

Christchurch massacre: The terror in New Zealand is borne of the same far right ideology taking hold in Europe

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The news of a devastating terrorist attack in Christchurch, New Zealand, is heartbreaking. The deaths of so many people, of all ages, simply engaging in practising their faith, is hard to comprehend.

Another set of lives, and families, destroyed by an ideology of visceral hatred. The depravity of the killer is only underlined by the fact that he live-streamed the attack.

Depressingly though, this act of savagery only further highlights the increasingly violent impact of anti-Muslim rhetoric.

The man who posted the videos online tried to cloak himself in the façade of normality, describing himself as “just a ordinary White man.”

In fact, he was a self-confessed “eco-fascist”. He praises Oswald Mosley and the Norwegian mass-murderer Anders Breivik, who killed 77 people in 2011.

Shortly before the attack he, like his hero Breivik, posted a document online that used stock phrases from the alt-right to justify the murders. He talked of “white genocide” and cited spurious statistics about birth rates to explain away the savagery of his actions. As if anything could justify such mass murder. The document is called the “Great Replacement”, a phrase widely used in [Generation Identity](#) circles, a network close to British far right figures such as Stephen Yaxley-Lennon (Tommy Robinson).

Violence, terrorism and murder are part and parcel of his rationale. Through his murders, he wanted to “mobilise a race war and revolution.”

In the days to come, politicians might face a question: could this happen here? The stark and challenging reality is that the shooter appears to have taken inspiration from an attack in the UK. He specifically name checks [Darren Osborne](#), who killed one person and injured others when he drove a van into worshippers in Finsbury Park in 2017, and again whose killings were [celebrated by other extremists](#). The alleged shooter’s social media accounts are littered with links to articles in UK news outlets and to content posted by UK-based far right accounts.

He also drew sick inspiration from events around the world. He cited a terrorist attack in Sweden, the 2017 French elections and made 14 references to grooming scandals in the UK.

The shocking terrorism that we have witnessed in New Zealand is violence borne of the same conspiracy theories and far-right ideology that has already spawned violence in Europe. He might have been alone when he carried out his attack, but he is no ‘lone wolf’. He was plugged into a

global far-right movement that is organised online, and is as defined by its [DIY, 'post-organisational' structure](#) as it is by its hatreds.

In this social media age the far right is one small community, united in purpose and action but merely fighting on different battlefields.

The increasingly confrontational tone of far-right rhetoric is matched by their [increasingly pervasive belief that a civil war](#) between Islam and the West is coming. For some, there is just the resigned acceptance of an inevitable "clash" with Islam, but for others it is to be actively encouraged as it would only be through a civil war Islam will be defeated and Muslims ultimately expelled from Europe.

An increasing number of far-right websites actively encourage readers to take pro-active action to actually instigate attacks and spark the civil war which they believe is necessary.

And yet rarely is action taken by authorities against these websites and commentators. For too long the authorities have been ignored the growing anti-Muslim rhetoric which, as [HOPE not hate polling has shown](#), is becoming increasingly mainstream.

Sadly, as these latest shootings prove, words have consequences.

Far right and Islamophobic websites and commentators [commonly view Islam as a supremacist religion](#) hell-bent on domination over the West. No distinction is made between the vast majority of ordinary Muslims who go about their lives like anyone else and the extremist few. Western governments, they believe, through their weakness and political correctness are allowing Muslims into Europe and sowing the seeds of Western civilisations own destruction.

Over the coming hours and days politicians and the media will be united in condemnation and that is obviously to be welcomed. But these same people, along with media and social media outlets, should also pause for thought and think about how they have enabled anti-Muslim hatred through their own words or even silence.

Words cannot describe the barbarity of the Christchurch attack, but perhaps one way to honour those who have been killed and injured is for a period of reflection and even debate about the levels of anti-Muslim hatred and Islamophobia in our societies today. It was, after all, this that helped drive this heinous crime.

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P.S.

- THE NEW STATESMAN. INTERNET 15 MARCH 2019:
<https://www.newstatesman.com/world/2019/03/terror-new-zealand-borne-same-far-right-ideology-taking-hold-europe>
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