

NEW ZEALAND (/NEWS/NATIONAL) / NEW LYNN TERROR ATTACK (/NEWS/NEW-LYNN)

Timeline leading to terrorist's attack in New Lynn

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Sarah Robson (/authors/sarah-robson), Producer of The Detail

[@arahsobson](https://twitter.com/@arahsobson) (<https://twitter.com/@arahsobson>) [✉ sarah.robson@rnz.co.nz](mailto:sarah.robson@rnz.co.nz) (<mailto:sarah.robson@rnz.co.nz>)
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Terrorist Ahamed Aathill Mohamed Samsudeen was on the radar of authorities long before he walked into a New Lynn supermarket, picked up a knife and stabbed several shoppers, leaving some of them critically injured.



Police keep watch outside the Countdown supermarket at LynnMall. Photo: AFP

He was no stranger to the police or the courts - shortly after his frenzied attack began, he was shot dead by a member of the police special tactics group, who had been tasked with keeping him under constant surveillance after he was released from prison.

At the same time, immigration authorities were trying to have Samsudeen stripped of his refugee status and deported - a years-long process that had not yet reached a conclusion.

RNZ traces back Samsudeen's time in New Zealand and his interactions with immigration, police and the courts.

October 2011: Samsudeen, a Tamil Muslim, left Sri Lanka and arrived in New Zealand on a student visa.

November 2011: He sought refugee status.

April 2012: Immigration New Zealand declined Samsudeen's refugee status claim, as it was found to be lacking in credibility. He appealed.

December 2013: Immigration and Protection Tribunal recognises Samsudeen as a refugee.

January 2014: Samsudeen applies for permanent residence. Subsequent police and security checks identified no concerns. He was granted permanent residence in April.

April and May 2016: Samsudeen was formally warned by police about posting objectionable material on the internet. It included videos and pictures of graphic violence, comments advocating violent extremism, and expressions of support for Islamic State terrorist attacks. Despite the warnings, Samsudeen did not stop and used aliases to continue posting similar material. Samsudeen was also on the radar of the Security Intelligence Service.

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May 2017: Samsudeen was arrested at Auckland Airport. Two days earlier, he had purchased a one-way ticket to Malaysia. He had previously told a worshipper at an Auckland mosque that he wanted to go to Syria to fight for Islamic State. When police searched his apartment they found a large hunting knife under a mattress on the floor. They also found secure digital cards containing fundamentalist material including propaganda videos, photographs of him posing with a firearms, and bookmarks to sales of firearms, crossbows, binoculars, military boots and a vest. He was charged and remanded in custody. These are the first set of charges.

August 2017: The Refugee Status Unit in Immigration New Zealand began a review of Samsudeen's refugee status based on information received that he may be a threat to security.

May 2018: Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern makes inquiries about Samsudeen's refugee status and deportation options.

June 1, 2018: Samsudeen was notified his refugee status would be cancelled on the basis of fraud. Authorities believed he had provided fraudulent documentation.

June 29, 2018: Samsudeen pleaded guilty to representative charges of knowingly distributing restricted publications. Police withdrew an offensive weapon charge in relation to his possession of the hunting knife. By that time, he had been held in custody for 13 months - a period that would have exceeded any sentence for the charges he faced. He was granted bail, with conditions around his use of electronic devices and the internet.

July 2018: Samsudeen is granted name suppression by the High Court. Justice Wylie said this was on the grounds his safety would be in danger, if his refugee status was revoked and he was deported to Sri Lanka.

August 7, 2018: Samsudeen searched the internet for camouflaged trousers at Hallensteins, his own name, news stories about his offending and "ISIS allegiance".

August 8, 2018: Samsudeen bought the same model of hunting knife that police had earlier found under his mattress. It had a camouflaged sheath. He arranged for the knife to be delivered to his address.

August 9, 2018: Samsudeen was arrested again. His house was searched. On electronic devices they found he had searched the internet for "enemies of Allah", "hunting knife" and "Islamic State dress". He had also been accessing Islamic State hymns and videos, many of which depicted violent acts. One referred to "how to kill non-Muslims". He was charged by police and remanded in custody. These are the second set of charges.

September 2018: Samsudeen is sentenced on the first set of charges. Given the time he had spent in custody prior to his sentencing, Justice Wylie said he could not be sentenced to a term of imprisonment. Instead, he was sentenced to one year of supervision, with conditions, which both the Crown and defence agreed was appropriate. As part of his conditions, Samsudeen's online activity would have to be monitored and he would be required to attend any directed psychological assessments. However, Samsudeen remained in custody, on remand on the second set of charges.

February 2019: Samsudeen's refugee status is cancelled on the basis of fraud.

April 2019: Samsudeen is served with two deportation liability notices. One related to his criminal offending and the other related to the cancellation of his refugee status. He lodged an appeal over the latter. He could not be deported until that appeal was determined.

July 2020: The High Court rules the Crown cannot lay charges against Samsudeen under the Terrorism Suppression Act. The charge would have alleged Samsudeen, on or about August 9 2018, planned or otherwise prepared to cause death or serious bodily injury. But Justice Downs concluded that was not an offence under the law. "The absence of an offence of planning or preparing a terrorist act ... could be an Achilles heel," Justice Downs said. He directed the Crown to provide a copy of the judgment to the Attorney-General, Solicitor-General and Law Commission.

September 2020: Samsudeen is charged with injuring with reckless disregard and assault with intent to injure, after he attacked two Corrections officers. He pleaded not guilty and was remanded in custody. These are the third set of charges.

May 2021: Samsudeen goes on trial in the High Court at Auckland on the second set of charges. The jury found him guilty on two charges of possessing Islamic State propaganda that promoted terrorism and one charge of failing to comply with a search. He was found not guilty of possession of a knife in a public place and another charge of possession of objectionable material.

July 2021: Samsudeen is sentenced to one year of supervision, with conditions around the monitoring of his online activity and engaging in rehabilitative assessments. By this time, he had spent three years in custody, so a prison sentence could not be imposed. He was then granted bail by the District Court on the third set of charges.

August 2021: Samsudeen's hearing in the Immigration and Protection Tribunal was originally set down for September 13, but on August 26, it was adjourned because of the alert level restrictions and issues with legal representation. No future date had been set.

P. **September 3, 2021:** Samsudeen is shot dead by police after stabbing several people in Countdown LynnMall. Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern labels it a terrorist attack.

September 4, 2021: Suppression orders are lifted by the High Court, meaning Samsudeen's name and details about his immigration status can be published.

