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Palestinian Women Suicide Bombers: The Interplaying Effects of Islam, Nationalism and Honor Culture



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Palestinian Women Suicide Bombers: The Interplaying Effects of Islam, Nationalism and Honor Culture

Maria Alvanou*

INTRODUCTION

In the context of wars and conflicts, women have tended to be classified within the single category “women and children”, as the “vulnerable” victims who suffer under violence with no means of defence. But women are not necessarily always vulnerable and on the contrary they have been actively engaging in many armed conflicts around the world, playing their own part in warring throughout history.¹ In conditions of national struggles and revolutions women enter the arena of public activity, even in societies

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that restrict their participation in the general public and political sphere (Applewhite and Levy, 1990; Moghadam, 1993). Thus, it is not strange that they have played their role also in terrorism and have seized attention,ⁱⁱ because of their prominent contribution in numerous terrorist operations.ⁱⁱⁱ

The female mark in suicide terrorism is no less impressive. One of the distinct features of the “Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam” (LTTE) has been the use of women who have delivered 30% to 40% percent of the group’s suicide attacks and whose ability to appear pregnant was exploited to hide explosives (Coomaraswamy, 2002: 61-64; Filkins, 2000; Dolnik, 2003: 24). One of the most infamous attacks, the suicide operation in 1991 that killed Rajiv Gandhi in India was staged by a woman (Gunaratna, 2000, 2000b, 2000c), as well as another big hit at a rally for Shri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga that cost the life to 23 people and the right eye to the president. The “Partiya Kerkeren Kurdistan” (PKK) used its women to carry out eleven out of fifteen successful suicide attacks against Turkey (Schweitzer, 2000: 82-83).

Women have also played a central role in the Chechen campaign against the Russians.^{iv} The “Black Widows” of Chechnya have been responsible for about half of the suicide bombings in Grozny and Moscow and people spoke of a “Palestinization” of the Chechen struggle (Cronin, 2003:15). The parallelism is not an accidental one or just a figure of speech. The Palestinian-Israeli conflict^v represents an ideal opportunity to study the phenomenon of contemporary female suicide terrorism.

Palestinians – In the West Bank and Gaza Strip – have launched a campaign of suicide attacks as part of their operational tactics since 1993 and especially after the start of the second “Intifada” in September 2000.^{vi} Since January 2002, Palestinian women have heightened their involvement in the conflict by joining the ranks of men who use themselves as human bombs and commit acts of suicide bombings. Arafat's plead: “You are the hope of Palestine. You will liberate your husbands, fathers, and sons from oppression. You will sacrifice the way you, women, have always sacrificed for your family” (Victor, 2003: 20) has been the call for the writing of a special, deadly and bloody chapter in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; the one of Palestinian women's “martyrdom operations”.

This paper is an attempt to explain the involvement of Palestinian women in suicide terrorism through the outlook and tools of criminology. What is unique about this scholarly discipline- and indeed its defining characteristic- is the central question about the causes of crime. If terrorism is perceived as a crime, then any factor that affects or concerns the perpetrator has to be analysed in order to break down the pattern of deviance and deter it adequately (Alvanou, 2006: 17-25). Gender is one of these crucial factors, thus the female participation in suicide terrorism qualifies for special research, since the cultural, social and religious standards in the areas where it happens, put women in a very different position than this of men. They are “special” deviants, not because the operational method of their self-immolation differs from that of men, but because their womanhood plays a key role in the way the whole social environment influences them. It is the specific province of criminology, studying the manifestations of crime and

social control – In relation to law, but also the conditions, processes and implications at the societal level – to contribute in identifying and analysing female suicide attacks. It can offer explanations valuable to the difficult task of counter-terrorism which will be more able to try and combat or modify the special characteristics of this special form of female criminal behaviour.

The problem of suicide “martyrs” is particularly difficult to understand. The perpetrators are willing not merely to risk their lives, but to commit themselves to die for their cause. It is this apparent readiness to sacrifice oneself that makes the threat of suicide terrorism so large and so incomprehensible, as most of us cannot imagine ourselves committing any such act. Suicide bombings seem to epitomize the violence of irrationality. They are a form of an extraordinary self-immolation, an act that operates against the most basic of all human instincts – the one of self preservation. And when women are involved, the issue becomes even more perplexed, taking in account that usually these women – like in the Palestinian case – have been brought up in a cultural environment that dictates their roles as mothers and submissive creatures. We're more used to hearing about mad, bad, ruthless, male terrorists, though their actions as suicide bombers defy our understanding; on the other hand women exploding themselves totally destroy their traditional gender-roles as nurturing and caring.

The big question is, what leads Palestinian women to support and join violent organizations and commit such atrocious acts. Paraphrasing Simon De Beauvoir, Palestinian women suicide bombers are not born; they are made. Their suicide terrorism is a social fact in the Durkheimian sense, and

it ought to “be explained not as an individual psychological aberration but as the product of specific social conditions” (Hage, 2003: 69). Rather than trying to figure out what kind of woman becomes a suicide bomber, it may be more useful to consider the “pull factors” that attracts her in this horror spreading activity. The present paper tries to answer the above question by exploring three key social dimensions and processes in the Palestinian environment that affect women: Religion,^{vii} Nationalism^{viii} and Women’s Honour Culture.^{ix}

Chapter 1

THE PRESENCE OF PALESTINIAN WOMEN IN SUICIDE TERRORISM

Suicide Operations: Female Human Bombs As An Effective Weapon

One cannot but start any talk on the issue of female suicide terrorism with at least a brief description of the operation that seems to spread death and terrify so much. An adequate definition of a suicide attack could be one of an “operational method in which the very act of the attack is dependent upon the death of the perpetrator. The terrorist is fully aware that if she/he does not kill her/himself, the planned attack will not be implemented” (Ganor, 2000). The death of the perpetrator is the key to the success of the attack; and he/she knows in advance that success depends entirely on this death (Schweitzer, 2000).

Suicide attacks increase the likelihood of mass casualties and extensive damage^x that time bombs or remotely controlled explosives can produce, since the bomber can choose the exact circumstances in order to inflict more harm. In this regard the suicide bomber is no more than “a sophisticated bomb-a carrier that brings the explosive device to the right location and detonates it at the right time” (Ganor, 2000), or – as it is often noted – a low tech “smart bomb with a human guidance system”.

Suicide operations entail very low cost and are cost-effective, with the total price of an operation averaging about one hundred and fifty dollars (Hassan,

2001:39). This was the financial estimation of the “electrical components and chemical supplies needed to produce a suicide bomb”, according to an invoice from the Al-Aqsa Brigades Martyrs found during Operation “Defensive Shield” by Israeli troops (Shahar, 2002). Cynically – but realistically – put, as Abu Shanab, a “ Hamas” leader argued “all that is required is a bomb, a detonator, and a moment of courage and courage is the scarce resource” (Stern, 2003: 23).

In the framework of the second Palestinian “Intifada”, women have proved to be a valuable and precious weapon in the fight against Israel. Of course, you see no women members to any of the organizations, secular or religious and not as fighters taking part in the guerrilla. On the other hand, it is not an exaggeration that they are the new “Palestinian human precision bomb” (Jaber, 2002), against the undeniable military supremacy of the Israelis. On the Palestinian streets female suicide bombings are commented as a response weapon to the enemy’s structured armed forces (Toolis, 2003):

The Israelis have women in their army. We do not have F-16s, rockets or tanks. But these girls are our rockets. It's OK for our girls to fight the Jews...

There is a strong utilitarian approach behind the recruitment of women. The infliction of injuries, destruction and human casualties is not the only reason why female suicide attackers are efficient: Women are presented as symbols of “utter despair” themselves. Their use by Palestinian militant groups is designed in addition to embarrass the Israeli regime and show that things are so desperate that women are fighting instead of men. Even more, that even

women can beat them, according to Abu Ahmad, leader of the Al-Aqsa Brigades in Jenin (Stahl, 2004):

The martyrdom operation by Andaleeb Taqatqah is proof of the [al-Aqsa Martyr] Brigade's capability of striking at the [Zionist] entity any time, anywhere.

As said, suicide bombers provide the low-cost, low-technology, low-risk weapon that maximizes target destruction and instils fear. Women are even more effective with their increased accessibility and obviously “it is much easier for women to go through checkpoints” (Al Rantisi in Victor, 2003: 31). Terrorist organizations have increasingly used minors and women to perpetrate suicide attacks by exploiting their innocent appearance.^{xi} Women are seen as arousing less suspicion than men and often the Palestinian women used for the operations disguise themselves, so that they are able to blend in on the Israeli streets. The terrorists tried to give themselves an overall Western appearance by wearing non-traditional clothing such as short clothes, pregnancy outfits and having modern hairstyles. In addition, the search of the female population poses another difficulty, understandable in the closed and conservative settings of the Palestinians: if the Israeli soldiers touch a woman to search her it is an insult to her honor and they will have to find themselves “confronting the whole civilian population over the honor of their women”^{xii}.

Finally, many organizations deliberately are recruiting women for strategic purposes because female suicide bombers receive even more media attention than their male equivalents. Women who kill or threaten to kill are hot news.

It is a reaction that knows no state or religious boundaries” (Reid, 2002: 14). Their media shock value is much higher than this of men, as research has shown that “public perceptions of the level of terrorism in the world appear to be determined not by the level of violence, but rather by the quality of the incidents, the location, and the degree of media coverage” (Alexander and Gleason, 1981: 8). Women also, tend to be seen as desperate figures, sway public opinion and generate sympathy.

