

# Tunisian Foreign Fighters in Iraq and Syria

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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS



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Aaron Y. Zelin is the Gloria and Ken Levy Senior Fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy where his research focuses on Sunni Arab jihadi groups in North Africa and Syria as well as the trend of foreign fighting and online jihadism.



## In-Depth Reports

Over the past few years, the influx of Tunisian fighters to Iraq and Syria has rendered Tunisia practically synonymous with a phenomenon that is still not well understood. This new Policy Note by jihadism expert Aaron Y. Zelin seeks to remedy this gap by quantifying the flow of Tunisian fighters, in particular the recruitment push within Tunisia from 2011 to 2013, and exploring the history of their networks in Iraq over the last decade.

This study examines the motives driving Tunisia's foreign fighters, the roles they have assumed with jihadi groups in Iraq and Syria, the reasons why many have returned to Tunisia from the battlefield, and the dilemma this poses to the Tunisian state in terms of security and human rights. A deeper understanding of Tunisia's foreign fighter phenomenon will help situate the trajectory of the jihadist movement both inside and outside the country, while suggesting ways to tackle this challenging issue.

## The Author

**A**ARON Y. ZELIN is the Richard Borow Fellow at The Washington Institute, where his research focuses on Sunni Arab jihadi groups in North Africa and Syria as well as trends in foreign fighting and online jihadism. Zelin is the founder of the widely acclaimed and cited website Jihadology.net and its podcast, JihadPod, and is the author of numerous Institute studies and papers. ❖

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