

During his two-day royal visit this week, Prince William has met with survivors of the Christchurch mosque shootings and has [praised New Zealand's response](#) to the attacks.

To the people of New Zealand and the people of Christchurch, to our Muslim community and all those who have rallied by your side, I stand with you in gratitude to what you have taught the world in these past weeks.

Earlier, Prince Hassan bin Talal of Jordan described New Zealanders as “[citizens of the future](#)”.

Globally, Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern's response to the attacks is seen as a new way of reacting to violent extremism. With an emphasis on what unites people, communities in different countries were motivated to express solidarity across religious and cultural divides.

In contrast, the opportunistic linking of the Easter Sunday [terrorist attacks](#) in Colombo, Sri Lanka, with Christchurch will once again serve to divide humanity.

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**Read more:** [\*\*\*Islamic State has claimed responsibility for the Sri Lanka terror attack. Here's what that means\*\*\*](#)

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## Solidarity at home

Domestically, the terrorist attack on Muslim worshippers in Christchurch was met by a display of unity. A heartfelt exchange of respect between the country's leadership and the minority Muslim community characterised the days and weeks following the attack.

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**Read more:** [\*From Mahometan to Kiwi Muslim: history of NZ's Muslim population\*](#)

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A renewed rejection of racism in all its forms, including Islamophobia, led to a public discussion of the [Crusaders rugby team's name](#). The government took decisive action by [tightening gun laws](#) and instituting a [royal commission of inquiry](#) into New Zealand's security and intelligence agencies.

But the question now is whether New Zealand can translate its new-found domestic cohesion and goodwill into foreign policy.

### Support for Palestinian sovereignty

The Israel-Palestine conflict is a good place to start. If solidarity at home is to influence global understanding and cooperation across cultures, Palestinian sovereignty must be a foreign policy priority.

The international community's failure over the past 72 years to find a just and sustainable solution to the "[Palestine question](#)" is an ongoing source of discord between Muslims and non-Muslims.

Shortly after its establishment, the UN Alliance of Civilisations ( [UNAOC](#) ) [noted](#) :

The Israeli military occupation of Palestine has been perceived in the Muslim world as a form of colonialism and has led many to believe, rightly or wrongly, that Israel is in collusion with the "West".

Palestinian [casualties, dispossession and suffering](#) due to the occupation fuel resentment and

radicalisation in the Muslim world. The impunity an American veto allows Israel further enhances the perception of Western hypocrisy. The US and Israel's disregard for the legal status of Jerusalem as [corpus separatum](#) undermines both the potential for peace between Israelis and Palestinians and an international rules-based system.

New Zealand needs to be more vocal in international forums in criticising Israel's [occupation policies](#).

## Challenging Islamophobia

Islamophobia, or an anti-Muslim bias that incorrectly presents Muslims as a dangerous monolithic group, is both a domestic and global concern. The real danger is that Islamophobia becomes the norm.

Politicians, such as Hungarian Prime Minister [Viktor Orban](#), promote the notion of a clash of civilisations when they present Muslims as a threat to Christian Europe. The United Kingdom's security strategy in response to the terrorist attacks in London on July 7 2005, called [Prevent](#), is an example of anti-radicalisation policies that target people based on their faith, specifically Muslims.

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**Read more:** [Terror, Muslims, and a culture of fear: challenging the media messages](#)

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Islamophobia also finds expression in conflating radical and moderate Islamists. These groups may share the pursuit of an ideal state, based on Islamic teachings, but they differ drastically in their methods and interpretation of Islam. Autocratic governments in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region [fuel Islamophobia](#) when they dismiss these differences in order to demonise their moderate Islamist opposition.

This can be explained by the fact that moderate Islamism offers an authentic alternative to authoritarianism. For example, Syria's President Bashar al-Assad and his late father, Hafez al-Assad, have a [history](#) of demonising and repressing the moderate Islamist Syrian Muslim Brotherhood ( [SMB](#) ) to ensure the regime's political survival. Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Egypt declared the Muslim Brotherhood a terrorist organisation in the wake of the 2010-11 [Arab uprisings](#) , which threatened autocrats across the MENA region.

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**Read more:** [\*Competing foreign interests trump Syrian aspirations for political change\*](#)

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## A rules-based international system

The UAE and Saudi Arabia are key markets for New Zealand. They are also members of the Gulf Cooperation Council ( [GCC](#) ), our [eighth-largest trading partner](#) . In equating moderate Islamism with terrorism to contain domestic dissent, these states contribute to international disunity and hate.

New Zealand needs to resist pressure from these partners as well as from some other member countries in the [Five Eyes intelligence alliance](#) to view Islamists as monolithic. It also needs to enhance support for initiatives that strengthen global understanding and cooperation between non-Muslim and Muslim-majority countries such as the UNAOC.

At the UN General Assembly in September 2018, Ardern signalled a clear direction for foreign policy by calling for [kindness, collectivism and an international rules-based system](#) . This is in stark contrast to US President Donald Trump's [portentous rejection of globalism](#) .

New Zealand's response to the Christchurch terrorist attack showed the world values that, in Ardern's words, "[represent the very best of us](#) ". The expectation remains that our foreign policy

## Why New Zealand needs to translate its response to Christchurch attacks into foreign policy

Written by Hanlie Booysen, Lecturer, Victoria University of Wellington

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will follow through.

*Hanlie Booysen does not work for, consult, own shares in or receive funding from any company or organization that would benefit from this article, and has disclosed no relevant affiliations beyond their academic appointment.*

Authors: Hanlie Booysen, Lecturer, Victoria University of Wellington

**Read more** <http://theconversation.com/why-new-zealand-needs-to-translate-its-response-to-christchurch-attacks-into-foreign-policy-115556>