For all the above mentioned reasons, the strategy of female “human bomb” continues for the Palestinian organisations. In the early morning hours of June 20, 2005, a 21-year-old Palestinian female suicide bomber arrived at the Erez crossing in the Gaza Strip, wearing extra stockings that contained approximately 20 lbs. of explosives. The female terrorist, who aroused the suspicion of the Israeli security forces, was taken to a security check, during which the explosive stockings were uncovered. She attempted several times to detonate herself at the crossing and- having been unsuccessful- was arrested. Wafa Samir Ibrahim al-Bass, a resident of the Jabalia refugee camp in the northern Gaza Strip, admitted to being affiliated with the “Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades” and to being dispatched by the organization to carry out a suicide bombing attack in an Israeli hospital, with the intention of killing Israeli civilians. A senior figure of the “Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades”, nicknamed Abu Muss'ab warned^{xiii}:

Today's attempt has failed, but the next attempt will be a success and it will make the Israelis tremble.

Wafa Idris: The First “Shaheeda” and the Rest Suicide Attacks Carried Out by Female Perpetrators During the Second “Intifada”

“Martyrdom is a privilege she said softly. We shall be like stars; like the sun. Then in the instant when she rose up it was as if everybody awoke, it became clear to them all that she really meant business, she was going through with it all the way she was holding in her hand the wire that connected all the pins of all the grenades beneath her gown...she pulled the wire anyway...”

Symphony, by Jacqueline Cervantes

On January 27 2002, 27-year old Wafa Idris, a Fatah activist from the al-Amari refugee camp near Ramallah, carried a bomb that detonated in central Jerusalem, killing an 81-year old Israeli and injuring over a hundred more.^{xiv} The “Al-Aqsa Brigades Martyrs” claimed responsibility for this attack.



Wafa Idris, in one of her most circulated photos.

While female suicide bombers have played an important role in many organizations that employ suicide bombings like the “Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam” (LTTE) in Sri Lanka, the “PKK” in Turkey, this was the first female suicide terrorism step in the Palestinian scene of the second “Intifada”. After that hit, on February 18 2002, the Al-Aqsa established a squad of willing female suicide bombers in her honour, named “Shawaq al-Aqsa” (“Those who miss the Al-Aqsa mosque”) (Victor, 2003: 31).

The shocking incident was of such magnitude that initially many speculated that Idris was simply transporting the bomb and that she had not set out to deliberately discharge it herself. Soon stories began to surface about her personal involvement in the Palestinian fighting and more specifically about the way in which she had personally been affected by Israeli “oppression”. More people began to accept the theory that she had intentionally carried out the explosion. “Martyrdom”, the divine reward for giving up one’s life for the benefit of a movement, took on greater significance. This ultimate honour would no longer be reserved exclusively for men but instead was unfastened to include women.

A month after her daughter died, Mabrook Idris honoured her daughter's memory with an empty pine box.^{xv} At least 2,000 Palestinian mourners marched in the streets of Ramallah behind the empty coffin, which was draped with Palestinian flags and pictures of Wafa, chanting and carrying posters of other Palestinian heroes in a display of pride and joy. During the symbolic funeral for Wafa Idris held by the Fatah, one of the council members eulogised her in the following way:



Palestinian schoolgirls holding banners with the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the photo of “Martyr Wafa Idris, their national “heroine”. (Photo: Palestinian Media Watch).

“Wafa's martyrdom restored honour to the national role of the Palestinian woman, sketched the most wonderful pictures of heroism in the long battle for national liberation. Wafa came today to complete the path of the martyr Dalal Al-Maghribi and her comrades...” (Victor, 2003: 54).

The Arabic world hailed the murderous act.^{xvi} While the Iraqi media hastened to report how, Saddam Hussein had ordered a memorial to be erected in Baghdad to honour Idris. In Cairo, an Egyptian film producer named Dr. Amira Abu-Fatuh memorialised Wafa in a television programme broadcast throughout the Arab world and then later in an article entitled “An Oscar Winner”, which appeared in the Egyptian government opposition daily newspaper, Al-Wafd. She wrote:

“This is not a typical film; the heroine is the beautiful and pure Palestinian woman Wafa Idris, full of life. I could find no better than

she, and I could find no film more wonderful than the one that pierces Israel's heart. From Paradise where she is now, she shouts with all her strength the glorification of the dead, enough glorification of the victories of your forefathers, their part - and now it is your turn."

The Arab media were really excessive in their praise with comments like:

"This is the first time a young woman strapped belt of explosives and bits of metal around her waist and blew herself up on Jaffa Road in the heart of the occupied city. Thus she joins the convoys of the martyrs and sets a precedent [or women] to take pride in the history of the Arab and Islamic women"^{xvii}.

"Suddenly out of the darkness came a spark of light and hope in the person of a Palestinian girl, courageous in deeds, not words..."^{xviii}

"Wafa carried her suitcase [of explosives], which is...the most beautiful prize any woman can possibly win. Her spirit was raging, her heart filled with anger and her mind unconvinced by the calls for peace and coexistence...Peace be upon Wafa and the martyrs, men and women, before and after her"^{xix}.

She was compared to Mona Lisa, praised about her "dreamy eyes and the mysterious smile on her lips"^{xx} and even to Jesus Christ:

"Perhaps you were born in the same city, the same neighborhood and in the same house. Perhaps you ate from the same plate or drunk from the same cup, the water flowing through the veins of the holy city and who placed a child in Mary's womb. Perhaps the same holy spirit placed the martyr Wafa and enveloped her pure body with dynamite. From Mary's womb issued this martyr who eliminated oppression while the body of Wafa became shrapnel that eliminated despair and aroused hope"^{xxi}.



The making of a myth: The cover of a book titled “Wafa Idris and other Palestinian Tales” by Muhammad Salmawi, published in Egypt in 2002, highly praising the first female suicide bomber and expressing support to Palestinian suicide bombing attacks against Israel in general (Photo from Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center at the Center for Special Studies, Special Information Bulletin, March 2004).

Wafa's impact was so great in the Palestinian society, that it even initiated a “new breed of womanhood” (Victor, 2003: 34). Men, who continued to define femininity by women’s traditional roles and appearances, have had to reconstruct traditional values and therefore set the standards by which women acquire honour in war (Peteeet, 1991). Femininity- as it used to be perceived- came under attack after the start Wafa made, for women who take an active role in politics and militancy. A Palestinian husband lamented indicatively:

“Our women aren’t women any more; they have become men....even when they go home they are no longer women”.

While in Joseph Conrad's novel "The Secret Agent" an anarchist says:

"I have always dreamed of a band of men absolute in their resolve to discard all scruples...No pity for anything on earth, including themselves...I could never get as many as three such men together",

unfortunately, not just three men, but also 8 more women appeared willing to follow Wafa Idris' footsteps and commit acts of unwanton cruelty.^{xxii}

The second suicide bombing operation by a Palestinian woman occurred on February 27, 2002. Dareen Abu Aysheh, 22-years-old, detonated a bomb at the Israeli Maccabim roadblock in West Ramallah (West Bank), wounding four Israelis. She was a student at Al-Najah University in Nablus, and came from the village of Beit Wazan, in the West Bank. In this incidence, Abu Aeshah left behind a videotape making it clear that she had intentionally carried out this objective—to kill Israelis.

Dareen Abu Aysheh



On March 29, 2002, eighteen-year-old Ayat al-Akhra from Dheisheh refugee camp outside Bethlehem became the third woman to commit suicide by blowing herself up. She detonated a bomb inside a supermarket in the Kyriat

Hayovel area of Jerusalem killing two Israelis and injuring 28 others. The “Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades” claimed responsibility.

Ayat al-Akhras



April 12th, 2002, twenty-year-old Andaleeb Takafka, who preferred to be called Suha, became the fourth woman to commit a kamikaze act with the help of the militant group “Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade”. The girl originated from Bethlehem, detonated a belt full of explosives at a Jerusalem bus stop, killing 6 Israelis, and injuring 104.

Andaleeb Takafka



On May 19 2003, nineteen-year-old Hiba Daraghmeh detonated a belt filled with explosives that was strapped to her waist killing herself and three

Israelis and injuring 93 others outside the Amakim Shopping Mall in the city Afula in northern Israel. Both the “Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade” and the “Palestinian Islamic Jihad” claimed responsibility, indicating that they may have jointly planned the operation.

Hiba Daraghmeh



On October 4, 2003, Hanadi Tayseer Jaradat, a 29 year old attorney from Jenin detonated a bomb in a restaurant in Haifa, Israel killing herself, 19 Israelis and injuring 50 others. Hanadi Tayseer Jaradat wrapped her waist with explosives and fought her way past a security guard at a popular restaurant, in a mission claimed by the “Palestinian Islamic Jihad”.

Hanadi Tayseer Jaradat



On the morning of January 14, 2004 Reem Salih al-Rayashi, a 21 year old mother of two children (ages 1 and 4), detonated a bomb at the Erez border check point between Israel and the Gaza Strip killing four Israeli soldiers and wounding several civilians. This was a joint operation by the “Al-Aqsa Brigades Martyrs” and the “Hamass”.

Reem Salih al-Rayashi



On September 22 2004, Zeinab Abu Salem became the eighth Palestinian woman to carry out a suicide bombing mission. Age 18, she was sent by the “Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades” and blew herself up near a hitch-hiking post in Jerusalem killing two Israeli border police and wounding 17 others. The blast tore through the mainly Jewish district of French Hill in Arab East Jerusalem.

