

# Israel's Evolving Terrorist Threats from Sinai to Syria

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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS



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Ehud Yaari is a Lafer International Fellow at The Washington Institute.

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Aaron Y. Zelin is the Richard Borow 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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## In-Depth Reports

Israel and Jordan have together mounted a "well coordinated" effort to prevent the most extreme elements among the Syrian rebellion from dominating the southern front along both the Israeli and Jordanian borders, Middle East analyst Ehud Yaari told attendees at The Washington Institute's [2014 Weinberg Founders Conference \(/policy-analysis/view/2014-weinberg-founders-conference\)](/policy-analysis/view/2014-weinberg-founders-conference). Yaari, the Institute's Lafer International Fellow, was joined by Aaron Y. Zelin, the Institute's Richard Borow Fellow, for a detailed examination of the rising terror threats along Israel's Syrian and Egyptian borders.

Yaari described Israel's humanitarian outreach to people in Southern Syria, likely in coordination with Free Syrian Army forces. In addition to providing much-needed food aid and medical care to Syrian civilians, including in hospitals within Israel, the Israeli effort is aimed at enabling non-extremist rebels to hold the area south of Damascus against both regime and Islamist extremist forces.

Zelin, a close observer of jihadist groups and activity throughout the region, described the mosaic of extremist groups operating among the Syrian rebellion and in Sinai. Jihadist groups are increasingly present and active near Israel's Syrian border, Zelin said, yet for the most part they have refrained from attacking across the border. "They have the capabilities and potential aspirations" to strike Israel, Zelin said, but at this point jihadist groups do not believe doing so is in their best interests. Fear that any Israeli response to an attack would "demolish" the Islamist

project in some southern Syrian areas stays jihadists' hands - for now. Even so, Zelin says, these groups' propaganda demonstrates that they view Israel as their ultimate enemy, and attacking Israel as their final goal.

***Ehud Yaari** is Lafer international Fellow at The Washington Institute and a commentator for Israeli TV 2.*

***Aaron Y. Zelin** is Richard Borow Fellow at The Washington Institute.*

***Matthew Levitt**, who moderated this discussion, is Fromer-Wexler Fellow and director of the Stein Program on Counterterrorism and Intelligence at The Washington Institute. ❖*

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