



[www.globaled.org.nz](http://www.globaled.org.nz)

GEC WEBSITE HOME

RELEVANT LINKS

## FACT SHEET

# MUSLIMS LIVING IN NEW ZEALAND

Islamic citizens first appeared in the New Zealand Census in 1874. The earliest Muslim migrants were of Indian descent from both Fiji and India.

There are approximately 23,631 Muslims living in New Zealand today and the community is exceptionally diverse. New Zealand Muslims belong to different branches of Islamic faith, participate in a range of observance from moderate to strict and their different cultures have influenced their lives and their views of the world. They have come from many countries around the world and have settled all over New Zealand (predominantly in the cities). There is also an increasing number of New Zealand born Muslims.

### ORIGINS OF NZ MUSLIMS

Asia/Middle East	Africa	Europe	Pacific
Indonesia	Somalia	Turkey	Fiji
Malaysia	Ethiopia	Albania	
Pakistan	Eritrea	Macedonia	
Bangladesh	Egypt	Bosnia	
India		Kosovo (Serbia)	
Brunei		Former Soviet Union	
Lebanon			
Iran			
Iraq			
Palestine			

Many within the Islamic community have come to New Zealand to escape conflict in their home countries or to further their education and find employment. Originally, Muslims immigrated to New Zealand for employment opportunities but many of the more recent arrivals have come to New Zealand under the humanitarian/refugee immigration category. This has lifted the profile of Muslims among the New Zealand population.

New Zealand Muslims have felt the impact of recent world events. For reasons of nationality and dress many are outwardly visible within New Zealand society and feel particularly vulnerable. Many view the reporting of Islamic news in the New Zealand/Western media as extremely biased with emphasis always being placed on fundamentalism and sensationalist stories associated with *shari'a* law.

Muslims cite, as an example, an article that originally appeared in the *UK Times* and was reprinted in the *Dominion* on the 16th October 2001:

'...After centuries the tide of Islam in Afghanistan is reversing the gains of Western civilisation in Central Asia'

Muslims regard this kind of reporting as unproductive, and it presents Islamic culture as backward. Most Muslims within New Zealand regard themselves as moderate, with little support expressed for the policies of such extreme governments such as the *Taliban*.



[www.globaled.org.nz](http://www.globaled.org.nz)

## GEC WEBSITE HOME

## MUSLIMS LIVING IN NEW ZEALAND FACT SHEET

Muslims have found that attitudes within New Zealand can be extreme. Muslims have experienced harassment, physical attack and vandalism of property as a result of people attempting to strike out against anyone who is connected with Islam due to the events of September 11th 2001. Many Muslims believe media coverage is responsible for this backlash against their community. The word Muslim has become associated with terrorism and fundamentalism, as these are the words some mainstream media preface their commentaries with.<sup>1</sup>

In January 2003, several of the New Zealand Muslim communities signed a declaration denouncing all kinds of terrorism and stating clearly that Islam promotes peace and security to all mankind and that they would distance themselves from any acts of terrorism.

The Dominion, October 12th 2001 using a Reuters source, reports of 'the world's 22 most wanted men'. Are they in fact the 'world's' most wanted men or the West/US's most wanted. If a non western state was required to submit a list of 'most wanted' the list would be quite different. That they all happen to have names of Arabic/Middle Eastern origin is indicative of journalistic bias in New Zealand.

In many instances other communities within New Zealand, such as Sikhs, have experienced this negative behaviour as people have targeted them, in the belief that they were Muslims.

New Zealand Muslims, like all New Zealanders, deserve objective, non stereotypical, unbiased reporting aimed at providing information to the people so that informed opinions can be developed.

It is worth noting that today Muslims are integrated throughout New Zealand society and occupy all levels of private and public life. One example of a prominent Muslim, is New Zealand's first Muslim Member for Parliament, Dr. Ashraf Choudhary. Currently a sitting MP with the Labour Government, Choudhary is often called to comment in the media on the more extreme aspects of Islam. He is keen to see New Zealand Muslims become a vital part of the cultural mix that is New Zealand today and he urges moderation amongst Muslims and that there be understanding and tolerance between all cultural groups in society.

### RELEVANT LINKS

[www.fianz.co.nz](http://www.fianz.co.nz)

[www.iman.co.nz](http://www.iman.co.nz)

<sup>1</sup> refer to FIANZ website <http://www/geocities.com/Tokyo/Teahours/8786mnz.htm>