

New Zealand: Extremism and Terrorism

On December 5, 2024, the “Five Eyes” intelligence partners—Australia, the United States, Canada, United Kingdom, and New Zealand—released a report expressing increasing concern about the radicalization of minors who support, plan or undertake terror activities. The report specifically warned of radicalization among digital natives. According to the report, mental health, education and social services needed to intervene in many cases before the behavior of minors became a police issue. A week later, the New Zealand Security Intelligence Service (NZSIS) said that a terror attack remained a “realistic possibility” in the coming year.” Nonetheless, the government’s national threat level remained at “Low,” as it had since November 2022. (Sources: [Reuters](#), [Reuters](#))

In the 12 months following Hamas’s October 7, 2023, attack on Israel, there were 227 recorded antisemitic incidents in New Zealand, an increase from the 166 incidents in the eight-and-a-half years prior. The reported incidents since October 7 include five antisemitic assaults and 40 recorded threats against members of the Jewish community. On February 28, 2024, New Zealand designated the Iran-backed Hamas organization as a terrorist entity for its large-scale October 7, 2023, attack on Israel that killed 1,200 people. The attack launched the Hamas-Israel war that month. Auckland also imposed travel bans on “extremist” Israeli settlers who they claim have committed violent attacks against Palestinians in the West Bank. Previously, Auckland designated Izz ad-Din al-Qassam, the armed wing of Hamas, as a terror group in 2010. (Source: [New Zealand Herald](#), [Reuters](#))

Since the March 15, 2019, Christchurch mass shooting at Al Noor and Linwood mosques that killed 51 worshippers, Auckland remains vigilant in its response to violent extremism. On October 24, 2023, New Zealand Coroner Brigitte Windley began an inquest on the 2019 attack at the high court in Christchurch. The inquest would examine whether any of those killed could have been saved. Windley is expected to publish some of her findings in 2024. In May 2022, Windley revealed the inquest would examine what role social media played in radicalizing perpetrator Brenton Tarrant, if Tarrant acted alone, how he obtained a firearms license and if the method of procuring weapons could be directly linked to the attack, and how emergency services responded to the attack. In regard to Tarrant’s online activities, Windley stated she would focus on the period between 2014 and 2017, before he moved to New Zealand from Australia and began planning the attack. inquest date has yet to be scheduled. On August 27, 2020, Tarrant was sentenced to life in prison without parole after pleading guilty to 91 charges of murder, attempted murder, and terrorism. Tarrant was the first person in New Zealand to be charged under the country’s anti-terrorism laws passed after the September 11, 2001, attacks on the United States. The Christchurch attack also inspired a New Zealand ban on military-style semiautomatic weapons, assault rifles, and high-capacity magazine, as well as government reviews of hate speech laws and extremist activity online. (Sources: [Guardian](#), [7 News](#), [Reuters](#), [Guardian](#), [BBC News](#), [BBC News](#), [NPR](#), [Reuters](#), [Washington Post](#), [Wall Street Journal](#), [Wall Street Journal](#), [New York Times](#), [Guardian](#))

New Zealand authorities updated the country’s terrorism legislation on September 30, 2021, to expand police powers in terrorism investigations and criminalize the preparation of a terrorist attack. The enhanced legislation was a response to an attack on September 3, when a Sri Lankan national entered an Auckland supermarket, grabbed a knife on display, and stabbed and wounded seven people while shouting “Allahu akbar” (God is greatest). Within 60 seconds of the start of the attack, New Zealand police shot and killed the assailant, who was identified as Aathil Mohamed Samsudeen. Samsudeen was a known supporter of ISIS ideology, and the terror group inspired the attack, according to authorities. Further monitoring of white supremacist groups also continued. In March 2020, a week before the first anniversary of the Christchurch attack, police charged a man in connection with a photo circulating online of a masked man doing surveillance on the Al Noor mosque. The individual was linked to the white nationalist group Action Zealandia, which formed in July 2019 to build what it calls “a community for European New Zealanders.” (Sources: [Associated Press](#), [Reuters](#), [Reuters](#), [Washington Post](#), [Reuters](#))

Overview

New Zealand’s geographic isolation has largely shielded it from major terrorist events. It has not experienced a major terrorist attack inspired by Islamic extremism while the few terror attacks in the country have been largely—though not entirely—related to protests. Since the terror attacks of September 11, 2001, New Zealand has passed legislation to expand its definition of terrorism and empower its intelligence and security services to combat domestic extremism. In the aftermath of the March 2019 Christchurch attack, however, the government was criticized for focusing too much on Islamic extremism while ignoring the rise of the far right. In response to the March 15, 2019, Christchurch attack, the government banned military-style semiautomatic weapons and sought to identify and disrupt violent extremist content across digital channels. The attack also sparked a review of hate speech laws. (Sources: [Financial Times](#), [Guardian](#), [New York Times](#), [Al Jazeera](#), [New Zealand Herald](#))

Historically, New Zealand has had state-sanctioned racism toward the aboriginal Maori people and other—largely non-white—minorities. The Maori faced discrimination from European settlers arriving in the 19th century out of a belief of cultural superiority. These attitudes also affected

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Asian immigrants and resulted in widespread social discrimination. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, New Zealand passed laws restricting non-white immigration and limited the rights of minorities. By the 1960s, however, South Asian immigrants seeking work began to integrate into New Zealand and attitudes largely shifted by 1975. (Sources: [New Republic](#), [New Zealand History](#), [Te Ara – The Encyclopedia of New Zealand](#))