Zeinab Abu Salem



From Shaheed's Mothers to Shaheedas: The Turning Point In Palestinian Organizations

Women's role in societies has customarily been differentiated from this of men. This difference applies also in the environment of war, where society, through its body of rules and its numerous institutions, has conventionally dictated the female roles within the boundaries of militancy. Nationalist movements invite women to participate in the struggle, but they do not challenge the existing cultural code of feminine conduct (Kandiyoti, 1993: 380). It is men who comprise the overwhelming majority of individuals who practice terrorism. In part, this is because of sexist and patriarchal norms that preclude women from militaristic action and limit their public or activist roles. Since many terrorist groups are rooted in diverse religious fundamentalist ideologies, their male leaders often refuse to let women assume men's traditional roles as soldiers, terrorists, Martyrs', or so-called "freedom fighters". Their terrorist actions are often justified as defending a social order that is dependent on women's "purity" and requires the exclusion of women from many facets of public life. Assisting in subordinate and auxiliary roles has always been welcomed and encouraged. Some women support men's militancy in their traditional roles as mothers by nurturing families committed to militarist or terrorist causes (Ibanez, 2001), true to the idea that "the struggle is a man's battle, and women's role is to help by encouraging him and taking care of him" (Peteet, 1991:92). But when it comes to real fighting and taking arms, things are different and women have demanded to be integrated in all aspects of war including this male- privilege front line fighting (Frazier, 2002).

Studies have indicated that during times of conflict women experience the same feelings of nationalism and patriotism that men do. They also experience the identical psychological traumas as well as the same emotions that are inherent to wars. It makes sense that women then will not be satisfied with having to stay within the limited boundaries that society has placed them in during times of war.^{xxiii} As in most national liberation movements, Palestinian women first had to fight for the right to be included as active participants in the struggle (Hamami and Johnson, 1999: 321).

Palestinians have long had a cultural set of rules that markedly define gender roles. The rules have dictated the separation of the sexes and prescribed that women keep to the private space of the home. It is a world in which biology is destiny and a woman is created to bear and rear children as a primary role and most important contribution to society. Their role as fertile mothers and reproducers of the nation marked their utility in the parameter of the conflict as a demographic war. They were entrusted with motherhood (in much more than its biological sense) and the preservation of the nation's identity. The nationalistic discourse defined Palestinian woman in terms of her reproductive capacity thereby making her sexuality and fertility a patriotic and explicitly political issue.^{xxiv} With her womb “nationalized”, she has been called to have as many children as possible because this is her “national duty” (“wajib watani”) (Giacaman, 1989). For Islamist her clear mission is to give birth and educate:

“The Muslim woman has a role in the battle for liberation which is no less than that of the man, for she is the factory of men. Her role is

directing generations and training them in large...The woman in the house of the Mujahid, be she mother or sister, has the most important role in taking care of the home and raising children of ethical character and understanding that comes from Islam, and of training her children to perform their religious obligations in order to prepare them for the Jihadic role that awaits them. From this perspective it is necessary to take care of the schools and curricula that educate the Muslim girl, for her to become a righteous mother aware of her role in the battle for liberation. She must have the necessary awareness in running the home ^{xxv}

Palestinian women have been traditionally charged with passing on the cultural norms and expectations to sons and daughters. When those norms include the use of violence for political ends, women encourage the radicalism and militaristic self-sacrifice that lead to terrorist acts. Women were seen as vital in passing on the Palestinian traditions, instilling political consciousness to the young, with the highest accolade given to the “Mother of the Martyr”, whose “maternal sacrifice” is a supreme political act that translates into respect and prominent community stature. Notably, their roles perpetuating these values are not unique to non-governmental terrorist groups: the values of “feminine sacrifice,” in which mothers give their sons to militarist causes, are promoted by many military policy makers who would loathe being compared with terrorists (Enloe, 2000)^{xxvi}.

The involvement of women in suicide terrorism has had extreme effects on the cultural norms and created incongruity between genders. Though not necessarily with the conscious goal to break down traditional gender roles, the female suicide bombers have nonetheless found themselves challenging customary cultural standards of the Palestinian society (Frazier, 2002). Now

women engaged in this extreme form of combat place themselves in public front lines, alongside men with whom they are not blood related. This has created a double trajectory that militant females must undertake: convincing society of their distinguished contributions to the cause, while at the same time reconstructing normative ideals which will allow them to advance toward their ultimate goal of warring.

In the Palestinian fight the Islamic groups until the self-explosion of Wafa Idris, prohibited the actions and participation of women in such operations^{xxvii} and women were not seen as part of the Jihad. In traditional Palestinian society a woman is under the responsibility of her male relatives. Terror organisations could not recruit women as would-be suicide bombers without transgressing the honour codes that require women to seek permission for every action they take outside the family home. To secretly recruit a woman would be seen as an insult to the family's male honour.

So after the appearance of Wafa Idris, the first female suicide bomber, a serious debate started (Israeli, 2002) about whether they should or should not become "Martyrs". " Hamas" spiritual leader, Sheikh Ahmad Yassin, with a great impact on the Palestinian public, had expressed his reservations with statements like:

"In our Palestinian society, there is a flow of women towards Jihad and martyrdom, exactly like the young men. But the woman has uniqueness. Islam sets some restrictions for her, and if she goes out to wage Jihad and fight, she must be accompanied by a male chaperon"^{xxviii} or "We have no need for suicide operations by

women now because preserving the nation's survival is more important”.

These opinions expressed the strong traditional standards about: how a woman should always be under a man's protection; the reservations because she would have to be absent from her home for more than a day in order for the attack to be prepared; the role of women to have children and strengthen this way the Islamic nation. Yet there were those too eager to see women follow the bloody path of suicide terrorism, as one more weapon to inflict harm upon the enemy. Isma'il Abu Shanab, a “ Hamas” leader in Gaza stated on the subject that “ Jihad against the enemy is an obligation that applies not only to men, but also to women. Islam has never differentiated between men and women on the battlefield”^{xxxix}. Lebanese scholar Muhammad Hussein Fadlullah gave his expert opinion that “ Islam has licensed the woman to fight especially if necessities of a defence war require women's participation in any ordinary military operation or a martyrdom operation”^{xxx} and with him agreed another “ Hamas” leader in the West Bank, Sheikh Hassan Yussef, adding that:

“ A Muslim woman is permitted to wage Jihad and struggle against the occupation. The Prophet would draw lots among the women who wanted to go out to wage Jihad with him. The Prophet always emphasized the woman's right to wage Jihad”^{xxxi}.

Jamila Shanti, heading the Women's Activities Division of the Palestine Islamic Movement, embraced the same line, proclaiming:

“Islam does not prohibit a woman from sacrificing herself to defend her land and her honour. It is she who was attacked, and she has the right to defend herself in any way. It is not puzzling that Muslim sisters have been carrying out heroic operations within Palestine since 1948. On the contrary: It would be strange if the Palestinian woman had not done so, as Jihad is a personal imperative for her and no one can prevent her from waging it, provided... she avoids fitna^{xxxii} which is not on the agenda in martyrdom operations because she is going to her death. Perhaps these activities require the woman to wear a particular garment in order to mislead the enemy, and therefore she may have to relinquish part of her veil when she goes to martyrdom. But there is nothing wrong with this, because the clerics are in consensus that martyrdom operations are the highest level of martyrdom^{xxxiii}”

Hence, in 2003, an important change takes place: female Islamic “Martyrs” make their first appearance on the scene.^{xxxiv} On May 19, Hiba Daraghmeh carried out a suicide bombing attack at the entrance of a shopping mall in Afula and the responsibility for her gesture was claimed both by the “Palestinian Islamic Jihad” and the “Al-Aqsa Martyrs’ Brigades”, with the latter one claiming is the one that receives most credit. It was nevertheless the first time that the “Palestinian Islamic Jihad”, a fundamentalist orientated organization, claimed responsibility for a “martyrdom” operation accomplished by a woman. On October 4 of the same year, Hanadi Tayseer Jaradat, became a “martyr” spreading death in a restaurant in Haifa, the “Maxim”. This time the claim was solely taken by the Palestinian Islamic Jihad and the woman’s religious zeal left no doubt as to the change of operational mind that had taken place amongst the Islamic organizations. This was confirmed by the attack of January 2004, carried out by Reem

Raiyshi, mother of two small children and the first woman to carry out a suicide attack in the name of “ Hamas”.

While the use of women as suicide bombers still poses conflicts with some fundamental religious leaders’ beliefs in Islam,^{xxxv} females serve the tactical need for a stealthier weapon. Saudi Arabia originally refused to legitimize female suicide bombings as martyrdom; however, in August 2001, the High Islamic Council in Saudi Arabia issued a fatwa encouraging Palestinian women to become suicide bombers. Lebanese Muslim cleric Sheikh Mohammed Hussein Fadlallah declared “it is true that Islam has not asked women to carry out “Jihad” (holy war), but it permits them to take part if the necessities dictate that women should carry out regular military operations or suicide operations”.^{xxxvi} The Koran states that “Jihad” can be carried out by women as well as men, but “most contend that women can serve as combatants only after the male ranks have been depleted. This is the demarcation that had kept “ Hamas” from recruiting women” (Harakas, 2002). In January 2004, that demarcation disappeared. From a strategic perspective, the most significant change has been the clergy’s approval of female martyrs. Suicide bombers believe they are martyrs and are told they are the “true defenders of the oppressed and dispossessed” (Howard and Sawyer, 2002: 129). Many experts perceive the problem to be the “blurring of differences and the increased confusion between nationalism and religiosity.”^{xxxvii}

“ Hamas” had in the past referred women volunteering for suicide missions to other organizations like Islamic Jihad. With time, its leadership has come to support such use in the case of women who have “desecrated family

honour.” “ Hamas” spiritual leader Sheik Ahmed Yassin who in January 2002 “categorically renounced the use of women as suicide bombers” and in March 2002 after the second Fatah bombing reported that “ Hamas was far from enthusiastic about the inclusion of women in warfare, for reasons of modesty” was forced to change his mind. He told reporters in the Gaza Strip that the militant group would look to women to step up and fulfil their “obligations”. He defended this change as a “significant evolution in our fight. The male fighters face many obstacles”, so women can more easily reach the targets. He concluded his statement by noting that “Women are like the reserve army-when there is a necessity, we use them”.

