Extended Biography for Dr. Mia Bloom

My name is Mia Bloom and I am professor of Communication and Middle East Studies at Georgia State University in Atlanta, Georgia where I am also a fellow at the Evidence Based Cyber Security Program in the Andrew Young School of Policy Studies. In addition to being a professor I am the international security fellow (nonresidential) at the New America Foundation in Washington, DC where my areas of expertise include terrorism and radicalization.

I have bachelor’s degree in History and Middle East Studies (including Islamic studies) from McGill University in Montreal, Canada, a master’s degree in Arab Studies from the Edmund Walsh School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University in Washington, DC and a PhD in Political Science from Columbia University in New York City. My academic training spans comparative politics, the history of the middle east, religious studies, communications and international relations. I have also researched and published on the psychology of terrorism and the process of radicalization.

I have worked in academia as a professor since 1999 and taught at several schools around the United States and Canada including Cornell University, McGill University, University of Georgia, Pennsylvania State University and now at Georgia State University. Over the course of 22 years of teaching, I have been steadily promoted from a visiting professor at Cornell (1999-2001), to an assistant professor at Georgia and Penn State (2004-2010), to an associate professor with tenure (2011-2014), to Full Professor at Georgia State University. There is no academic rank above a Full Professor.

I have taught classes on politics, conflict and war, women’s studies, criminology, international relations, Middle East politics, US Foreign Policy, and communication studies, and graduate seminars on ethnic conflict, gender-based violence, and conspiracy theories. I have also worked individually with students on independent studies classes focusing on terrorists’ use social media, how terrorist organizations exploit encrypted platforms (like Telegram), and how and why Western women were deliberated targeted for recruitment by Jihadi groups to move (emigrate) to Syria and Iraq beginning in 2013 onwards.

My areas of expertise include the larger study of war and political violence ranging from civil war to rape during war, terrorism and repressive state tactics. I am also an expert on gender and violence. I have studied terrorism since 1985 when a bomb was defused in front of me at the central bus station in Tel Aviv and I have devoted my entire academic career to studying all forms of terrorism; comparing how different groups around the world use terrorism and the tactics that terrorist groups employ. I have specialized on suicide terrorism, women and terrorism, and the role of children in terrorist groups since 1999 when I received a MacArthur Fellowship to compare suicide terrorism, rape in war and child soldiers. This led to my publishing books related to each of these subjects.

I completed my first book in 2004 after conducting field research and interviews in Egypt, Sri Lanka, and Israel. I became one of the only scholars exploring the role of women in terrorist movements. This was not an area widely studied (yet) and, beginning in 2005, I started publishing articles on the subject. I focused on how women engaged in terrorist organizations and what kinds of roles and responsibilities they were given depending on the ideology of the group, the location of the conflict, which region, and whether the group permitted women to fight on the front lines or instructed them to merely support the cause online or in other ways. My first publication on the subject was entitled “Mother Daughter Sister Bomber” (2005) and paved the way for more articles, op eds, media interviews, and consulting on this subject until my next book (2011).

In 2009-10 I conducted interviews with women who had been members of terrorist organizations around the world to provide a comparative perspective on how different groups recruited and mobilized women. I interviewed women who been in the Provisional IRA (Irish Republican Army), women who had been in Jihadi groups, and even female former Neo-Nazis. This resulted in my 2011 book *Bombshell: Women and Terrorism* which was published in several countries and translated to foreign languages.

In the days after 9/11, I was asked to work with the New Jersey Office of Counter Terrorism since there were very few terrorism experts before the attacks in 2001. In my capacity as a consultant, I briefed the state troopers and members of law enforcement about Islamic history and traditions and explained the different types of Jihad. I helped the OCT set up a number of outreach initiatives to prevent attacks, and an 800 tips line to encourage community members to call (anonymously) with any information. Several plots were disrupted when members of the NJ Muslim community contacted the tips line to report plots against NJ transit or plots against New York City. I also conducted research on the process of radicalization in prison and compared New Jersey with New York and Pennsylvania. The results of my research were implemented by Senator Charles Schumer (New York) and were made classified by the Bureau of Prisons.

