

# New Zealand's Jihadis

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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.



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## The small but growing number of Kiwis participating in the Syrian jihad holds several lessons for the New Zealand government and other jurisdictions dealing with the problem of homegrown extremists and sympathizers.

Unlike many other Western countries and its neighbour Australia, New Zealand historically has not had an issue with members of its Muslim population joining up with Sunni global jihadi groups abroad or sympathising with them at home. It is true that comparatively there still are not that many of these types of individuals in New Zealand, but with the unprecedented number of foreign fighters going to Syria and the rise of the Islamic State, there has been some New Zealand travel to Syria and support in its homeland. This should not lead to an alarmist interpretation, but rather provides an opportunity to illustrate what types of trends are occurring to better situate what is happening within the broader global jihadi milieu and how Kiwi jihadis fit into it. To get at this, this article will first provide background on the Syrian war and the Islamic State, then briefly discuss the historically extremely low rate of New Zealanders joining up with global jihadi organisations; afterwards it will highlight cases of individuals going to Syria as well as the rise in homegrown sympathisers, and lastly discuss how the New Zealand government has responded to this issue...

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