were stronger.

The call provides clarity, tips and assistance

The woman on the hotline listened to Mia's mother, asked questions and calmed her down. She should, of course, take the changes that had taken place with Mia seriously, the woman said. And there were indeed indications that the girl had come into contact with Islamist groups on the internet. The mother had been right in her assessment.

The counsellor also supported the mother's wish to talk with her daughter. She then gave her some tips on the phone on how to deal with Mia's confrontational statements and radical views. Every contact to Mia was valuable in order to prevent further radicalisation with the help of experts. The expert from the Advice Centre on Radicalisation suggested that Mia's mother make contact with an advice centre close to her home. They would be able to support her further in assessing whether and to what extent Mia had become radicalised. She gave Mia's mother the address of a partner organisation that had experience with similar cases.

Today the family is being supported by experienced advisors. Mia has started to be more open with her parents again. And she no longer feels that there is no place for her in Germany with her Islamic beliefs. The family is well on its way to normality, the experts say.

* Mia's case is based on experience from advisory work but is not a real case.

All the important contact details at a glance



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www.beratungsstelle-radikalisierung.de

Other contacts

www.bamf.de www.bmi.bund.de www.bpb.de

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