Despite the wider societal acceptance of non-white immigrants, white nationalist groups still developed in New Zealand during the latter half of the 20th century. New Zealand authorities, however, considered the threat from these groups to be low and did not track domestic hate crimes. On March 15, 2019, gunman Brenton Tarrant killed 51 and wounded dozens of others at the Al Noor and Linwood mosques in Christchurch in the country’s deadliest terror attack to date. Tarrant authored a manifesto in which he promoted a white nationalist theory called the Great Replacement, which posits that non-white migrants are threatening to replace the dominant European—i.e., white—culture. The theory is shared by white nationalists around the world. Tarrant wrote that he could no longer stand by while witnessing a so-called European genocide. Police have sought to create tracking mechanisms for hate crimes in the aftermath of the Christchurch attack. (Sources: [BBC News](#), [BBC News](#), [NPR](#), [Reuters](#), [Wall Street Journal](#), [Wall Street Journal](#), [CNN](#), [Stuff](#))

Compared to 12 other nations polled on security concerns by global IT company Unisys, New Zealanders are relatively unconcerned by the threat of terrorism. The survey found that 51 percent of New Zealanders were seriously concerned about war or terrorism after the Christchurch attack, an increase from 29 percent before the attack. New Zealand ranked third-least concerned about terrorism in both polls. Unisys also recorded that 80 percent of New Zealanders believe social media companies are responsible for monitoring and removing hate speech and other inflammatory content. (Source: [Unisys](#))

Radicalization and Foreign Fighters

On December 5, 2024, the “Five Eyes” intelligence partners—Australia, the United States, Canada, United Kingdom, and New Zealand—released a report expressing increasing concern about the radicalization of minors who support, plan or undertake terror activities. The report specifically warned of radicalization among digital natives. According to the report, mental health, education and social services needed to intervene in many cases before the behavior of minors became a police issue. A week later, the New Zealand Security Intelligence Service (NZSIS) said that a terror attack remained a “realistic possibility” in the coming year.” Nonetheless, the government’s national threat level remained at “Low,” as it had since November 2022. (Sources: [Reuters](#), [Reuters](#))

Far-Right Extremism

New Zealand has struggled with white nationalism against the indigenous Maori people since the country’s founding. The Maori faced discrimination from European settlers arriving in the 19th century out of a belief of cultural superiority. This resulted in land confiscations, wage discrimination, and social discrimination. These attitudes also affected Asian immigrants, particularly Chinese foreign workers who migrated in the 19th century during the gold rush years. New Zealand’s proximity to Asia made migration more attractive for those looking for work, but New Zealanders largely saw Asian immigration as a threat to the burgeoning white society, in line with attitudes in neighboring Australia. In 1899, one Australian parliamentarian called for maintaining “a pure Australian Blood, or a pure British blood, or a pure British and European blood...” Beginning in 1899, New Zealand began instituting laws barring non-white immigrants from obtaining citizenship. The Immigration Restriction Amendment Act of 1920 required immigrants to apply for a permanent residence permit before arriving in New Zealand, but the act barred non-white British subjects from entering the country. The law became known as the White New Zealand policy. Beginning in the 1950s, however, New Zealand saw an influx of Pacific Islanders, Indonesians, Malaysians, and Thais. By 1971, 30 percent of the country’s foreign-born immigrants were non-white. Non-white immigrants and the aboriginal Maori gained wider acceptance. The Race Relations Act of 1971 prohibited discrimination based on race, nationality, or ethnic origin. In 1975, New Zealand symbolically ended its policy of assisted immigration from Great Britain. (Sources: [Te Ara – The Encyclopedia of New Zealand](#), [New Republic](#), [New Zealand History](#), [Te Ara – The Encyclopedia of New Zealand](#))

Despite the societal shift in New Zealand, anti-immigrant and anti-minority attitudes did not disappear. In the late 1960s, two foreign-born fascist organizations took root in New Zealand. The National Front emerged in 1967 as a local chapter of the British fascist National Front organization. In 1969, the Nazi-inspired National Socialist White People’s Party emerged. Both groups viewed immigration and multiculturalism as threats to the white identity of New Zealand. In the 1980s, other white supremacist groups began to assert themselves. Groups included the White Defence League, New Order, the European Liberation Front, New Force, the New Zealand–Rhodesia Society, and Friends of South Africa. These groups defended the apartheid regime in South Africa, promoted the notion of a global Jewish conspiracy, and opposed Maori rights. (Source: [Te Ara – The Encyclopedia of New Zealand](#))

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Beginning in approximately 2017, a new alt-right white nationalist movement began to take root in New Zealand around the idea of a central European identity that was under threat. Groups began to emerge at the country's universities warning of white genocide and cultural Marxism, the theory that Marxists have infiltrated Western society in order to destroy it from within with concepts like feminism and multiculturalism. In March 2017 at Auckland University, a group called Western Guard plastered campus with posters demanding white rights. So-called white rights groups Auckland University's European Students Association and the NZ European Association also emerged on campus. The groups promoted anti-immigration and white nationalist policies but claimed to be non-violent. In July 2018, officials in Auckland canceled an upcoming event featuring Canadian speakers Lauren Southern and Stefan Molyneux. Southern was previously barred from the United Kingdom. The Auckland Council said the cancellation was on safety and security grounds. (Sources: [Stuff](#), [New Zealand Herald](#), [New Zealand Herald](#))