According to Israeli television's “Channel Two”, a new theology has emerged about female suicide bombers among some Palestinian Muslim clerics.^{xxxviii} Searching for new ways to resist the security complications, the Palestinians discovered that their women could be an advantage and religiously backed up their use. There was suddenly an answer found even in the practical problems of being un-chaperoned and taking off the veils:

“She is going to die in the cause of Allah and not to show off her beauty”^{xxvix}

But even more, women embracing death with bomb-belts is a strong, prominent and persuasive symbolic gesture. It signifies the extent to which even the most protected and “soft” members of society embody the suffering from the Israeli occupation and how much the whole of the Palestinian community supports the fight:

“Our women are no women who cry or weep. We have martyrdom women now”.^{xl}

A point of special interest in this appearance of Palestinian females in the suicide terrorism scene is the following: though these women with their engagement in terrorist operations had to challenge their gender imposed isolation and lack of confidence (Warnock, 1990) they did not have to abandon their “feminine roles”. On the contrary female activity in suicide terrorism has made use of, rather than overridden, the protection traditionally owed by men to femininity. Women's presumed “innocence” and “weakness” as well as their sacredness as mothers have been utilised in practical and moral field.

Chapter 2

ISLAM: THE RELIGIOUS DIMENSION

Islam, “Martyrdom”, Jihad and Palestinian Organizations

Organizers of violence must align their tactics with cultural norms, symbols and ethics that give moral meaning to acts of violence. Culture provides a “tool kit” of concepts, myths and symbols from which militant organizations can selectively draw to construct strategies of action. Religion, of course, is a primary component of culture. Religious notions of martyrdom and self-sacrifice have inspired violent campaigns in all religious traditions,^{xli} since they are focal points of religiosity itself (Jurgensmeyer, 2001).

Islam is recognised as an important cultural element in the moulding Palestinian identity (Hatina, 2001) and a crucial factor in all aspects of Palestinian life (Gordon and Murad, 2002). Thus, the Palestinian national identity – similar to that of most other Islamic nations – coexists and mixes with the other overarching identity, the Islamic one. Moreover, the Islamist indoctrination activities of “Hamas” and more recently even of the Palestinian Authority have caused a far reaching Islamization of Palestinian society, where Islamist terminology has now become part of mainstream Palestinian discourse. As a result, religious appeals have received greater acceptance and religious symbolisms resonate much more readily than in previous decades. What is immediately relevant is the metamorphosis that has been under way in the ranks of the Palestinian fight. Once embodying

Arab nationalism and a set of ideals fitting into the socialist third world camp, it became more and more islamized (Kepel, 2000).

In the case of Palestinian suicide bombers, terror groups find in Islam a cultural toolkit that allows militants to frame their suicide attacks as a fulfilment of sacred imperatives to fight injustice. Militant groups ingeniously framed their contemporary struggle as part and parcel of the Islamic tradition of “Jihad” and “martyrdom”. Muslim clerics, in particular, have played an important role in ramming popular attitude toward suicide operations and encouraging their followers to carry them out. One may seriously question a cleric’s claims that action “A” will lead to afterlife reward “B”, but this much is sure: no strictly secular system can offer any hope of “B” at all (Iannaccone, 1992). In the market for “martyrs”, a faith-based firm that (credibly) offers immense personal rewards in exchange for death enjoys an obvious *ceteris paribus* advantage over its non-religious competitors.

The terms “suicide bombings” or “suicide attacks” are a Western invention. In Islamic terminology the same operations are called self-chosen “martyrdom”. Paying attention to the semantics of the different vocabulary is not merely academic hair splitting, because the difference between these interpretations reflects the distance between two whole ideologies, schools of thought and worlds. Western secular society finds it hard to comprehend the religious motivation behind suicide attacks, nor the promised salvation that Islam offers through them.^{xlii} To our logic, “the fear of death must be

present behind all our normal functioning, in order for the organism to be armed toward self-preservation” (Becker, 1976: 35).

The act of self-annihilation fused with the premeditated death of bystanders is described not as terrorism or suicide (“Intihar”), but rather as “Istishad” (“self-chosen martyrdom”), a permissible act of violence necessitated by the political circumstances of the occupation, and justified through the transcendent, religious discourses of “Jihad” (Jurgensmeyer, 2001:74). It is the act of sacrificing one’s own life for the sanctification of Allah and Islam and in its contemporary meaning, in connection with the Palestinian “Intifada”, it refers to dying while carrying out a terrorist attack, and in particular a suicide attack, against Israel. The exploding individual is thus called “Shaheed” (pl: Shuhada) meaning a martyr who died for his faith, sacrificed his life for the sanctification of Allah and Islam. Martyrdom demonstrates the legitimacy and authenticity of the cause as its truth is established by the individual's willingness to sacrifice everything in its behalf (Crenshaw, 2000)^{xliii} and the bravery of those who are not afraid of death opposed to their enemies who are cowards (Paz, 2000).

“Martyrdom” is connected with the notion of “Jihad”, which is the duty to struggle. “Jihad” is actually the one Islamic tenet that has been the subject of much interpretation and controversy and carries two crucial meanings that refer to the two fundamental struggles of the Muslim. “Jihad al nafs” is often described as “the struggle for one’s soul against one’s own base instinct”, a struggle that a Muslim undertakes to purify the soul from mundane desires, defects and egotism (Palazzi, 2001) an explanation that has been rejected by

Islamists as heretical. “Jihad bi al saif” is the military struggle, the “holy war by means of the sword”. According to Islamists, the military fight against the non-believers is the real, the “Greater Jihad” as “God's justice will prevail only in Jihad and in blood and in corpses”.^{xliv} To support their claims, they invoke only those Qur’anic sections that equate warfare with the duty of the faithful Muslim and the Islamic nation “to open the gates of Jihad, where its strength and honour lie.”^{xlv} Islamist radicalism has bred a mentality of “bello ergo sum” (“I fight, therefore I exist”). These concepts, carried to their extreme conclusion by the radicals have deep roots in mainstream belief, since the foundation of Islam is the “Armed Prophet”.

While the “five pillars of Islam” (declaration of the faith, prayer, fasting, pilgrimage and paying the zakat-tax) are personal obligations for the believer, “Jihad” is a collective obligation, incumbent upon the entire Islamic nation. It becomes a personal obligation (“Fard 'ayn”) though, when non-Muslims attack Muslims or invade a Muslim country. As “Hamás” puts it:

“When our enemies usurp our Islamic lands, Jihad becomes a duty binding on all Muslims. In order to face the usurpation of Palestine by the Jews, we have no escape from raising the banner of Jihad. This would require the propagation of Islamic consciousness among the masses on all local, Arab and Islamic levels. We must spread the spirit of Jihad among the Islamic umma, clash with the enemies and join the ranks of Jihad fighters”.^{xlvi}

Palestine is at the focus of the religious-historic confrontation between the Muslims and their eternal enemies, the Jews. It contains “Baitul-Maqdis”,

the holiest place in Islam outside the “Hijaz” and where both “Al-Masjid Al-Aqsa” and the “Dome of Rock” are built.^{xlvii} It is not only Jerusalem as the third sacred place after Mecca and Medina, but the whole region that serves as an important geopolitical axis that links three continents and constitutes the “Muslims most important homeland”. In the Islamic tradition, Palestine is the “Holy Land” (“Al-Ard Al-Muqaddasa”) and this goes back to the verse in Surat al-Isra, where Moses tells his people: “Oh people enter the Holy Land” (“Ya qawm, udkhulu al-ard al muqaddasa”) (Gerber, 2003:26). As Islam is a territorial religion, land once occupied by Islamic people, is irrevocably Islamic. Since the “Holy Land” has been occupied by Islamic people, the state of Israel must never be allowed to remain on “Islamic land”.

The Israeli “occupation” of Palestine induces a sense of shame, because “infidels” controlling the Holy Land are an unacceptable situation.^{xlviii} Indeed this notion of “Holy Land” is even more important than the geographical term Palestine.^{xlix} Even with limited recourses the Palestinian Muslims who are sound in spirit and body (“Fard'ayn”) are compelled to wage the “Jihad” against Israel who directly occupies their land and threatens to destroy their Islamic identity (Hatina, 2001)¹ “Jihad” is actually the point where religion mixes and meets with nationalism, where it is a divine duty to fight for a national territory and “the zenith of honour for a man, a young person, boy or girl, to be prepared to sacrifice his life in order to serve the interests of his country and his religion” (Khamenei, 2002.).

Some scholars have said that it is important to distinguish whether the nature of the Palestinian organizations engaged in suicide terror is religious or

nationalistic and secular. One- they argue- does not see atheists rushing into a crowd and blowing themselves up along with innocent bystanders in protest. Religiously oriented groups are supposed to be more complicated and dangerous. Their ultimate goal includes the spread of a religious holy war to end evil (as interpreted by them), or the pursuit of some heavenly millenarian reward. Additionally it would appear to be easier for religious groups to mobilize operatives to commit suicidal violence, than it would for secular nationalistic groups.^{li} In short, religious groups are supposed to be far more lethal than their secular counter-parts, regarding violence as a divine duty or sacramental act (Hoffman, 1995).

