



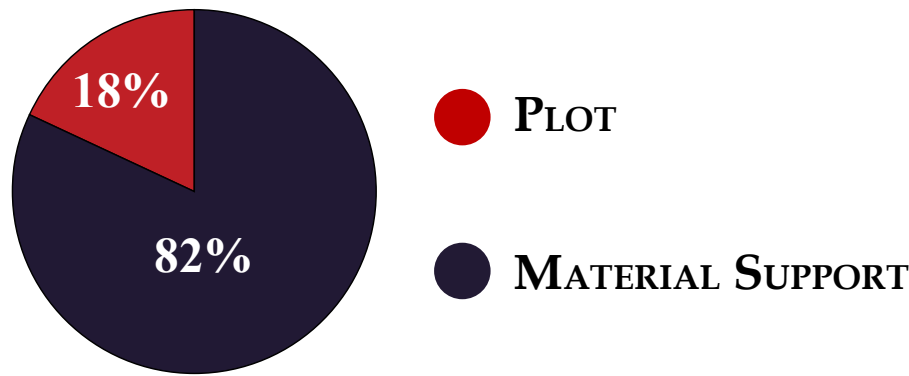
FEMALE HVEs LIKELY TO PLAY SUPPORTIVE ROLE FOR ISIS







ISIS’s female sympathizers in the United States are likely to provide material support as they encourage supporters to conduct attacks on the group’s behalf, fundraise for its operations overseas, and issue threatening rhetoric online. An NJOHSP review of 11 out of 13 incidents highlighted that female homegrown violent extremists (HVEs) supported ISIS, despite recruitment tactics targeting female sympathizers from other foreign terrorist organizations.

- In June, authorities arrested Waheba Issa Dais of Cudahy, Wisconsin, for facilitating recruitment and maintaining a virtual library on how to make bombs, biological weapons, poisons, and suicide vests. Dais attempted to encourage a person she believed to be an ISIS supporter to conduct an attack, providing instructions on how to make Ricin and suggesting targets. In August 2015, Safya Roe Yassin of Buffalo, Missouri, posted the names, residences, and phone numbers of two FBI agents with the words “Wanted to kill” on Twitter.
- Last year, *Isdarat*, an ISIS media platform, requested sympathizers to financially support the site through Bitcoin. In December, authorities arrested Zoobia Shahnaz of Brentwood, New York, for providing material support to ISIS while attempting to join the group in Syria. Shahnaz had laundered over \$85,000 in cryptocurrencies and transferred it overseas to support ISIS.
- In September 2016, authorities arrested Marie Castelli of Maysville, Kentucky, for promoting ISIS propaganda on her social media account under the alias “Jihad Marie Antoinette Castelli.” Castelli posted the names and addresses of US service members and their families, encouraging supporters to execute them. Castelli posted the information to an invite-only Facebook group, claiming the service members killed Anwar al-Aulaqi.

In 2017, ISIS rebranded its message to female supporters, calling upon them to take a more active role on the battlefield and “wage physical jihad” amid the group’s territorial losses.



FEMALE ISIS-INSPIRED HVEs IN THE TRI-STATE REGION, 2015-2017				
				
NAME	Keonna Thomas	Asia Siddiqui	Noelle Velentzas	Zoobia Shahnaz
LOCATION	Philadelphia, Pennsylvania	Queens, New York	Queens, New York	Brentwood, New York
STATUS	Pleaded guilty; Sentenced to eight years	Incarcerated; Trial Ongoing	Incarcerated; Trial Ongoing	Incarcerated; Awaiting trial
INCIDENT DETAILS	In April 2015, authorities arrested Keonna Thomas for providing material support to ISIS. Between August 2013 and April 2015, Thomas used social media to express her support for ISIS, post pro-ISIS messages and propaganda, and communicate with jihadists overseas. Thomas planned to travel from Philadelphia to Turkey to join ISIS and conduct “martyrdom operations.” In April 2015, authorities arrested Asia Siddiqui and Noelle Velentzas for plotting to build a bomb. Between August 2014 and April 2015, Siddiqui and Velentzas researched how to build explosives and collected potential bomb-making materials in order to conduct a terror attack in the United States. In October 2014, Siddiqui and Velentzas referred to themselves as “citizens of the Islamic State” to authorities. On December 12, 2017, authorities arrested Zoobia Shahnaz for defrauding financial institutions and laundering money to support ISIS overseas. Shahnaz obtained over \$85,000 in cryptocurrencies. Shahnaz planned to travel to Syria to join ISIS.			

Additional Resources

- [Homegrown Violent Extremists \(HVEs\) in the US, 2017](#)
- [Homegrown Violent Extremists \(HVEs\) 2018 Terrorism Threat Assessment](#)