On March 15, 2019, gunman [Brenton Tarrant](#) killed 51 and wounded dozens more in attacks on the Al Noor and Linwood mosques in Christchurch in the worst terror attack in New Zealand's history. Tarrant subscribed to the white nationalist philosophy of the Great Replacement, which alleges that the European—i.e., white—race is threatened by immigration from non-Europeans. He wrote in his manifesto that the attack would “show the invaders that our lands will never be their lands.” Tarrant was arrested on his way to a third target. He has been charged with multiple counts of murder, attempted murder, and terrorism. He was the first person in New Zealand to be charged under anti-terrorism laws passed in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks. In March 2020, Tarrant pled guilty to 91 charges of murder, attempted murder, and terrorism. That August, he was sentenced to life in prison without parole. (Sources: [Sydney Morning Herald](#), [Washington Post](#), [New York Times](#), [New York Times](#), [Sydney Morning Herald](#), [New York Times](#))

In December 2020, the Royal Commission of Inquiry into the Terrorist Attack on Christchurch Mosques published an 800-page report that examined whether the authorities could have prevented the massacre. The report concluded that although New Zealand's security agencies did not thoroughly monitor white supremacist threats, the massacre was not able to be prevented. (Sources: [RNZ](#), [RNZ](#))

Despite the report's findings, on October 21, 2021, New Zealand's chief coroner, Judge Deborah Marshall, announced that she had begun a fresh investigation into the 2019 Christchurch attacks. The inquiry originally investigated the details surrounding deaths that were not fully resolved by previous investigations. Despite Marshall's ongoing investigation, on November 7, 2021, media sources reported that Tarrant was considering appealing his life sentence. According to Tarrant's lawyer, Tarrant pled guilty under duress. Reportedly, while in New Zealand custody, Tarrant was “subject to inhuman or degrading treatment whilst on remand...[which] prevented a fair trial.” A year later, on November 8, 2022, Tarrant appealed his conviction and sentence, however, a hearing is not immediately set. He later applied for a judicial review of his prison conditions on April 19, 2023. The exact conditions Tarrant sought to have reviewed are not reported, however, Tarrant is currently held at the Prisoners of Extreme Risk Unit within Auckland Prison. (Sources: [New York Times](#), [ABC News](#), [Reuters](#), [Guardian](#), [New Zealand Herald](#), [BBC News](#))

On May 4, 2022, New Zealand Coroner Brigitte Windley—who took over Marshall's October 2021 investigation—announced the topics she would pursue in the inquiry. Among the topics investigated are the role social media played in radicalizing Tarrant, if he acted alone, how he obtained a firearms license and if the method of procuring weapons could be directly linked to the attack, and how emergency services responded to the attack. In regard to Tarrant's online activities, Windley focused on the period between 2014 and 2017, before he moved to New Zealand from Australia and began planning the attack. The inquest opened on October 24, 2023, but Windley is expected to publish some of her findings in 2024. (Sources: [Guardian](#), [7 News](#), [Guardian](#))

In March 2020, a week before the first anniversary of the Christchurch attack, police charged a man in connection with a photo circulating online of a masked man doing surveillance on the Al Noor mosque. The individual was linked to the white nationalist group Action Zealandia, which formed in July 2019 to build what it calls “a community for European New Zealanders.” The group refers to itself as a nationalist youth movement and calls on supporters to engage in nationalist activities. The group also prides itself on environmentalism and community building. Nonetheless, Action Zealandia is firmly committed to white supremacist ideals. Echoing the Great Replacement theory touted by Tarrant, Action Zealandia claims the “New Zealand European identity” is under threat from demographic replacement brought on by corporations and businesses importing foreign labor. The group limits membership to men only as it calls itself a fraternal organization. (Sources: [New York Times](#), [Reuters](#), [Twitter](#), [Action Zealandia](#), [Action Zealandia](#), [Action Zealandia](#), [Action Zealandia](#))

Action Zealandia disavowed the individual linked to the threats against Al Noor. The group specifically said it does not follow other conservatives in declaring Islam as a whole to be the “absolute enemy” and rejects violence. In February 2020, Facebook removed the group's page. Action Zealandia remained active on Twitter and Telegram. The group accuses social media companies of limiting free speech and silencing dissidents. (Sources: [Twitter](#), [Twitter](#), [Action Zealandia](#))

Antisemitism

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New Zealand does not have a major history of antisemitism. According to surveys of the Jewish community, New Zealand's Jewish community has not felt an antisemitic backlash since at least the 1980s. Nonetheless, there have been antisemitic movements that grew in New Zealand in the mid-20th century. In the 1950s, an antisemitic political party called Social Credit emerged based on the Social Credit movement founded in the early part of the century by a Canadian named Clifford Hugh Douglas. Social Credit is an economic theory that posits the current economic system does not allow workers to afford the goods and services they produce and thus needs to be reformed. Douglas also believed in a global Jewish conspiracy to control the world financial system, and this informed the beliefs of the Social Credit movement in New Zealand through the 1970s when the party began to reform under new leadership. (Sources: [Te Ara – The Encyclopedia of New Zealand](#), [Social Credit](#))

Social Credit inspired a new organization out of Australia called the League of Rights, which promoted conspiracies based on the antisemitic Russian forgery *The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*. A New Zealand chapter emerged in 1970. The organization had approximately 1,000 members at its height in the 1970s, but it had largely disintegrated by the 1990s due to an aging membership. (Sources: [Te Ara – The Encyclopedia of New Zealand](#), [Victoria University of Wellington](#))