This attempt to distinguish and categorize organizations according to their relationship with religion and metaphysical beliefs, may be of utility when researching the identity and activity of terrorist groups in the West,^{lii} but it may not be appropriate for groups operating in a society like the Palestinian one after its recent increased islamization. In Arab countries, communities and societies, Islam is more than an official religion, a faith that one observes or not. It is a cultural feature deeply rooted, inherent to all members, difficult to abolish and- above all- a point of reference to unite people against the “infidel” enemy.^{liii} No group would enjoy the support of the Palestinian public- necessary for its existence and operations- by declaring openly its distance from Islam or opposing the Muslim principles. This would really mean that the terrorist organization is the one committing suicide! As a result, what we call secular in the West is not comparable to Palestinian secular groups that are allowed – or even maybe forced by the

special circumstances of the environment- to employ Islamic rhetoric and religious cloth for its operations.

Islamist groups and radical secular groups alike are consistent in using the terms “Shaheed” (“martyr”) and “Istishhad” (“martyrdom”). When referring to their suicide attackers and suicide attacks, respectively, since ordinary suicide (“Intihar”), i.e. suicide caused by personal distress, is expressly forbidden in Islam. Although Palestinian terrorist organizations operate according to a strategic logic, they are tied to a cultural system of “martyrdom” that supports their strategy of suicide bombings and they spend a great deal of energy reinforcing this cultural system to ensure continued popular support and a stream of volunteers. “Martyrdom”, “while for the religious groups it is a strategy, for the secular groups it is a tactic”. Plus, generally we do need to be sceptical about the role of ideological preferences concerning the terrorist organizations in general.^{liv} At best, these preferences are only soft constraints for terrorist organizations, little more than rhetorical devices used to prevent the loss of supporters. Ideologies and beliefs often offer ample room for ex – post rationalization.

The videos and the pictures released after the attacks, evidence of the blood covenant made before between the ‘martyr’ and the organisation reinforce the above argument. Despite the non Islamic character of the group and no matter the previous history of the woman or man (whether she or he was an observant Muslim or not) there is always a religious dimension in the presentation of the “martyr”, the same as done by Islamic groups.^{lv}

Islamization of the Female Involvement in Suicide Terrorism

Though according to Prophet Mohammed “the best Jihad for women is performing a valid pilgrimage” (Palazzi, 2001: 26), women along with all Muslims have the right and the duty to participate in suicide bombings in order to destroy the enemy and bring an Islamic state to all of Palestine:

“Exactly when there is an invasion to the holy land “a Muslim woman is permitted to age Jihad and struggle against the enemy...the Prophet would draw lots among the women who wanted to go out with him to make Jihad. The Prophet always emphasized the woman's right to wage Jihad” (Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, in Victor, 2003: 113)

Now radicalized young Muslim women, particularly those who have lost relatives in the “Intifada”, want to be more closely involved with the armed struggle (Beaumont, 2002). The numerous duties of women and girls in the present conflict and “Jihad” are demonstrated by examples from Arab and Islamic history. These include Asmaa, the daughter of the first “Khalifa” (“Calif”), Abu Bakr, who succeeded the Prophet Muhammad. According to Muslim tradition, Asmaa helped the Prophet Muhammad in his battles by providing him with supplies and by informing him about the enemies, thereby making a great contribution to the war against the “infidels”. Her example sets a model for Palestinian schoolgirls, as the textbooks teaching them pose a direct and compelling question:

“Asmaa, the daughter of Abu Bakr [the first Calif to succeed the Prophet Muhammad], was my age when she took part [in the struggle] by supplying the prophet Muhammad and his companion with provisions, water, food, and information about [his opponents in

the tribe of] Quraish, after their secret migration from Madina to Mecca. What role can I play in support of the national resistance movement against the occupier and the imperialist?''^{lvi}

What are promised to them are the same benefits, the same heavenly bliss as a reward, but with some modifications. For example, they are not awarded with a flock of virgin men to be amused. In their case, if the woman is unmarried, she will be wed to a “Shaheed” or a righteous man. If she was married, she will live in eternity in Heaven along with her husband. In case she has been divorced, she can choose the man she loves best. They become “even more beautiful than the seventy-two virgins...if they are not married they are guaranteed a pure husband in Paradise and of course they are entitled to bring seventy of their relatives to join them there without the anguish of the grave”.^{lvii}

The videos and photos of the Palestinian women who blew themselves up narrate in the best way the relationship between the suicide operation and Islam, as one photo speaks for a thousand words. The female is holding the Quoran, wearing the “Hijab” (scarf-veil) and the green headband with “Allah Akbar” written on it, often citing Islamic verses. She is not just a militant, a member of an organization (“secular” or religious radical) fighting and trying to liberate her land and injure the occupier; she is more than that: she is a “martyr”, hoping and waiting for her “sacrifice” to be accepted and rewarded by heaven.

Apart from the videos and photos left behind, there are additional evidence about the role of Islam and religious indoctrination behind their willingness

to explode themselves and kill other people, Israelis. In the house of Wafa Idris, among her personal stuff, there is a photo of her wearing a black and white chequered keffiyeh, the symbol of the Fatah organisation. Though of a “secular” group and before the debate and legitimization of female “martyrs”, the green bandanna is worn around her head, on it was written “Allah Akhbar” (“God is greater than all other gods”). Marbrook Idris, the mother of Wafa, finds meaning in her daughter's death since the cry of the suicide bombers as they attack is “Allah Akbar”. Wafa being a Muslim “made her fearless” and did an action that defends the true One God (Victor, 2003).

Darine was a devout Muslim. In December 2001, she had entered a literary competition with other women students majoring in English literature from all over the Arab world. The theme was what it meant being a woman in a Muslim society. Though she did not win, it is interesting what she wrote, since it was reprinted in a leaflet that was passed out in schools and universities throughout the West Bank and Gaza:

“I am a Muslim woman who believes her body belongs to her alone, which means that how I look should not play a role in who I am or what response I evoke from people who met me. Wearing the hijab gives me freedom, because my physical appearance is not an issue. True equality means women don't have to display themselves to get attention” (Victor, 2003: 106).

As the close circle of women who took classes with her at Al-Najah University argue, the debate and the “fatwa” allowing women played a significant role in the decision of Darine:

“Because she took the Koran very literally, she accepted the new ruling for women...and she trusted the religious leaders to interpret the Koran correctly” (Victor, 2003: 109).

According to her mother, Hanadi Jaradat had started taking home tapes of the Qur’an to listen to at night. Her brother was also an “Islamic Jihad” member, whose pictures of him holding on one hand the Qur’an plastered the city walls of Jenin. In her video she is modestly dressed in a tight-fitting white headscarf giving a testimony:

“By the will of God I decided to be the sixth martyr who makes her body full with splinters in order to enter every Zionist heart who occupied our country. We are not the only ones who will taste death from their occupation. As they sow so will they reap.”

Her mother resorts also to religious Islamic language talking for her daughter:

“I pray to God to bless her. May God accept them all, Fardi, Salah and Hanadi as martyrs” (Toolis, 2003).

The “last will and testament” that Hanadi Jaradat left is a clear evidence of her faith in “martyrdom” and the promise in afterlife:

“In the name of Allah the Merciful and Compassionate, prayer and peace be upon the master of mankind, our master Muhammad, may Allah pray for him and give him peace. The Exalted One said [in the Koran]:”Do not consider those who died for the cause of Allah as dead, rather as alive, sustained at the presence of their Lord” [Koran 3:169]. Verily, Allah's words are true. Dear family, whom the Lord of the world will reward as He promised us all in His Holy Book [in the

words], "Give glad tidings to those who persevere" [Koran 2:155]. Indeed, Allah promised Paradise to those who persevere in all that He has brought upon them-and what a good dwelling Paradise is. Therefore, reckon my sacrifice in anticipation of the reward of Allah, praised and exalted be He, today and in the Hereafter. I should not be too valuable to sacrifice myself for the religion of Allah. I have always believed in what is said in the Holy Koran, and I have been yearning for the rivers of paradise and I have been yearning to see the glorious light of Allah's face. I have been yearning for all this ever since Allah bestowed guidance upon me"

The expression "reckon my sacrifice in anticipation of the reward of Allah" recurs four times, addressing her family, her loved ones, her father and her mother. The woman was certain of the Islamic doctrine about martyrdom, "Jihad", salvation and afterlife. She saw her death as a happy occasion, a passage to the true life, gift of Allah. Indeed after the death of the shahid there is a celebration instead of mourning and mothers' utter cries of joy and sweets are distributed to visitors, like as if a wedding, a happy occasion took place. Handling suicide bombers' deaths as 'martyr's weddings are truly common in Muslim tradition, and are not confined to Palestinian suicide bombers. "Bride of Blood" San'ah Muheidli, who drove her yellow Mercedes into an Israeli military convoy in southern Lebanon on April 9, 1985, instructed her mother in a videotape:

"Be merry, to let your joy explode as if it were my wedding day"
(Taheri, 1987: 128).^{lviii}

The following example is also indicative: In her traditional pre-suicide videotape testimonial, Raiyishi, holding an AK-47 assault rifle- almost as big as she was- and wearing the green " Hamas" sash, said she long wanted

‘the honour’ of being a suicide bomber and was proud to be the first female “‘ Hamas martyr”. Her words speak of the Godly deed and against the Zionists:

“By God, my heart is full of many mixed feelings that I cannot control as though a thought is filling my mind, and living in my heart, a pleasant dream is gripping my body, and the beats of my heart say: ‘God, make me a martyr for your sake’. I have always wished, and went too far in wishing, that my body would be shrapnel that tears the sons of Zion, and I have always wished to knock at the door of heaven with the skulls of the sons of Zion. By God, if you break my bones and cut off my body, you will not be able to change my faith or change my banner. This is my conviction...I began to try to do my utmost after the second preparatory grade. I searched on a daily and continuous basis in the hope of finding someone who would guide or help me in anything. By God, my search continued for years, but I did not feel bored even for one second or retreat in my mind. It was hard for me to find someone who would satisfy my desire; namely, martyrdom. I have always dreamt and wished to carry out a martyrdom-seeking operation inside Israel, but did not manage. I have always dreamt of sacrificing myself for the sake of God Almighty. By God, I wished to be the first female who carried out a martyrdom-seeking operation where my body would be scattered in the air. This was my most wanted wish that I asked God Almighty to fulfil. Through strong persistence and by God's favour, my wish was fulfilled in the manner I wantedlix.

