

Scholars Circle Resource Guide

Double-sided

Veiled Threats: Women and Jihad



About Dr. Mia Bloom

Mia is an International Security Fellow at New America and a Professor at Georgia State University. She speaks eight languages and has authored six books on violent extremism, including "Dying to Kill" and "Bombshell." Her most recent book, "Veiled Threats", coming out Winter 2025, explores the diverse roles of women involved in jihad. Mia has held appointments at Cornell, Harvard, Princeton, and McGill, and serves on several Counter-Radicalization boards. She holds a PhD from Columbia University and advanced degrees from Georgetown and McGill.

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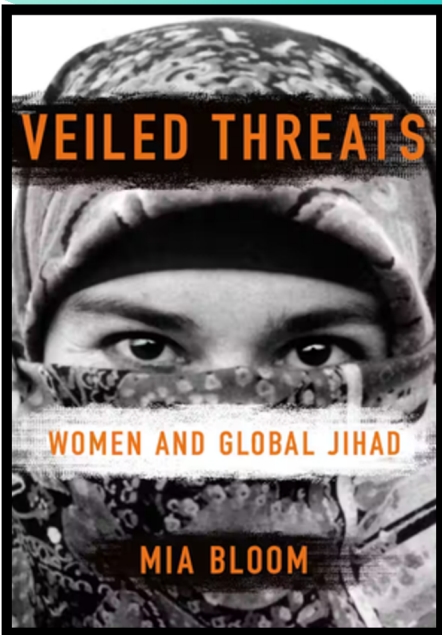
Veiled Threats explores the range of roles of the women involved in jihad. Pre-order available - visit cornellpress.cornell.edu



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Common Q&A's

Why would patriarchal conservative Jihadi groups recruit women?

Patriarchal Groups use gender stereotypes to their advantage. They know that most western countries assume women are inherently peaceful and so this offers them the element of surprise and a comparative advantage.

Are women “better” at terrorism than men?

In some ways women have proven to be more deadly and more effective than men. In Israel, women can infiltrate the target deeper than men (e.g. a bus) and wreak maximum damage. Women also generate significantly more media and attention than male bombers, knowing this the groups often select more attractive women to carry out the attack.

Why are there so many convert women who join these terrorist groups?

Converts (both male and female) constitute a disproportionate percentage of terrorist members and including suicide bombers. For many converts, there is a need to prove themselves to the new faith, but also, the converts rely on charismatic religious men to interpret the Quran, Sunnah and the Hadith because they cannot access the text themselves. This allows the religious recruiters to bastardize the meaning of the text and convince the convert that suicide terrorism and killing civilians is legitimate.

Key Takeaways

- Women have always been members of terrorist organizations. The very first person tried for a terrorism offense was a woman.
- Jihadi Groups exploit Western constructions of gender to use women for the element of surprise.
- Women terrorists receive eight times the media attention than most men do and groups leverage the media effects of female operatives to get bang for their buck.

The views expressed by the speaker don't necessarily reflect Chai Mitzvah's official position.

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