In the 12 months following Hamas's October 7, 2023, attack on Israel, there were 227 recorded antisemitic incidents in New Zealand, an increase from the 166 incidents in the eight-and-a-half years prior. The reported incidents since October 7 include five antisemitic assaults and 40 recorded threats against members of the Jewish community. On February 28, 2024, New Zealand designated the Iran-backed Hamas organization as a terrorist entity for its large-scale October 7, 2023, attack on Israel that killed 1,200 people. The attack launched the Hamas-Israel war that month. Auckland also imposed travel bans on "extremist" Israeli settlers who they claim have committed violent attacks against Palestinians in the West Bank. Previously, Auckland designated Izz ad-Din al-Qassam, the armed wing of Hamas, as a terror group in 2010. (Source: [New Zealand Herald](#), [Reuters](#))

Islamic Extremism

New Zealand has had a small number of Islamic extremists supporting al-Qaeda, ISIS, and other Islamic extremist groups. The country has not experienced an Islamist-inspired terrorist attack.

In November 2014, Maori Muslim Te Amorangi Izhaq Kireka-Wahaanga, leader of the Aotearoa Maori Muslim Association, announced his support for ISIS. He claimed that he is not a violent man but wanted to travel to Syria with his family. His ex-wife told New Zealand media that the Muslim community did not support him or ISIS. In June 2016, Imran Patel became the first New Zealander to be imprisoned for possessing and distributing extremist propaganda. Patel was released on parole in 2018 after authorities determined he no longer posed a threat. In 2018, a New Zealand court sentenced an unidentified teenager from Christchurch to intensive supervision for planning a vehicular ramming attack, which he ultimately did not carry out. The teen reportedly radicalized online. The teen told the court he had "done it for Allah." (Sources: [New Zealand Herald](#), [New Zealand Herald](#), [New Zealand Herald](#))

New Zealand has liberal free speech laws and has had some reports of abuses in mosques, while New Zealand's Federation of Islamic Associations has condemned all forms of hate speech. In November 2016, a video emerged of Shaykh Dr. Mohammad Anwar Sahib of the At Taqwa Mosque in Manukau, Auckland, giving multiple sermons between 2014 and 2016 in which he used antisemitic and homophobic language. Sahib denied all allegations but stepped down from the mosque. New Zealand's Human Rights Commission condemned the speeches as appalling. (Sources: [At Taqwa Trust](#), [Shalom Kiwi](#), [New Zealand Herald](#), [New Zealand Herald](#))

Foreign Fighters

Up to two dozen New Zealanders have traveled abroad to become foreign fighters since 2014, according to estimates in the country. In 2015, the New Zealand Security Intelligence Services identified a growing trend of women traveling to Syria to become jihadi brides. The brides all left from Australia, according to authorities. Former Prime Minister Helen Clark said in March 2019 that jihadi brides should be allowed to return to face the consequences of their actions. New Zealand does not have any mechanisms in place to revoke the citizenship of foreign fighters. As of December 2018, however, at least eight New Zealanders had their passports revoked. In November 2019, authorities reported a "small number" of New Zealanders still overseas fighting alongside foreign terrorist groups in Iraq and Syria. (Sources: [Guardian](#), [Newstalk ZB](#), [Stuff](#), [New Zealand Herald](#))

New Zealand's most notorious foreign fighter is Mark Taylor, a.k.a. Muhammad Daniel and Abu Abdul-Rahman. Media dubbed the U.S.-designated Taylor the "bumbling jihadist" because he accidentally tweeted out his location multiple times. In 2009, Taylor visited New Zealand foreign fighter Daryl Jones, a.k.a. Muslim bin John, in Yemen. Jones was killed in a November 2013 drone strike alongside Australian militant

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Christopher Harvard while fighting for al-Qaeda. Taylor traveled to Syria in 2014. He displayed his burnt New Zealand passport in a Facebook post in June 2014 and declared he would never return. He later reportedly applied for a replacement. In December 2018, the Syrian Democratic Forces took Taylor into custody. New Zealand authorities issued an arrest warrant for him in October 2019, which would result in Taylor's arrest at the border if he attempts to return to New Zealand. (Sources: [Guardian](#), [Guardian](#), [Newshub](#), [New Zealand Herald](#), [New Zealand Herald](#), [New Zealand Herald](#))

