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## **Chapter 19: The Christchurch Shooting and The 2020 New Zealand Election**

This chapter involves a brief description of the 2019 Christchurch terrorist attacks; Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern's, the Labour Government's, and the New Zealand society's response to the atrocity; and New Zealand's relations with Muslims at home and abroad in the aftermath of the deadly shooting. It also looks at the effects of the mass murder on the country's counter-terrorism strategy and white supremacist violence as well as at the implications of the 2020 New Zealand election for the Muslim community in New Zealand. The chapter concludes with a section on the media coverage of the 2020 New Zealand election in the Muslim world to examine how Muslims across the globe reported the election and its outcome.

### **The Day New Zealand Changed Forever: The 2019 Christchurch Shooting**

On 15 March 2019, a 28-year-old white supremacist from Australia arrived at the Al-Noor Mosque in central Christchurch during Friday Prayer. An elderly Afghan man who greeted the terrorist with the words, 'Hello, Brother', at the mosque entrance was one of the first to be shot. After killing his victim, the terrorist walked in and opened fire on some 190 innocent worshippers while live-streaming the massacre on social media. He then drove to the Linwood Islamic Centre, another mosque five kilometres east of the Al-Noor Mosque, to continue his fatal gunfire. The consecutive attacks cost 51 lives and injured 40, including women and children. They were the deadliest to take place in New Zealand, one of the most peaceful countries in the world (Brown 2020). Prior to the slaughter, the terrorist had published a 74-page manifesto entitled 'The Great Replacement', citing the growing Muslim population and 'white genocide' as his main motivations (Bogost 2019). The manifesto also included hateful references to Turkey, its President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, and the Turkish diaspora. According to analysts, this is because 'Turkey is synonymous with Islam in the eyes of Western ultra-nationalists' and the terrorist aimed to pit the European members of the NATO against Turkey, which is also an important NATO member (Sahin 2019).

The twin attacks sent shock waves across the country and the rest of the world, given the scale of the bloodshed and the clear targeting of Muslim worshippers, some of whom were foreign nationals. Two days after the incident, a high-level diplomatic delegation led by Turkish Vice President, Fuat Oktay, and Foreign Minister, Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, met with the then Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Winston Peters, in Christchurch (Cheng 2019). Although the meeting had been amicable, relations between New Zealand and Turkey strained shortly after Turkish President Erdoğan showed a footage of the massacre at electoral rallies to garner support for his Justice and Development Party prior to the 31 March 2019 local Turkish elections. In addressing New Zealanders, Erdoğan shouted at one of these rallies: 'Your grandparents came [and] some of them returned in coffins. If you come as well, like your grandfathers, be sure that you will be gone like your grandfathers ... The enemies of Muslims have shown that they continue to hate us ... They are testing us from 16,500 km away, from New Zealand, with the messages they are giving from there. This is not an individual attack, it is organised'. Following these inflammatory remarks, Winston Peters left New Zealand to attend an emergency Organisation of Islamic Cooperation meeting hosted by Turkish officials in Istanbul.

‘They asked me to come and I’m going to go. I certainly intend to put New Zealand’s record as being an innocent party to an act of a foreigner in our country’, Peters announced before his departure (Young and Trevett 2019). Jacinda Ardern clarified that the main motivation behind Peters’ trip was not to criticise Erdoğan’s display of the video but to demonstrate that New Zealand is not a place that bolsters white supremacist movements. She announced that, after the successful meeting, the rhetoric of Erdoğan had changed (Walls 2019). In the meeting, Turkey’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, Çavuşoğlu, thanked New Zealand’s authorities for their sensitivity towards Muslims and conveyed the message that Turkish is in solidarity with New Zealand (Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2019).