The “Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade” released a videotape of Andaleeb Takafka (Suha) where she also employs religious meaning in her terrifying act:

“I am prepared to sacrifice my life for the cause. This (bombing mission) is the highest level of Jihad (holy war), and I hope God will give me the honour of doing it.”

Hiba, after her tragic rape as a teenager, became religious:

“More and more she became religious. More and more, she read the Koran.” (Victor, 2003: 297).

*“At 15, she wore the Jelbab. At 16, she wore the veil
“Any time the radio or TV played a love song, she turned it off...She used to pray for two hours, standing, stooping and kneeling in devotion...She spent most of her free time reading the Koran”* (Ghazali, 2003).

In the 10th grade, she began veiling herself and she would hide behind a closed door or go to an aunt's house so that men would not see her face as she ate. She was known as a member of the Islamic Bloc of “ Hamas” and “Islamic Jihad”, participating in a campaign promoting “Jihad”.^{lx}

Ayat Akras, though of “secular Al-Aqsa”, explained on a videocassette that her suicide mission was an act in defence of both the mosque of “al-Aqsa” and of Palestine (Margalit, 2003).

Cases of “martyrs to be” show again a religious dimension in their actions: Ahrin Ahmed purified and prayed before proceeding with the planned deadly operation and was lured with the promise: “you will be reunited with him [her dead boyfriend]. You will be with him in Paradise”^{lxii} Wafa al-Bass pointed out that ever since she was a little girl, her dream had been, and still was, to be a shahid (“martyr”) and die for Allah's sake^{lxii}.

Chapter 3

THE NATIONALISTIC PERSPECTIVE OF VIOLENCE

SOCIALIZATION

Culture of Martyrdom Culture of Martyrdom

Virtually all societies engaged in armed struggle honour those who die as part of it. What is wrong, however, is to equate individuals who are victims of attacks or who have carried out attacks that are permissible under international humanitarian law with individuals who die while committing terrorism, war crimes or crimes against humanity.

An obvious social phenomenon is the support that the ‘volunteers for martyrdom’ receive among the Palestinian population. In the summer of 2001, popular support for suicide bombings among Palestinians reached an all-time high, with over seventy percent of Palestinians expressing their support for such attacks, according to a poll conducted by the Palestinian Center for Public Opinion.^{lxiii} Towards the end of that year, support for suicide bombings dropped somewhat, but still layed over sixty percent.^{lxiv}

Palestinian political leaders have made statements that appear to endorse attacks against civilians, both within the Occupied Territories and externally. These cross the range from ambiguity to outright support and undermine other statements condemning attacks against civilians. It should be taken in account also that the usual condemnations of suicide attacks have been phrased approximately in the following manner:

“We condemn all attacks against civilians, whether they are Israeli or Palestinian civilians. We call upon Israel and the international community to put an end to the conditions that breed violence against civilians.”

This manner of “condemning” attacks was widely understood by the Palestinian public as “mere diplomatic talk” to placate international pressure and may served to actually justify suicide bombings by implying that they were directly linked to “conditions” that forced people to blow themselves up. Moreover, political leaders such as late President Arafat have repeatedly praised “martyrs”, without distinguishing between those who die as victims of attacks or while attacking military targets and those who intentionally die in the course of a deliberate attack against civilians.

When news of a successful suicide strike is broadcasted, candy is distributed in the streets and women respond with traditional cries of joy (Hoffman and McCormick, 2004). The deaths are celebrated as “marriages” in Heaven and their wedding announcement are further evidence of the fundamental recalibration of Palestinian values that have been engineered by Palestinian organizations (Lelyveld, 2001). The Palestinian quest for independence and statehood through martyrdom is referred to as the Palestinian wedding in a poem by Mahmoud Darwish, “Blessed Be That Which Has Not Come”:

*“This is the wedding without an end,
In a boundless courtyard,
On an endless night,
This is the Palestinian wedding:*

Never will lover reach lover

Except as martyr or fugitive" (Azar, 1991:93).

In fact, 'martyrdom operations' have long reached the status of a pop culture in Gaza and the West Bank. "Martyrs" and the details of their missions are glorified and immortalized in various forms with also calendars cropping up in Palestinian neighbourhoods with the martyr of the month (Hassan, 2001, 39). An-Najah University in the city of Nablus, for example, marked the first anniversary of the beginning of the second "Intifada" by sponsoring an exhibition on "martyrdom operations" entitled "The Sbarro Cafe Exhibition" that featured re-enactments of suicide bombings celebrating the suicide bombing of the "Sbarro" pizza-restaurant in Jerusalem, on August 9 2001, which killed 15 people and wounded dozens more (Daraghme, 2001). Streets are being renamed after those who have sacrificed themselves for the cause and memorials have been erected to commemorate their passing (Hoffman and McCormick, 2004). According to most terrorism experts, this "cult" of the suicide bomber is among the most important reasons why there seems to be a steady flow of Palestinians willing to die.

The martyrs have reached a status of holiness in the eyes of the people. They are viewed as "superheroes"^{lxv}. After the "martyrs" death, their families are showered not only with honour, but receive substantial financial rewards too (Ganor, 2000). Even the material rewards offered by people's support^{lxvi} and sponsor organizations can be seen primarily as signals to society about the importance and recognition of suicide bombers. "Hamas" offers the martyrs' families free education and healthcare and a monthly stipend of \$300-600.

This has been supplemented by one-time payouts sent by Arabs outside the territories, including former Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein, who used to offer \$20,000 prior to the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 (this was increased from \$10,000). While it is doubtful whether bombers choose to die for money,^{lxvii} the monetary rewards are a signal the importance of the act by assigning monetary compensation. It is thus only one among a variety of different elements that create a general societal belief that martyrdom is something for which to strive. Also it is important that the recruits are reassured by the organizations that their families will be looked after materially, after they die and there are charitable organizations that exist for this purpose (Milner, 2001).

Almost before the victims of a terror bombing are even buried, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip are plastered with gaudy montages of the latest poster boys and girls of the “Intifada”. Part propaganda, part cliché and part macabre artwork, each poster commemorates those killed in the most recent Palestinian uprising, with standard across the top always a few verses from the Qur’an vowing to continue the struggle. Some incorporate digital news images into the poster of shattered baby buggies, ambulances and the gathering of fragmentary body parts from a bombed-out restaurant turned human slaughterhouse. These savage documents are pornography of violence, gloating in the suffering their subject has inflicted.

Another key notion behind “martyrdom” popularity appears to be “social contagion”: Ordinary suicide has been shown to spread through social contagion especially among youth. Studies have shown that a teenager

whose friend or relative commits suicide is more likely to commit suicide himself. Major is the influence in the social environment of the youth^{lxviii} and theories of group dynamics seem particularly pertinent in this subject. Many Palestinian youngsters seem particularly susceptible to peer-pressure manifested by the cult of the suicide bomber as described above and this is of great importance as in many cases the friend or an acquaintance of somebody belonging to a group is recruited^{lxix}.

In Gaza, “martyrdom operations” are part of the popular youth culture. For example, on the streets of Gaza, children play a game called “Shuhada” (martyrs), which includes a mock funeral for a suicide bomber. The details of the deadly attacks are re-enacted in school playgrounds and on the streets to both honour the shahid’s memory and encourage others to follow their footsteps (Hoffman and McCormick, 2004). Teenage rock groups sing songs praising the latest martyrdom operation and during the 1990s, there was even a teenage rock band known as “The Martyrs” who sang about the latest suicide bombers (Kushner, 1996: 334). Asked to name their heroes, young Palestinians are likely to include suicide bombers (Stern, 2003: 52-53) and decorate their bedrooms with their pictures rather than of the latest teenage heartthrob or action hero. They even write the names of “martyrs” on their arms like tattoos (Jordan, 2002), they trade pictures of suicide bombers like baseball cards (Kushner, 1996: 334) and fifth and sixth graders read poems about them. Youngsters spray paint images that are horrendous, of buses being exploded. The “martyrs” have become murals on walls, lines in textbooks, songs sang by children, and the talk of the day by women in the markets.

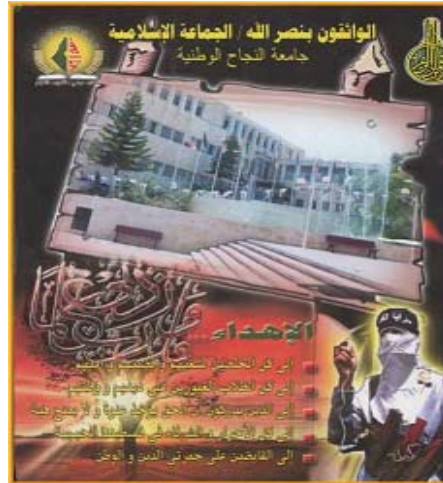


A Palestinian mother strapping fake explosives around her child's waist, masquerading it in a death costume (Photo: Palestinian Media Watch).