Major Extremist and Terrorist Incidents

- **February 28, 2024:** New Zealand designates the Iran-backed Hamas in its entirety as a terrorist group. Previously, Auckland singularly designated Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades, the armed wing of Hamas, as a terror group in 2010. Auckland also imposes travel bans on "extremist" Israeli settlers who they claim have committed violent attacks against Palestinians in the West Bank. Source: [Reuters](#)
- **October 24, 2023:** New Zealand Coroner Brigitte Windley begins an inquest on the 2019 attack at the high court in Christchurch. The inquest is to examine whether any of those killed could have been saved, as well as the role social media played in radicalizing perpetrator Brenton Tarrant, if Tarrant acted alone, how he obtained a firearms license and if the method of procuring weapons could be directly linked to the attack, and how emergency services responded to the attack. Windley is expected to publish some of her findings in 2024. Sources: [Guardian](#), [Guardian](#)
- **September 3, 2021:** Sri Lankan national Aathil Mohamed Samsudeen enters the Countdown supermarket in the Auckland suburb of New Lynn where he grabs a knife on display and goes on a stabbing spree. The assailant shouts "Allahu akbar" before stabbing and wounding five people. Two others are wounded in the ensuing chaos. Within 60 seconds of the start of the attack, New Zealand police shoot and kill Samsudeen. The police had been following Samsudeen since his release from prison that July. He had lived in New Zealand for 10 years and had been monitored by police for about five years. Samsudeen was a known supporter of ISIS ideology and the terror group had inspired the attack, according to authorities. On September 4, Countdown announces it will temporarily remove all knives and scissors from supermarket shelves. Motivated by the attack, New Zealand's government expands terrorism laws on September 30 to criminalize plotting a terror attack and grant police the authority to enter, search, and surveil without warrants while investigating the planning and preparation of terrorist acts. Sources: [Associated Press](#), [Hill](#), [Reuters](#), [Reuters](#), [Washington Post](#)
- **March 15, 2019:** Gunman Brenton Tarrant attacks the Al Noor and Linwood mosques in Christchurch, killing 51 and wounding 50 others. Tarrant wears a helmet-mounted camera to broadcast the attacks on Facebook Live. Tarrant is arrested on his way to a third target. He is charged with multiple counts of murder, attempted murder, and carrying out a terrorist attack. Tarrant is the first person in New Zealand to be charged with a terrorism offense. The attack inspires a New Zealand ban on military-style semiautomatic weapons, assault rifles, and high-capacity magazines. In 2020, Tarrant pleads guilty to 91 charges of murder, attempted murder, and terrorism, and receives a life sentence without parole. Sources: [BBC News](#), [BBC News](#), [NPR](#), [Reuters](#), [Wall Street Journal](#), [Wall Street Journal](#), [New York Times](#)
- **July 10, 1985:** French saboteurs attach two limpet mines to the Greenpeace ship Rainbow Warrior in Auckland Harbor. The explosion creates a giant hole in the ship's hull, causing it to sink and killing one crewmember. The saboteurs are revealed to be French secret service agents under orders of the French government, reportedly to prevent Greenpeace from protesting French nuclear testing in the Moruroa Atoll in French Polynesia. New Zealand Prime Minister David Lange calls the attack "a sordid act of international state-backed terrorism." French agents Alain Mafart and Dominique Prieur plead guilty to manslaughter and willful damage. They are each sentenced to 10 years in prison. The attack influences the New Zealand government to pass the International Terrorism (Emergency Powers) Act in 1987. France pays \$8.2 million in damages to Greenpeace in 1987. Sources: [Te Ara – The Encyclopedia of New Zealand](#), [Te Ara – The Encyclopedia of New Zealand](#), [Greenpeace](#), [Guardian](#)
- **March 27, 1984:** A bomb left in a suitcase at Trades Hall in Wellington kills one. Police do not identify suspects or motive, but the bombing is suspected of targeting unions. Sources: [New Zealand Police](#), [Te Ara – The Encyclopedia of New Zealand](#)
- **November 18, 1982:** Neil Roberts detonates explosives at the Wanganui Computer Centre, damaging the building and killing himself. There are no other casualties. The police center housed the National Law Enforcement Data Base containing New Zealand's criminal and court records. Roberts leaves a note describing himself as an anarchist and hoping his attack inspires others. Sources: [RNZ](#), [Te Ara – The Encyclopedia of New Zealand](#)
- - : Protesters against the Vietnam War set off 13 explosions at military bases, government offices, and a newspaper office. There are no casualties. Source: [Te Ara – The Encyclopedia of New Zealand](#)
- **April 30, 1951:** Unknown assailants plant explosives under the Huntly rail bridge over the Waikato coal field, destroying the bridge. There are no casualties. Sources: [National Library of Australia](#), [Te Ara – The Encyclopedia of New Zealand](#)
- **July 14, 1905:** Farmer Joseph Sewell blows himself up outside the Murchison courthouse during a legal dispute with another farmer over a heifer. There are no other casualties. Source: [Te Ara – The Encyclopedia of New Zealand](#)

Domestic Counter-Extremism

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The New Zealand government has expanded its focus on terrorism since the September 11, 2001, attacks. In 2002, the New Zealand police created the Strategic Intelligence Unit (SIU) to provide intelligence on domestic and international security. The SIU joined with the Security Intelligence Service (SIS) and the Government Communications Security Bureau (GCSB) to investigate and combat terrorist threats in the country. Over the years, the government has passed legislation to expand the authority of the security agencies and address emerging threats. (Source: [Te Ara – The Encyclopedia of New Zealand](#))

International Terrorism (Emergency Powers) Act 1987

In 1987, New Zealand instituted the International Terrorism (Emergency Powers) Act in response to the 1985 sinking of the Rainbow Warrior by French secret service agents. The act allows the prime minister to declare a state of emergency in response to an international terrorist incident with the support of at least three ministers. The state of emergency grants the government emergency powers for seven days. Parliament must then vote to extend the emergency powers to the government. The act defines an international terrorist incident as one involving actions, or threats of actions, to kill or injure people or seriously damage property in order to coerce or intimidate a government or person. (Sources: [Te Ara – The Encyclopedia of New Zealand](#), [New Zealand Parliamentary Counsel Office](#))