The United Arab Emirates also sent a delegation to New Zealand to visit the two mosques and to console the victims’ families in Christchurch (*The Gulf News* 2019). Other countries with a significant Muslim population, including Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Oman, Jordan, Egypt, Morocco, Indonesia, Malaysia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Bangladesh similarly condemned the atrocity, and extended their sympathies and condolences to the victims, their families, and the New Zealand society. Iranian Foreign Ministry condemned the mosques attacks as ‘brutal’ and ‘inhuman’ and urged New Zealand authorities to find perpetrators behind the massacre. Iran’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, Javad Zarif, noted that ‘the West must end its “hypocrisy” of demonizing Muslims under the pretext of defending freedom of expression’ (*Tehran Times* 2019). The country’s leading international daily, *Tehran Times*, labelled the attacks as ‘white supremacist terrorism’ and indicated that ‘how the counter-terrorism and law-enforcement authorities in New Zealand missed the warning is incredibly astonishing’ (Mehdi 2019). The Al-Azhar Mosque and the Coptic Church in Egypt, the Muslim World League, the Arab League, and the United Nations were among the institutions that issued an official statement to express their deepest sorrow and condemnation at the abhorrent attacks (*Arab News* 2019).

Jacinda Ardern immediately called out the killings as an act of terrorism and refused to use the terrorist’s name. ‘Many of those who will have been directly affected by this shooting may be migrants to New Zealand; they may even be refugees here. They have chosen to make New Zealand their home, and it is their home. They are us’, she said. ‘The person who has perpetuated this violence against us is not. They have no place in New Zealand. There is no place in New Zealand for such acts of extreme and unprecedented violence, which it is clear this act was’ (*The Guardian* 2019). ‘One of his goals ... was that he sought notoriety and we will absolutely deny him that’, she continued. Ardern wore a *hijab* while comforting Muslim mourners, broadcasted the Islamic call to prayer (*adhan*) on national television and radio, and called for a global struggle to root out racism (*BBC* 2019). Moreover, she notified that survivors would be eligible to benefit from the Labour Government’s funeral grants and financial assistance (Kuruvilla 2019).

Prime Minister Ardern’s warmth resonated well with Muslims all around the world. An image of her hugging a Muslim woman was projected onto the world’s tallest building, the Burj Khalifa, in Dubai. Sharing the image of the tower on his Twitter account, Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum of the United Arab Emirates thanked Ardern for her ‘sincere empathy and support that has won the respect of 1.5 billion Muslims’ (Satherley 2019). Other Muslim leaders and institutions also praised Prime Minister for her strong leadership: The Muslim World League announced that they have full ‘confidence in the New Zealand Government to bring those involved in this crime to justice and to prosecute them as terrorists’ (*Arab News* 2019). Sadiq Khan, the mayor of London, tweeted a picture of Ardern hugging a Muslim woman and praised

her inclusivity. Negar Mortazavi, a prominent Iranian-American columnist and the host of the Iran Podcast wrote that donning a hijab was ‘a sign of respect’ (Fifeld 2019).

In a similar vein, in an opinion piece he penned for *The Washington Post* a year after the wicked act, Turkish President Erdoğan expressed his gratitude to Ardern: ‘In the aftermath of the Christchurch massacre, the West has certain responsibilities. Western societies and governments must reject the normalization of racism, xenophobia and Islamophobia, which has been on the rise in recent years ... Finally, all Western leaders must learn from the courage, leadership and sincerity of New Zealand’s prime minister, Jacinda Ardern, to embrace Muslims living in their respective countries’ (*The Washington Post* 2020). Representatives of the Muslim Public Affairs Council and the Muslim Advocates in the USA also maintained that ‘Ardern has done an “exceptional job” and is demonstrating how a politician should lead a country after such a horrific attack’ with her ‘honest, compassionate, and strong response’ (Kuruvilla 2019). Arabic media sources, such as the London-based Saudi *Asharq al-Awsat*, also suggested that, with this unfortunate event, ‘the world recognised New Zealand like a gift hidden in a disaster’ (Utaybi 2019 cited in Öztürk 2019, p. 37). The Qatar-based international news channel, *Al Jazeera*, compared her empathetic leadership to the anti-Muslim rhetoric of the other world leaders, such as France’s Marine Le Pen and the USA’s Donald Trump, and lauded her for clarifying that ‘Islam is neither the “other” nor the “invader”’. Islam is New Zealand and those adhering to it, departed or alive, are at home in this country’ (Beydoun 2019).