Beginning in 2007, I started winning competitive grants from the US Government to fund my research on terrorism. I was funded by the US Department of Defense and the research arm of the Navy (Office of Naval Research – ONR), to explore a wide range of subjects. These included topics such as online radicalization of men and women, how terrorist groups used social media and encrypted messaging platforms like Telegram, and the impact of de-platforming on the longevity of terrorist organizations. I was tasked over the years with additional projects to explore how terrorist groups recruited, how they funded their activities, and what types of counter messaging worked (and what backfired). These projects included consulting for the CIA, the FBI and foreign governments such as MI5 and MI6. My research generated a new methodology of digital ethnography in which I could monitor what Jihadis discussed online and how they moved from discussions online to real world activities. To conduct this research on Telegram (as is required for any university research) I applied for IRBs (Institutional Review Board) for each project to ensure the research was conducted ethically, safely, and honestly. I pioneered the methodology of using the semi encrypted platform, Telegram to study terrorist organizations (ISIS and Jabhat al Nusra) and briefed US government agencies about online patterns of behavior and the terrorist strategies to sustain user engagement. In other words I examined the “addictive properties” of terrorist social media. My project compared and contrasted Telegram across several different languages, and I published the methodology of how to conduct research online monitoring terrorist channels and chatrooms.

By monitoring both the terrorist channels and the chatrooms, my team was able to detect plots in their infancy and prevent a variety of attacks from ever happening. The project successfully prevented an attack against a club in Toronto, Canada on the anniversary of the Pulse Nightclub attack in Orlando, Florida and prevented attacks against a shopping mall in Australia, several Kosher bakeries in London, and kidnapping plot or threats against children of leaders, for example, Prince George in the UK and Baron Trump in the US.

Per university regulations, I alerted the authorities to a plot that was being planned on Telegram, and shared screen shots of plots with the relevant intelligence agencies. This is part of the academic “duty to warn” that if someone is planning self-harm or to harm others, it has to be reported. My university and research team took great pride when any terrorist plots were disrupted as a result of our research and vigilance monitoring the channels.

This same methodology of digital ethnography and observing the patterns of communication on the social media platforms allowed me to extend my research to US domestic groups and I examined the George Floyd Protests in May 2020. By using the encrypted platforms, I was able to detect that right wing groups like the proud boys and “boogaloo” groups had infiltrated the protests. One of my articles for *Just Security* was entered into the Congressional Record by Jamie Raskin (Maryland) during the policing hearings in June 2020.

To date, I have published 5 books on the subjects of violence or terrorism and one book is in production about the role of women in Jihad in several countries including Syria, Iraq, Somalia, and Nigeria; I have also published around 80 articles, book chapters, and policy pieces for non-academic audiences.

As part of my outreach and public facing engagement, I have given over 350 presentations and talks on radicalization and terrorism to universities, US government agencies, and private industry (e.g. Facebook) including 10 talks to World Affairs Councils around the United States, and three talks to the Council on Foreign Relations in Washington DC and New York City. I have briefed the Pentagon four times, the Department of Defense 20 times, the Department of Justice five times, the Department of Homeland Security five times, the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the National Security Council (NSC), FBI, CIA, the United Nations Security Council, and 10 foreign governments in Europe and Oceania on the subject of online radicalization and returning women and children from Syria and Iraq. I was one of three academics invited to the White House’s Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) Conference in February 2015 to discuss the subject of women and radicalization, with a focus on Western converts who were recruited to the Syrian/ Iraqi Jihad.

I advise the Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism (GIFCT) technical and policy group and the Centre for Research and Evidence on Security Threats (CREST) in the UK. I serve on the advisory committees for the United Nations CTED counter terrorism directorate, the Anti-Defamation League’s expert radicalization board, and I am a member of a non-Governmental organization to empower female led civil service organizations around the world called the Women’s Alliance for Security Leadership (WASL). I serve as a grant reviewer for the United States Navy, Air Force, Army, the National Science Foundation, the UK and Israeli governments, and the MacArthur Foundation. As part of my academic work, I have reviewed over 400 manuscripts for publication. An abbreviated list of the academic journals and presses are available on my resume.

As a result of being one of the original terrorism scholars predating 9/11, I have been interviewed by the news media an average of 80 times a year for the past fifteen years including television news CNN, BBC, Fox News, MSNBC, print media and magazines. I continue to generate new research and offer my analyses to the American public.