Terrorism Suppression Act 2002

The New Zealand parliament passed the Terrorism Suppression Act 2002 in response to the September 11, 2001, attacks on the United States. The act defines a terrorist act as one intended to induce terror in a civilian population or compel a government or international organization to do or abstain from any act. The act also brought New Zealand into compliance with U.N. anti-terrorist conventions and resolutions. The act also expanded the government's definitions of terrorism and allowed the prime minister to designate organizations as terrorists and freeze their assets. Under the law, groups can be labeled as terrorists if they have participated in terrorist acts. The act also outlawed participation in and recruitment for terrorist groups, as well as providing financial assistance to terrorists. (Sources: [New Zealand Parliamentary Counsel Office](#), [Te Ara – The Encyclopedia of New Zealand](#))

Counter Terrorism Bill 2003

In 2003, the New Zealand government passed the Counter Terrorism Bill to expand investigation of and penalties against terrorism. The bill criminalized harboring terrorists and expanded terrorism offenses to include improper use of nuclear material or unmarked plastic explosives, contamination of food crops, and causing sickness or disease in animals. The bill also expanded police powers to gather intelligence through tracking devices and computer access. (Sources: [New Zealand Parliamentary Counsel Office](#), [Te Ara – The Encyclopedia of New Zealand](#))

Intelligence and Security Act 2017

The Intelligence and Security Act 2017 revamped New Zealand's intelligence services. The act created new definitions of national security and redefined how the New Zealand Security Intelligence Service and the Government Communications Security Bureau address national security. Specifically, the act addresses how the intelligence agencies obtain warrants and brings both agencies under a single set of regulations. (Sources: [New Zealand Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet](#), [New Zealand Parliamentary Counsel Office](#))

2021 Terrorism Law Expansion

On September 30, 2021, the government passed a new bill to expand New Zealand's terrorism law to criminalize plotting a terror attack and expand the authority of police. Under the new law, planning a terrorist attack can carry a maximum penalty of seven years in prison. The law also criminalized travel to or from New Zealand for combat training for a terrorist attack or to implement an attack. Further, the expansion granted police the authority to enter, search, and surveil without warrants while investigating the planning and preparation of terrorist acts. The expansion closed a legal loophole that had been exposed during an ISIS-related stabbing attack earlier that month. On September 3, 2021, Sri Lankan national Aathil Mohamed Samsudeen stabbed seven people in an Auckland supermarket before he was shot dead by police. Police initially arrested Samsudeen in 2017 as he tried to leave the country for Syria. In 2018, he bought a large hunting knife and was found in possession of ISIS videos. Samsudeen remained in prison on various other charges and violating bail conditions. In May 2021, a court found him guilty of possessing objectionable videos,

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but a judge later ruled that New Zealand's existing terrorism laws did not include possible plots and found no legal justification to hold him. Samsudeen was released from prison in July 2021 and placed under surveillance. Police followed him for 53 days prior to the September 3 attack. (Sources: [Reuters](#), [Associated Press](#), [Associated Press](#), [Guardian](#))

AML/CFT

New Zealand authorities have not seen confirmed evidence of terrorist financing in the country and thus consider the risk in New Zealand to be low. Nonetheless, the government has enacted anti-money laundering/countering the financing of terrorism (AML/CFT) legislation. Parliament passed the Anti-Money Laundering/Countering Terrorist Financing Act 2009 to create mechanisms for the supervision, monitoring, and enforcement of AML/CFT under the Reserve Bank of New Zealand, the Financial Markets Authority, and the Department of Internal Affairs. The act created requirements for reporting entities to engage in due diligence, account monitoring, reporting suspicious activity, and other requirements. It also imposed civil and criminal penalties. The act came into full effect in June 2013. (Sources: [New Zealand Parliamentary Counsel Office](#), [Reserve Bank New Zealand](#), [FATF](#))

New Zealand is a member of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF). A 2009 FATF assessment deemed New Zealand's AML/CFT precautions to be "robust," but found multiple discrepancies with FATF guidelines. A 2013 follow-up found that New Zealand had made enough adjustments to its procedures to justify removing the country from the follow-up process. In response to the FATF recommendations, New Zealand implemented multiple preventative measures, created a supervisory framework headed by the Reserve Bank of New Zealand, the Financial Markets Authority, and the Department of Internal Affairs; created a cross-border cash reporting system; and strengthened its registration and licensing procedures for the financial and insurance sectors. (Sources: [FATF](#), [FATF](#))

New Zealand authorities are also reportedly concerned with terror financing by white nationalists. In March 2020, white nationalists in New Zealand shared online a leaked memo from the New Zealand Police Financial Intelligence Unit to the nation's banking industry to be on guard against terror financing. According to the memo, the police are aware of several transactions "common in the extreme right-wing community." Police declared distribution of the document to be illegal. Nonetheless, white nationalist groups such as Action Zealandia declared they would continue to share the document. (Sources: [New Zealand Herald](#), [Twitter](#))

Response to Foreign Fighters

In December 2014, the government passed the Countering Terrorist Fighters Legislation Act, which gave the government authority to suspend or cancel passports. As of December 2018, the government had canceled at least eight passports. According to the Security Intelligence Service, the individuals posed a national security threat. In December 2019, the New Zealand parliament passed the Terrorism Suppression (Control Orders) Bill in response to the threat posed by returning foreign fighters. The law allows authorities to implement control orders on returning foreign fighters, such as electronic monitoring or rehabilitation. According to officials, the control orders will be tailored to the individual. (Sources: [Library of Congress](#), [RNZ](#), [New Zealand Herald](#), [Scoop](#))