Everywhere one looks, there are clear signals that “martyrdom” is what society prioritizes and respects above all else and this formal and informal socialization process can have a strong impact on impressionable children and young adults, who are still in their formative years. The cultural system of martyrdom is supported by institutions and practices such as music, art and community norms, all of which depict martyrdom as the ultimate accomplishment for a Palestinian. In the minds of Palestinian the only model of power and glory is the “martyr” (Prusher, 2004) and many children identify with them, trying to simulate them and do the same actions.^{lxx} The result? So many students and alumni from an Islamic university in Gaza became suicide bombers that a professor decided to hold a competition for the best “last will and testament” (Reuter, 2004: 89-90).

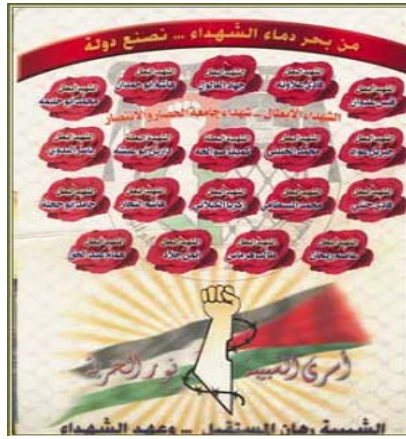
There is critical cultural work that organizations perform to sustain this “economy of martyrdom”. The reason why “ Hamas” and “Palestinian Islamic Jihad” no longer have to scout schools and mosques to recruit

willing martyrs is that Palestinian society has accepted their beliefs about the religious permissibility and strategic necessity of suicide bombings.



The front cover of the propaganda kit distributed by Al-Jamaa' al-Islamiyyah - the Palestinian Islamic Jihad student movement at Al-Najah University. In the bottom right-hand corner is a picture of a masked suicide bomber armed with an explosive belt and a headband bearing the inscription "Jerusalem Battalions" (the terrorist-operative wing of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad). Above his head is a photograph of Al-Najah University. At the left is the dedication, which says, among other things, "to those who are well aware, understand [this] well, that rights are taken by force and not given as a gift." (Source: Intelligence and Terrorism Information Bulletin, October 2004).

Recruiters say that "volunteers are beating down the door to join" (Atran, 2003), and they do not need any extra-intensive indoctrination because they are pre-programmed by their cultural social milieu. The broader mainstream culture provides an assortment of signals that "martyrdom" is the most valuable thing a person can do with his or her life.



The names of 19 “Shaheeds”, all students at Al-Najah University, appear on the back cover of the “information kit” distributed by Fatah’s Shabiba student movement. (Source: Intelligence and Terrorism Information Bulletin, October 2004).

Whereas Western culture coaches children and young adults to view accomplishments in terms of, let us say, material success, Palestinian culture emphasizes accomplishments in terms of “martyrdom”. This creates powerful influences on younger age cohorts, which are being socialized into “martyr” identities and roles in society.

The vast majority of parents actively participate in the charade of celebrating suicide bombers.^{lxxi} They talk about how proud they are, tell the press that they want their younger children to become “martyrs” as well and give the impression that this is one of their happiest and proudest days.^{lxxii} They are honoured by been given the title of “Umm al-Shaheed” (“mother of the martyr”) or “Abu al-Shaheed” (“father of the martyr”), instead of “Umm Ahmad” or “Abu Omar” for example.^{lxxiii} This title instils tremendous pride in families of bombers. Interestingly, the mothers are often the most vocal in

expressing these sentiments (Solnik, 2001). For most of the Western people this seems cold and almost inhuman. A famous Israeli saying about this strange stance of Palestinian mothers is exemplary: “Peace will come when Palestinian mothers will love their children more than they hate us”. But one must understand that this attitude of Palestinian parents as part of a cultural system that is supported by social pressure. These mothers, in vehement national pride, see their roles as producers, carriers of the uprising or the revolution when it comes to the idea of “martyrdom”.^{lxxiv} They have to follow the role model of “Al-Khansaa”.^{lxxv} Plus, the celebration of martyrdom has an extra utility: it provides parents with a short-term grieving mechanism by giving sense, meaning, and even honour to the death of their children,^{lxxvi} that otherwise could be unbearable.

This cultural acceptance, however, is susceptible to break down with time. Grief over the loss of life- especially of young children- can create opposition to the cultural system.^{lxxvii} If parents begin questioning the strategy of suicide operations, this could undermine the broad societal support. For the organizations parental grief must be sublimated to the need for a public spectacle that signals the acceptability and desirability of becoming a suicide bomber to the broader Palestinian community. As a result, this environment is actively sustained by the terrorist groups, who have a vested interest in perpetuating “martyrdom culture”, since it allows them to continue the use of suicide bombings and provides a steady stream of volunteers.

“ Hamas ” for example organizes processions, marches, and rallies commemorating the most recent “ martyr ”. The groups print “ martyrdom announcements ” in newspapers that read like wedding announcements. The final videotapes^{lxxviii} of the bombers are released to the public and replayed on Palestinian television. After a suicide bombing, militants quickly descend upon the parents’ house to start celebrations: they hand out candy, congratulate the parents, and talk about how wonderful it must be to have become a “ martyr ”. There is a strong coercive element hidden in this ritual: parents are expected not to cry, not despair, neither show concern that their child blew him/herself up, since this would imply that there was something wrong with becoming a “ martyr ”. They are supposed to be consoled by the Qur’an verse: “ and never think of those who have been killed in the cause of Allah as dead. Rather, they are alive with their Lord, receiving provision ” (Qur’an 3: 169). In some communities, “ Hamas ” run neighbourhoods as though it is a “ mafia ” and intimidation (even if only implied) generally dampers any desire to erupt in an emotional denunciation of the movement and suicide attacks. It would be difficult for a parent in Palestinian society to openly condemn the bombings and the sponsoring organizations while surrounded by a community radiating admiration and support. This indicates that the interjection of sponsor organizations and their militants into the grieving process may create an artificial facade of support on the part of parents.



Father holding in his arms his little girl, strapped with fake explosives (Photo: Palestinian Media Watch).

Female Suicide Heroes

Women “PLO” fighters in the late 1960s and 1970s were heroines and models for a generation of Palestinians (Warnock, 1990: 176). Still to date, the popular photo of a woman soldier dressed in military fatigues that hold a baby girl in one arm and an automatic weapon in the other can be seen in some public settings (Warnock, 1990: 4). In the cultural contemporary pro-suicide terror environment already explained, today's female suicide bombers have earned their own place in the pantheon of celebrated martyrs.

A week after Wafa’s suicide blast, her photographs were displayed on all the buildings. Children carrying toy guns and rifles ran up asked to be taken a picture with their heroine, the woman who died a “martyr's” death, exclaiming “One of us!” In the Gaza Strip a pocket-sized card is handed out in girls' school celebrating Hanadi as the “bride of the Haifa 'martyrdom' operation”. The first posters of this “bride of Haifa” appeared in Gaza, hundreds of miles away, five days after the bombing. In life Hanadi Jaradat

was an ambitious trainee to be a lawyer, but in death she has trailed a “path of martyrdom” for a whole generation of Palestinian women to come (Toolis, 2003).

After the operation of Andaleeb Taqatqa, the next day in her village a symbolic wedding was made to honour her and “her father accepted congratulations, as fathers of brides do, and the women of the village sang: “Oh martyr, we give our blood and our souls to you” (Simon, 2003).

The father of the 17 year old Ayat Akras supported publicly his daughter's operation, as nearly all parents do in such cases:

“I am very proud of her. Everyone here is proud of her because what she did came in response to Israel atrocities. She saw what was happening and decided to carry out an operation against the Jews in order to teach them a lesson. God bless her soul”^{lxxxix}

Tomorrow's female suicide bombers are formed now and many girls want to participate as “children watch people around them. They watch other kids, they watch TV, and so those are their own models...”^{lxxx} The words of little Palestinian girl Ikram say it all:

“I feel very proud. Really when I see a postcard of a girl who bombed herself, I feel very proud. I hope that I have the courage to be like her... Why not?...I think that every girl in this Palestine thinks like me”^{lxxxi}.

This admiration of the female “martyr” was used as an argument for the aspiring female suicide attacker Ahrin Ahmed to be persuaded to go forth with her deadly decision. She was told she would gain a very special status among the women suicide bombers and be a real heroine.^{lxxxii} Across the West Bank “Islamic Jihad” recruiters are at work in female colleges and universities to recruit more shaheed- martyrs. They pass out newsletters at universities in the West Bank raising the women fighters, with the verse in the leaflet that their women “exchanged their perfume for the smell of the land and they wear weapons instead of jewelry” (Daraghmeh, 2003):



Page from Palestinian school notebook featuring “PIJ” female suicide bomber (photocopy made personally from the captured material display at the Intelligence and Terrorism Information Centre, Tel Aviv).



Pictures and names of students, including Raishy in the center of the picture, “Shaheeds”, all members of the Islamic Block at Al-Najah University who died during the current ongoing violent Palestinian-Israeli confrontation (from the Islamic Block magazine, Al-Najah University, Issue No. 18, November 2003).

The most popular television programs for pre-teens and older adolescents are music videos, MTV style, except the songs are for those who have carried out suicide bombings. One of the most frequently played is about Wafa Idris, the “flower of womanhood”. While a sultry rock star sings, Wafa is shown through a series of photos from her early childhood until shortly before her death (Victor, 2003: 193).

The TV incitement picture is completed by video-spots transmitted like the following, promoting martyrdom culture and appealing to both female and male: The image of a young beautiful couple walking when suddenly IDF soldiers open fire and kill the girl. After, her boyfriend while visiting her

grave is also shot and killed by the Israelis The couple ascends and meets in heaven^{lxxxiii}.