New Zealanders have equally responded to the violent attacks with love and compassion. A day after the atrocity, a Baptist church in Auckland opened its doors to Muslims, and Catholic bishops published a statement, emphasising the positive relationships they have with the Muslim community. Synagogues in the country closed on Shabbat for the first time in their history (Rohrlich 2019). The New Zealand Māori Council also expressed their solidarity by calling for a nation-wide haka on 22 March 2019 (Fitzgerald 2019). Finally, in the wake of the killings, a campaign was set up to encourage women across New Zealand to wear a *hijab*: ‘We are with you, we want you to feel at home on your own streets, we love, support, and respect you’, the initiator of the campaign asserted (*Reuters* 2019). While some Muslims found the campaign controversial, and interpreted it as a sign of ‘cheap tokenism’ and distraction from the root causes of ‘white supremacy, systematic racism, Orientalism and bigotry’, most Muslim groups, such as the Islamic Women’s Council of New Zealand and the New Zealand Muslim Association expressed their gratitude to the people of New Zealand for masterminding and participating in the campaign (Paul and Birsal 2019). The 2019 New Zealand Attitudes and Values Study, which compared the attitudes of New Zealanders before and after the attack also found that in the immediate days after the incident, warmth toward Muslims increased among both left-wing/liberal and right-wing/conservative individuals. However, attitudes toward Muslims among conservatives soon reverted back to pre-attack levels whereas liberals sustained their increased level of positive attitudes for a longer period (Shanaah et al. 2021, p. 15).

### **Counter-terrorism Measures in The Aftermath of the Christchurch Shooting and the 2020 New Zealand Election**

The Labour Government was quick to undertake significant counter-terrorism reforms: Immediately after the heinous shooting, the New Zealand police shut down all mosques in the country until further notice and placed security at their gates (*Stuff* 2019). In addition, the terrorism threat level went from low to high, all flights departing from Christchurch were

cancelled (Cooke and Kirk 2019), and security checks were heightened at Parliament (*Radio New Zealand* 2019). More importantly, Ardern announced the prohibition of the sale of all military-style semi-automatic and assault rifles under stricter gun laws only six days after the March 15 attacks: ‘On 15 March our history changed forever. Now, our laws will too. We are announcing action today on behalf of all New Zealanders to strengthen our gun laws and make our country a safer place’, Ardern declared (New Zealand Government 2019a). Ten days after the incident, the Government also publicised the establishment of the Royal Commission of Inquiry into the Terrorist Attack in Christchurch Masjidain on 15 March 2019 to scrutinise and report on ‘the actions of the individual, the actions of relevant Public sector agencies and any changes that could prevent such terrorist attacks in the future’ (Royal Commission of Inquiry 2020).

On 10 April 2019, the Arms (Prohibited Firearms, Magazines, and Parts) Amendment Act, which seeks to remove semi-automatic firearms from circulation and use by the general population in New Zealand by banning semi-automatic firearms, magazines, and parts that can be used to assemble prohibited firearms, passed its final reading. It received royal assent the following day (New Zealand Government 2019b). As part of the Government’s counter-terrorism measures, a six-month gun buy-back scheme took place in 2019, which encouraged gun owners to return their prohibited firearms to 605 collection points across the country. According to New Zealand Police (2020), a total of 34,185 hand-ins had been completed and 57,716 firearms (52,597 as buy-back and 5,119 under amnesty) and 205,209 parts (198,642 as buy-back and 6,567 under amnesty) had been collected.

The Arms Legislation Bill, which passed its final reading on 18 June 2020 and received royal assent on 24 June 2020, created a national gun registry to track how many firearms are in legal circulation and who buys and sells them; reduced length of firearms licence from 10 to 5 years for the first-time licence holders and those who have previously had their licence revoked or allowed it to expire; harsher offences and penalties; a ban on further ‘high-risk firearms’, such as pistol-length semi-automatic rifles (New Zealand Government 2020; Devlin 2020).

In November 2020, the Royal Commission of Inquiry presented a 800-page report entitled *Ko tō tātou kāinga tēnei* (‘This is our home’) to emphasise New Zealand’s inclusive and welcoming identity. The report was presented to the public in December 2020. Focusing mainly on the period between 2016 and 2019, the report pointed out that ‘the primary, but not exclusive, focus of the counter-terrorism resources was on what was seen as the presenting threat of Islamist extremist terrorism’ and that Muslims in the country had long experienced racism, discrimination, hate speech, and hate crime. The report acknowledged the negative consequences of secrecy about counter-terrorism measures and ‘failings’ within the firearms licensing system and the laws the security agencies operate. Some of the proposed policy recommendations were the formation of a Ministry of Ethnic Communities, new anti-terror and hate speech legislation, a new security and intelligence agency, and increased funding for New Zealand-specific counter-terrorism strategies (Royal Commission of Inquiry 2020; Sullivan 2020).