Response to Christchurch

A week after the March 15, 2019, attack on two mosques in Christchurch, the New Zealand government moved to ban military-style semiautomatic weapons, assault rifles, and high-capacity magazines. The legislation passed that April. New Zealand police also reported after the attack that they intended to better track hate crimes in the country, which had no separate classification for hate crimes and thus no separate record of them. Police sought to create tracking mechanism for hate crimes in the aftermath of the Christchurch attack. The attack also prompted a government review of hate speech laws. (Sources: [Wall Street Journal](#), [CNN](#), [Stuff](#), [Stuff](#), [New Zealand Herald](#))

The Christchurch attack raised concerns among government officials over how law enforcement did not anticipate the attack. Analysts in New Zealand suggested that security forces had been so focused on the threat of Islamic extremism that they overlooked the threat of far-right extremism. Five major New Zealand media companies agreed in May 2019 to limit their coverage of Tarrant's trial to avoid disseminating his ideology. New Zealand police increased their patrols around mosques ahead of the first anniversary of the Christchurch attack. The government also announced plans to create a new unit to focus on online extremism. In October 2019, Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern announced the formation of a team of 17 investigators to identify and disrupt violent extremist content across digital channels. The team would be housed in New Zealand's internal affairs department. (Sources: [Financial Times](#), [Guardian](#), [New York Times](#), [Al Jazeera](#))

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In December 2020, the Royal Commission of Inquiry into the Terrorist Attack on Christchurch Mosques published an 800-page report that examined whether the authorities could have prevented the massacre. The report concluded that although New Zealand's security agencies did not thoroughly monitor white supremacist threats, the massacre was not able to be prevented. The commission also issued 44 recommendations to the government to boost New Zealand's counterterrorism capabilities. The government responded that all of the recommendations would be adopted, but it would immediately focus on creating a new Ministry for Ethnic Communities; creating a new initiative to help police identify, record, and manage hate crimes and be more responsive to victims; creating a National Centre of Excellence to research radicalization, violent extremism, and social cohesion in New Zealand; and amending the country's terrorism and hate crime laws. Nonetheless, in August 2024, the government declared that only 36 of the recommendations had been implemented and the final eight would not progress. The recommendations the government would not adopt include:

- The creation of a new national intelligence and security agency;
- The creation of an advisory group on counter-terrorism;
- A summary of advice from the Advisory Group from the previous year in the annual National Security Intelligence Priorities report;
- The creation of a system to allow the public to report concerning behaviors or incidence;
- Mandatory reporting of firearms injuries to police by health professionals;
- Discussions with witnesses and survivors of the March 15 attack about what restorative justice processes might be desired and how these might be designed and resourced;
- Repeal section 131 of the Human Rights Act 1993 and insert a provision in the Crimes Act 1961 for an offense of inciting racial or religious disharmony, based on an intent to stir up, maintain or normalize hatred, through threatening, abusive, or insulting communications with protected characteristics that include religious affiliation;
- Amending the definition of "objectionable" in section 3 of the Films, Videos, and Publications Classification Act 1993 to include racial superiority, racial hatred, and racial discrimination.

(Sources: [RNZ](#), [RNZ](#))

Christchurch Call

Founded in the wake of the March 15, 2019, Christchurch mosque attacks, Christchurch Call is a global initiative working across governments, the tech sector, and civil society to eliminate terrorist and violent extremist content online. It includes more than 130 governments, online service providers, and civil society organizations. Following the deadly Christchurch shootings on March 15, 2019, New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern and French President Emmanuel Macron hosted tech CEOs at a summit of world leaders at the first Christchurch Call to Action Summit in Paris on May 15, 2019. The summit culminated in the Christchurch Call to Action pledge, under which signatories would aim to "end the use of social media for acts of terrorism." The community of governments and online service providers who committed to the pledge continue to gather for annual summits and leaders' meetings. At the second Christchurch Call to Action summit on May 14, 2021, Ardern and Macron hosted an online meeting of world leaders and technology company executives. The United States also joined in the meeting, which included discussions of better ways to stop extremist violence from spreading online while also respecting freedom of expression. Among the topics discussed, Ardern stated that part of the solution requires equipping younger generations of Internet users to better deal with and prevent the response to radical content and disinformation online. (Sources: [New Zealand Government](#), [Christchurch Call](#), [Christchurch Call](#), [CNN](#), [New York Times](#), [Voice of America](#), [Associated Press](#))

At the 2023 summit, held on November 10, 2023, in Paris, leaders issued a joint statement restating their commitment to promoting effective global approaches to eliminating terrorist and violent extremist content online while engaging with civil society. Leaders of the Christchurch Call noted that it took tech companies 30 minutes to remove the livestream of the Christchurch attacks in 2019, but the May 2022 attack in Buffalo, New York, came down within two minutes. The Christchurch Call leaders credited the quicker response to the incident protocols they developed to coordinate efforts across governments and tech platforms. (Sources: [Christchurch Call](#), [Christchurch Call](#), [Christchurch Call](#))

Following her January 2023 resignation, former Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern was appointed as special envoy for the Christchurch Call on April 4, 2023. According to Prime Minister Chris Hipkins, Ardern's position will reportedly "push for greater protection online from terrorist and violent extremist content." (Sources: [New Zealand Government](#), [Politico](#))

