

MENA-based, Far-right and Far-left Extremist Groups: A Date-based Analysis

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Global Network
on Extremism & Technology

This report identifies symbolically significant dates for extremist groups and individuals based in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), for the far right and for the far left. Given the high frequency of terrorist attacks worldwide, identifying useful patterns based on the dates of their past occurrences remains a challenge for developing effective responses and tracking. This report uses Google Trends scores and Nexis Uni data to identify important dates that spike the number of online views and international news items mentioning extremist groups and individuals.



Key dates for MENA-based extremist groups tend to be those associated with the six definitional characteristics of a proto-state: group-based ideology, lethal attacks, territorial control, population control, governance, and capacity to enter into alliances with other states.

Dates associated with the prediction of future attacks for MENA groups are those involving events linked to ideology. Christian holidays, such as Christmas and Easter, are the dates that have attracted the greatest number of high-profile attacks.

Symbolic dates associated with far-left groups mainly addressed issues of governance and population control.

Symbolic dates associated with attention spikes for far-right groups tended to focus on governance, population control, and alliance building. Those associated with far-right lone actors, however, related to lethal attacks based in ideology. Far-right groups are far more likely to link their contemporary events to historically significant dates associated with their cause than far-left groups.

Spikes in global news items mostly focus on dates associated with the activities of MENA-based groups, followed by far-right groups and then far-left groups. In the last five years, online attention spikes have corresponded more with events associated with far-right groups than far-left groups.