The Government also announced a second three-month gun buy-back scheme that will take place between February and May 2021 (Small and Fleming 2021). While New Zealand does not have the death penalty as a form of punishment, the white supremacist who committed the Christchurch terrorist shooting became the first person in New Zealand to be convicted of terrorism and to be sentenced to life in prison without parole (Gillespie 2020). Additionally, the Government has undertaken an extensive consultation and outreach process, provided better

trauma support for the victims, initiated an international fight against online extremism through the Christchurch Call (an action plan initiated by New Zealand and France in May 2019 that brings together countries and tech companies to stamp out terrorist and violent extremist content online), and worked on a new strategy with police to protect people in crowded places (Gillespie 2021). However, despite such a strong response from the New Zealand government, as detailed below, white supremacy is still present in the country (Gilbert and Elley 2020; Spoonley 2020; Arkilic 2020a) and far-right fringe parties are entering into New Zealand politics like never before (O'Brien 2020). In comparing attitudes towards Muslims with attitudes towards other religious groups in New Zealand, including Hindus, Buddhists Christians, Jews, and Atheists, scholars have also identified that there is substantially greater perceived threat and negativity towards Muslims compared with other groups and that, in particular, older people, Pākehā (New Zealanders of European descent), and those with a more right-wing stance report greater threat and negativity towards Muslims (Greaves et al. 2020).

Islam is one of the fastest-growing religions in New Zealand (Onnudottir et al. 2013; Drury 2016; Arkilic 2020b). This is a concern for some xenophobic groups. A short visit by a French ship to Northland brought the first Muslims, two Indian sailors, to New Zealand in 1769 (Drury 2015). The 1874 census recorded 17 'Mahometans', as Muslims were then referred to, most of whom were Chinese immigrants. By 1966, 551 Muslims from different parts of the world had been living in New Zealand (Pratt 2010). The population of Muslims has increased exponentially over the past decades. While there were about 6,000 Muslims in 1991, their numbers reached 46,146 in 2013 (Foroutan 2017). According to the 2018 census, the Muslim population stands at 60,621 and forms the third largest religious group in New Zealand (Statistics New Zealand 2018). This is a striking rise given that, across the same time frame, the number of people identifying with Christianity fell by 10 per cent and the percentage of people who identified as having 'no religion' rose by around 6 per cent (Statistics New Zealand 2013; Statistics New Zealand 2018).

While early immigrants formed the majority of the country's Muslim community, both Pākehā and Māori converts have been identified from the 1960s onwards and started to take part in the Muslim organisational life since the 1970s (Drury 2016). In the early 2000s, there were between 300-500 converts across the country, many of whom chose Islam due to marriage or other close personal contact with Muslims (Kolig 2003; Shepard 2006). There is no official data on the current number of converts. However, the 2018 census shows that there are 39,996 Asian; 15,780 Middle Eastern/Latin American/African; 3,693 European; 1,536 Pasifika; and 1,116 Māori Muslims in the country (Statistics New Zealand 2018). Islam has become a popular religion particularly among Māori. Māori Muslims form a small yet growing community given that the number of Muslims of Māori ethnicity was only 99 in 1991 (Keber 2003). Islam's appeal to New Zealanders has increased after the Christchurch attacks. According to the International Muslim Association of New Zealand, after the fatal event, three to five people a day were converting at a Wellington mosque (Hart 2019). The mosque shooting also encouraged some prominent Muslims to run for elections for the first time. For example, in 2019, the Imam of the Al-Noor Mosque, Gamal Fouda, and a well-known Muslim community advocate, Zahra Hussaini, both affiliated with the Labour Party, stood in Christchurch's city council and community board elections, a decision motivated by the March 15 shooting spree (Foon 2019). Finally, while until the Christchurch terror attack, news stories on Islam and Muslims in the New Zealand media tended to replicate 'the negative othering rhetoric' of Western media, after 15

March 2019, the New Zealand press has embraced a more inclusive and positive narrative with respect to Islam and Muslims (Rahman 2020).