International Counter-Extremism

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International Cooperation

New Zealand is a member of multiple international and regional counterterrorism organizations. New Zealand is a member of the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS and the Global Counter Terrorism Forum. New Zealand has also coordinated with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), and the East Asia Summit (EAS) in annual meetings on counterterrorism and transnational crime. In August 2018, New Zealand participated in the Five Country Ministerial with Australia, the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom. Senior officials from the participating countries met to discuss current and emerging threats. New Zealand also belongs to the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) and the Asia-Pacific Group on Money Laundering (APG). (Sources: [FATF](#), [U.S. Department of State](#))

Peacekeeping Operations

New Zealand actively participates in international peacekeeping operations. Since 1948, New Zealand has participated in more than 40 U.N. peacekeeping operations in more than 25 countries. (Sources: [New Zealand Foreign Affairs & Trade](#), [New Zealand Defence Force](#),

The New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) contributes soldiers to:

- Afghanistan: New Zealand first sent forces in 2001 to support the NATO mission to uproot the Taliban. Since 2013, the Defence Force has contributed personnel to the Afghan national Army Officer Academy to mentor and support the development of Afghan National Security Forces as part of Operation Resolute Support. In June 2019, New Zealand decreased its deployment to Afghanistan from 13 to 11 soldiers and extended the mission until December 2020. (Sources: [New Zealand Defence Force](#), [Scoop](#))
- Combined Maritime Forces (CMF): The CMF is a multinational naval partnership to promote security and stabilization in international waters. New Zealand contributes two staff officers to the CMF headquarters in Bahrain. (Source: [New Zealand Defence Force](#))
- Multinational Force and Observers (MFO): New Zealand has contributed forces to the MFO since its creation in 1982 to ensure the peace treaty between Israel and Egypt. New Zealand contributes up to 25 personnel annually. (Source: [New Zealand Defence Force](#))
- Iraq: New Zealand is a member of the U.S.-led Combined Joint Task Force - Operation Inherent Resolve in Iraq. The NZDF contributes personnel to the combined New Zealand and Australia Building Partner Capacity (BPC) mission in Iraq to train Iraqi Security Forces for combat and stabilization operations. New Zealand does not have any combat roles in Iraq. (Sources: [New Zealand Defence Force](#), [Operation Inherent Resolve](#))
- United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO): UNTSO is the U.N. peacekeeping mission to maintain truces between Israel and its neighbors. Since 1954, the NZDF has contributed personnel to oversee truces between Israel, Lebanon, and Syria. (Sources: [UNTSO](#), [New Zealand Defence Force](#))
- United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA): In March 2018, the NZDF committed one soldier to serving an intelligence role for the period of one year. (Source: [New Zealand Defence Force](#))
- Mutual Assistance Programme (MAP): MAP is an international program to provide training, technical, and other support to South Pacific and Southeast Asian security and defense forces. The NZDF provides skills and professional development training to MAP personnel. (Source: [New Zealand Defence Force](#))
- U.N. Command & Military Armistice Commission (UNCMAC): UNCMAC maintains the armistice between North Korea and South Korea. NZDF contributes six personnel annually to U.N. Command in the Republic of Korea to train South Korean forces and serve in the demilitarized zone. (Source: [New Zealand Defence Force](#))
- U.N. Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS): UNMISS was established in 2011 to consolidate peace and security and enable the government of South Sudan to assume its functions. The NZDF contributes multiple personnel to the mission. (Source: [New Zealand Defence Force](#))
- Operation Gallant Phoenix: Operation Gallant Phoenix is a U.S.-led multinational information sharing and intelligence mission based in Jordan to combat the threat of extremism in Iraq. New Zealand has contributed personnel since 2014. (Sources: [New York Times](#), [New Zealand Defence Force](#))

Public Opinion

New Zealand-based Horizon Research conducted a poll of 3,200,000 adults in December 2015 in the aftermath of the November Paris attacks. The poll asked security-related questions based on a scale of one to 10. The poll found that 12 percent (384,000 people) completely disagreed with a statement that New Zealand is less at risk of a terrorist attack than other countries, while 9 percent (287,000) completely agreed it is less at risk. The poll found that 14 percent (448,000) were very concerned that they or a member of their family would be hurt in a terror attack if one were to happen in New Zealand. Conversely, 12 percent (384,000) were not at all concerned about the possibility. Only 5 percent (160,000) thought a terror attack in New Zealand was “extremely likely,” while 8 percent (320,000) thought one was “extremely unlikely.” Only 4 percent felt “extremely

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unsafe” in New Zealand, while 13 percent reported feeling “extremely safe.” An additional 53 percent reported their safety levels as seven through nine, indicating relatively high feelings of security. (Source: [Horizon Research](#))

The 2019 Unisys Security Index found that both prior to and after the March 2019 Christchurch attack New Zealand’s population ranked the third-least concerned about terrorism among 13 countries polled. In the aftermath of the Christchurch attack, global IT company Unisys recorded 51 percent of New Zealanders were seriously concerned about war or terrorism, an increase of 29 percent from before the attack. Concern rose to 58 percent in the Christchurch region specifically. Unisys also recorded that 80 percent of New Zealanders believe social media companies are responsible for monitoring and removing hate speech and other inflammatory content. Unisys also polled the United States, the Philippines, Colombia, Mexico, Chile, Malaysia, Brazil, Australia, Belgium, the United Kingdom, Germany, and the Netherlands. (Source: [Unisys](#))