Yet Muslim representatives suggest that the threat of white supremacist violence has risen after the Christchurch attacks. For example, Ikhlaq Kashkari, the head of the New Zealand Muslim Association, reported shortly after the first anniversary of the mass murder that: 'We're constantly getting messages of hate ... There was a pause, obviously, after 15 March ... Lately it's got quite bad. I assume it's because of the anniversary'. In a similar vein, Anjum Rahman, the spokesperson of the Islamic Women's Council of New Zealand and the founder of the Inclusive Aotearoa Collective Tāhono, pointed out that the attacks have empowered some extremists. Rahman's messages need to be taken seriously, given that Rahman and her colleagues had met with state officials prior to the Christchurch massacre to voice their concerns over discrimination, increasing levels of hate, and a more organised far-right in New Zealand. A study conducted by the University of Auckland has also found that anti-Muslim hate crimes and Islamophobic abuse have increased dramatically after the March 15 terrorist attacks (Wilson and Shastri 2020).

Security Intelligence Service officials have confirmed that, recently, several young men affiliated with white supremacist, neo-Nazi, and identitarian movements, such as the 'Dominion Movement' and 'Action Zealandia', have been investigated or arrested and that the threat continues (Manch 2020). According to Paul Spoonley (2020), there are approximately 60 to 70 groups and 150 to 300 core right-wing activists in New Zealand. Given the small population of the country, these are not trivial numbers. Experts suggest that New Zealand's terrorist list needs to be expanded. While the list includes international terror groups, such as Al-Shabaab, the IRA, and ISIL Sinai, the only white supremacist on the list is the Christchurch assassin (Scotcher 2021).

As Dr Rawiri Taonui explains, while Muslim immigrants appear to be the main target of xenophobic groups today, white supremacy dates back to the slave trade and European colonisation, which marginalised Māori. Suppression of Māori culture and language, coupled with war and land confiscations, culminated in an inter-generational cycle of poverty; poor housing, education, and health; and incarceration for the Māori community that persists today. Taonui explains that during the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, white racism attacked Chinese, Indian, and Jewish immigrants. Chinese immigrants had to pay a poll tax to enter the country based on their ethnicity via the Chinese Immigrants Act. Chinese and Indian individuals also lacked citizenship rights until 1952. Christchurch, in particular, has been a hotbed for racism. Since the 1960s, New Zealand's second most-populous city has generated more street-level white racist groups than elsewhere in New Zealand. Although it is hard to measure the full extent of white racist violence as New Zealand does not record hate crime data, media stories and various reports indicate that Christchurch is still home to the highest number of racist violence and harassment incidents (Taonui 2019). Yet, as stated above, racism is a problem not just in Christchurch but in all New Zealand communities and provincial towns and that even small white supremacist groups need to be monitored closely (*cited* in Keith 2019).

Jacinda Ardern's landslide victory in the 2020 New Zealand general election is a positive development for the protection of Muslim minority rights and New Zealand's fight against white supremacist terrorism. According to the 2020 General Election results, 82.2 per cent of people enrolled to vote (the highest turnout since 1999) and the final enrolment rate was 94.1 per cent (the highest since 2008). The total number of votes cast was 2,919,086. The Labour Party attracted 50 per cent of the total votes and secured a total of 65 parliamentary seats. This was the

biggest victory for the Labour in the last 50 years, which allowed it to form the first single-party government in decades. The National Party came second with 25.6 per cent of the votes and 33 seats, followed by the Green Party (7.9 per cent, 10 seats), ACT New Zealand (7.6 per cent, 10 seats), and the Māori Party (1.2 per cent, 2 seats) (Electoral Commission 2020).

The 2020 election was characterised by an unprecedented ‘historic shift’ and ‘tilt to the left’, as ‘National Party leaders were decimated in their strongholds by young Labour candidates who appealed to voters with progressive, democratic messages, and highlighted the party’s success in beating coronavirus’ (*Al Jazeera* 2020). There is no data on Muslim voting behaviour in New Zealand. For example, the New Zealand Election Study, which documents political behaviour in New Zealand elections does not provide any information on the Muslim electorate due to the small sample of Muslims. However, one can suggest that, following the national trend, Muslim voters have become increasingly drawn to the Labour Party due to Ardern’s compassionate leadership, effective counter-terrorism measures, and ‘go hard and go early’ approach to the pandemic. In commenting on the election results, the Imam of the Al-Noor Mosque, Gamal Fouda, argued that: ‘It is the policy from Jacinda Ardern and how she was able to handle the pandemic, she was able to keep the country safe. It was also the strong support for the community after March 15, which has led to us being on the world stage. We are leading and we want to continue under this leadership of Jacinda Ardern’ (*Star News* 2020). Fouda now serves on Christchurch City Council’s Riccarton Community Board (Christchurch City Council 2021).

With the 2020 election, New Zealand Parliament has also become more diverse than ever in terms of the representation of international, Indigenous, women, and LGBTQ politicians. Labour MP Ibrahim Omer became the first African and second Muslim MP elected to the Parliament in this election round (Iranian-origin Labour MP Golriz Ghahraman identifies as an agnostic). Omer followed the footsteps of Ashraf Choudhary, who had been elected as the country’s first South Asian and Muslim MP in 2002 (New Zealand Parliament 2011) and had made Parliamentary history by deciding to swear allegiance on the Qur’an instead of the Bible, a move that broke a ‘centuries-old tradition’, according to New Zealand First leader, Winston Peters (*The Times of India* 2002).

In November 2020, the Islamicity Foundation’s Islamicity Index also ranked New Zealand as the ‘most Islamic country in the world’ for the second year in a row based on its adherence to the Islamic principles set forth in the Qur’an, such as integrity, consensus, religious freedoms, human rights, equality, and interest-free finance (Islamicity Foundation 2020). Sweden, Iceland, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Denmark, and Ireland come after New Zealand. The top Muslim-majority country on the list is the United Arab Emirates (ranked #44). According to Hossain Askari, the founder of the Islamicity Foundation, the Index takes the teachings of the Qur’an as its basis and ‘shows which countries would look like a Muslim country that did the things that Islam says you should do’. In his view, New Zealand is more Islamic than Muslim-majority countries because most of them ‘are despicable. There’s no freedom, there’s enormous inequality – look at Saudi Arabia, the inequality there is phenomenal’ (Carroll 2020).

The defeat of New Zealand First, a nationalist and populist party that has previously campaigned on reducing emigration and spread anti-migrant messages was another milestone in the 2020 election. However, the rise of far-right movements and parties across the world continues to be a serious threat for the country because New Zealand’s white supremacist community is closely linked to far-right networks in other countries, facilitated by internet chat

rooms and social media platforms (Cohen 2019). In other words, while we should not underestimate New Zealand's anti-terrorism efforts, it is important to remember that white supremacist violence can only be eradicated with closer surveillance and strong global commitment and collaboration.

### **Media Coverage of the 2020 New Zealand Election in the Muslim World**

The 2020 New Zealand election was covered extensively in the Muslim community. Ahead of the election, Jacinda Ardern was presented as the favourite of the race. For example, Turkey's state-run news agency, *Anadolu Ajansı*, stated that Ardern's 'handling of the COVID-19 situation has pushed up her chances to retain the top executive seat. Besides, her handling of the March 2019 Christchurch tragedy has won her acclaim in the Muslim community' (Ul Khaliq 2020). However, a columnist affiliated with another Turkish state-run news channel, *TRT World*, questioned whether Ardern is 'really the inclusive leader she's been made out to be', citing her 2017 power-sharing agreement with New Zealand First leader Winston Peters, who had previously promoted restrictive immigration policies, complained about an 'Asian invasion', and announced that 'New Zealand has never been a nation of Islamic immigrants' and that 'moderate and militant [Muslims], fit hand and glove everywhere they exist' in the wake of the 2005 London subway bombings. The columnist also criticised 'Ardern's 2017 election campaign, which included a proposal to cut net migration by 20,000 to 30,000 people during its three-year term' (Girijashanker 2019).

In the run-up to the election, *Al Jazeera*, referred to 'Jacindamania' in New Zealand and positioned Ardern as the 'antithesis of Donald Trump'. While also discussing some of Ardern's wrong moves throughout the pandemic and the country's escalating housing crisis, *Al Jazeera* estimated that Ardern was still 'on track' for her second term (Borissenko 2020).

Once her electoral victory was confirmed, Turkish media outlets, such as *Anadolu Ajansı* and *Hürriyet* attributed Ardern's success to her sensible decisions in the aftermath of the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Christchurch shooting. Turkish media also drew attention to Ardern's progressive leadership, young age, motherhood, and special role as the third female prime minister of the country. Furthermore, Ardern was presented as a leader that foregrounds minority perspectives, as evidenced by her use of Māori language, Te Reo, in her electoral victory speech (Aytekin and Sakar 2020; *Hürriyet* 2020) and by her appointment of a female Māori politician, Nanaia Mahuta, as the country's Minister of Foreign Affairs for the first time in New Zealand's history (*Sabah* 2020). Another media channel, *CNN Türk*, echoed these remarks: 'Ardern started her victory speech in the country's Indigenous language ... She is a leader appreciated by her own country and the world. She has become a symbol of peace after she condemned the terrorist attack, made the call to [Islamic] prayer on national television, and wore a headscarf in commemorative ceremonies' (*CNN Türk* 2020).

Journalists from Egypt's most-widely circulated daily newspaper, *Al-Ahram*, similarly extolled Ardern and wrote that 'a new feminine model of political leadership is promising to transform traditional models of power and authority ... with its emphasis on the values of care, empathy and inclusion, and on issues such as equality, climate-change and universal healthcare ... This model might be our only hope for a brighter future for our societies and our planet' (Shehata 2020). Indonesia, which hosts the world's largest Muslim population, covered the election extensively as well. Its daily English-language newspaper, *The Jakarta Post*, published numerous positive news about Ardern's victory and charisma (see, for example, Sands 2020).



According to *Al Jazeera*, the electoral outcome was Ardern's reward for 'a decisive response to COVID-19' and for her 'leadership through a series of extraordinary events that shaped her first three-year term: the gunman's massacre of 51 worshippers at two Christchurch mosques and the eruption of the White Island volcano, which killed 21'. However, it warned that, despite being an international champion of progressive values, such as women's rights and social justice, Ardern is criticised for not being 'transformational' at home. *Al Jazeera* caveated that she might suffer from an economic hangover from the pandemic, economic recession due to severe lockdowns, an exacerbating housing crisis, and growing inequality between the haves and have-nots (*Al Jazeera* 2020).

## **Conclusion**

This chapter discussed the Christchurch shooting and the 2020 election in terms of domestic and international effects. It showed that the country's response to the massacre has been compassionate and effective, as evidenced by Prime Minister Ardern's and the New Zealand society's empathetic response, heightened security, the firearms legislation, and the creation of the Royal Commission of Inquiry into the Terrorist Attack in Christchurch Masjidain on 15 March 2019. The Labour Government has also initiated an extensive consultation and outreach process, provided trauma and financial support for the victims, initiated an international fight against online extremism through the Christchurch Call, and embarked on a new strategy with police to protect people in crowded places. Jacinda Ardern's charismatic leadership and strong counter-terrorism measures have strengthened New Zealand's relations with Muslims both at home and abroad and boosted its international reputation. The Labour Party's landslide victory in the 2020 New Zealand general election is a positive development for the protection of Muslim minority rights as it created the most diverse New Zealand Parliament, which includes the country's second Muslim MP, Ibrahim Omer. The defeat of New Zealand First, a nationalist and populist party that has previously campaigned on reducing emigration and spread anti-migrant messages was another milestone in the 2020 election in terms of Muslim rights. As a careful analysis of media sources shows, Muslim-majority countries in the Middle East and Asia greeted the Labour Party's and Prime Minister's victory in the 2020 elections with joy. However, they noted that the country still faces significant challenges, such as economic slowdown, a worsening housing crisis, and a widening gap between the wealthy and the poor. Most importantly, the threat of white supremacist terrorism still persists in the country and many Muslims continue to be the target of racism, discrimination, and hate speech.

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