The television glorification of women-bombs starts at very early age, as the following example shows. On the “Children's Club” program (a “Sesame Street”-like children's program broadcast on Palestinian Authority controlled TV), on February 8 1998, a girl who could not have been more than ten years old sang about her wanting to “turn into a suicide warrior’ in Jerusalem:

*"I am the voice of the exalted martyr ...
And we shall march as warriors of Jihad.
Oh, my exalted martyr, you are my example. Oh my
companion, you are beside me. Oh, my sister, sing
constantly about my life as a suicide warrior."*

Chapter 4

WOMEN'S INEQUITY: RATIONALISING THE CHOICE TO DIE

Women's Position in the Palestinian Society and Honour Killings

Nations depend on powerful constructions of gender and the social structure of contemporary Palestinian society is bifurcated according to gender (male versus female) and age (old versus young), where older males occupy the pinnacle of the social pyramid and young females its base.^{lxxxiv} Palestinian women are identified in terms of their relationship or association with the other (male relative) rather than the self.^{lxxxv}

"..The woman is the mother of men, the sister of men and the daughter of men. She is the second nerve of society".^{lxxxvi}

Islamic law, a way of life, also plays its own important part in fixing gender roles, as it includes numerous codes governing societal relations and organization (Grant and Tessler, 2002), guiding what is societal as well as personal, corporate as well as individual. In Islam respect for women derives from their social responsibilities as ordained by the Qur'an, rather than from modern concepts of gender equality popular in the West. The Qur'an places men in a more responsible position, over women:

"Men have authority over women because Allah has made the one superior to the other and because they spend their wealth to maintain them. Good women are obedient. They guard their unseen parts because Allah has guarded them. As for those from which you fear

disobedience admonish them and send them to beds apart and beat them. Then if they obey you, do nothing further to them (Qur'an, 4).

Additionally, women have to live according to a strict moral code that makes them in reality second-class citizens. For those who take the Qur'an seriously it is logically impossible to treat women more liberally; as the Qur'an has ordered, so it must be (Laffin, 1975). "Shari'a" ("Islamic law") has a legally defined model of family and gender relations based on complementarity between male and female roles.^{lxxxvii} Rights and obligations are seen as equivalent, rather than equal. The husband's responsibility for maintenance ("nafaqa") of his wife, defined as shelter, food and clothing, is exchanged for female "obedience" ("ta'a") in the exercise of her marital and child-raising duties in the home, which as limits her autonomy outside the home. A woman is entitled to "nafaqa" only after the consummation of the marriage and she loses the claim if she is in a state of "nushuz" ("disobedience") (Hosseini, 2003: 7). All of this is naturally reflected in the perceptions and attitudes of Palestinian males towards females: Females are the possessions of Palestinian males, moving on marriage from the sphere of control of the father to the sphere of control of the husband.

It is in her family and since early age that the Palestinian girl develops her social personality and gains consciousness about her gender and its social implications.

"..In their families girls have to fight for any freedoms whereas boys have everything handed to them as a right. Women have had an accumulation of experience of oppression"^{lxxxviii}

Families believe daughters to be a great burden on them, because girls need more parental responsibility, attention and control than boys:

“..Women worry their families from the minute they are born to the minute they die. Most people perceive women as burdens because they need protection and support... I believe that a husband has the right to bring his wife to “beit el -Taah” [House of Obedience] if she doesn't obey his orders, or if she leaves home without his permission...”^{lxxxix}.

Girls are brought up to become wives, because marriage is almost the only socially acceptable alternative for a girl (Españoli, 1997). Actually, girls marry at an early age as a way to prevent them from having an opportunity to become “faltat” (“loose”). While a woman is married only to one man, a man can enter into more than one marriage (up to four) at a time and terminate each contract at will, with no grounds; the consent of the woman is not needed. While dissolution of marriage is permitted by Islam, it is considered one of the most detestable things.^{xc} A woman is usually the one to be blamed for the termination of her marriage and divorce is a scandal that gives her family a bad name and can endanger that the left sisters will not even be able to find a good husband (Españoli, 1997). The woman additionally loses her freedom of movement and becomes a third-class person and finds it difficult to remarry, even more if she has children. Palestinian society denies her the right to live by her self and she has no other option but to go back to her original home, that is obliged to integrate her back to the household .on the subject manasra

While during the first “Intifada” the magnitude of women's resistance marked a significant progress and transformation in the above mentioned gender roles,^{xcii} the second “Intifada” was a step back. The revival of radical Islam and the gaining strength of the Islamic organizations influenced the social position of women, making their lives even more difficult and constraint. At the height of the second “Intifada” women in Gaza were forced by the Islamist “ Hamas” and other groups to cover their heads with white headscarves and veils^{xciii} because the traditional role for woman demands dressing up according to fundamental and traditional customs in order to prevent “seduction”. If women spurned the veil they were even thrown acid to the face (Kepel, 1995). Women were urged to forgo public activity, to return to the home and resume their traditional roles as wives and mothers, segregating from men.

A reference to the place of women in Palestinian society would not be complete without mentioning the crucial issue of men's honour. As in nearly all Arab societies- the honour of men (“sharaf” and “ird”) is not contingent on personal achievements but depends on a man’s ability to control the behaviour of his womenfolk and is inherently linked to the sexual conformity and the sexual shame of women.^{xciii} The woman is considered to be also the primary agent and bearer of family honour (Minces, 1980), in part this translated to the virginity of the unmarried females and the chastity of the married ones. Men are responsible for the actions of women, occupying a public realm in which honour is “projected,” while women are part of a familial “sacred realm” that must be protected. “Sharaf” relates to the honour of the social unit as well as individuals and it can fluctuate up or

down according to moral behaviour and conduct; it can be gravely damaged when one of its women's chastity is violated or her reputation is tainted. In this case, it is the family as a whole, rather than an individual husband or partner, which perceives itself as the one "injured" by the "misconduct" of the female "ird". Consequently the violation of a woman's honour requires severe and immediate action since:

"...The woman is like an olive tree. When its branch catches woodworm, it has to be chopped off so that society stays clean and pure..."^{xciiv}

"Scandals" must be concealed or mitigated in accordance with the very important principles of "sutra" and "dabdabeh", by means of forced marriage or ultimately, by killing the woman concerned. The revelation of shameful acts to the public knowledge is what most wounds the honour, even more than the act of dishonour itself (Bukay, 2002). The lost honour becomes a reality only when it is made public and "sutra" is the act of draping something from view. The first priority is to ensure that a female suspected or perceived of committing sexual transgressions is not subjected to scandal, so methods are searched to provide "sutra" to females whose reputation has been tarnished or threatened. It should be noted that "sutra" is practiced only when the perceived violation has not been disclosed yet. Forced marriage, often to the male accused of violating the sexuality of the female, is the most common practice mentioned to achieve "sutra".^{xcv}

"Dabdabeh" is the act of preventing a scandalous situation from further deterioration. When it is no longer possible to achieve "sutra", "dabdabeh"

becomes the second line of defence. It is the vehicle by which society avoids “fitneh” or social sedition. It is generally achieved through cover-up techniques. It is best described by the proverb: “El-khammeh ma ilha illa el-tammeh” (“the best way to treat filth is to bury it”) (Shalhoub- Kevorkian, 2000: 50). “Dabdabeh” can also encompass “sutra”. For example, when a groom discovered that his bride was not a virgin, because she had been subjected to incest when she was a child, he divorced at a later (opportune) date and she was wedded to another man. The essential gist of this case is that the female was not a virgin and it mattered little that she lost her virginity as a result of incest. Marrying her to another man was a means of providing “sutra” for her and “dabdabeh” for her family (Shalhoub – Kevorkian, 2000: 53).

When all else fails, honour is protected by murder. While “honour” crimes are a wider category including honour killings and other violence committed against women (battering, acid throwing, rape, etc.) in the name of honour, “honour” killings can be defined as acts of murder in which a woman is killed for her actual or perceived immoral behaviour^{xcvi} and their historical origin is as ancient as patriarchy itself.^{xcvii} Such female “immoral behaviour” may take various forms, for example marital infidelity, refusing to submit to an arranged marriage, demanding a divorce, flirting with or receiving phone calls from men, failing to serve a meal on time, or - grotesquely- “allowing herself” to be raped. By being perceived as having entered into an “illicit” relationship or otherwise behaved in an “inappropriate manner”, women are seen as having defiled her guardian and family.

Rape is a very interesting way to understand how women, honour, shame and death inter-correlate in the Palestinian society. In the Arab culture, rape is an offence considered more humiliating than homicide (Abou-Zeid, 1965)^{xcviii} and raping a woman is an attack against the honour of men who are the woman's kin. Society perceives the injured woman not as a victim that needs protection, but on the contrary as someone who debased the family honour; the woman's consent or lack of it is seen as irrelevant to the question of lost honour. A shocking incident that the Palestinian press reported is when a four year old girl who was raped by a 25 years old man was left to bleed to death by her family because she had dishonoured it. The child "unfortunately" survived, with her "honour" marred for life (Ruggi, 2000: 398). When a 14 years girl was sexually abused, her father did not accept her back at home denouncing her to avoid the gossip against his family:

"...I really want to consider her dead and to tell people that she is dead in order to end the rumours and the gossip..." (Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2000: 44).

Females are also expected to "defend" their honour, even if it costs them their lives. For example, a female who was subjected to an attempt of rape by a police officer threw herself in front of a moving vehicle in order to defend her honour. Another female threw herself from a moving vehicle after a male attempted to rape her.

Unfortunately women have been killed in the Palestinian territories of the West Bank and Gaza Strip on the basis of what is termed as "family honor"

and such “honour killings” are regularly reported. Females have been killed by fire arms (pistols, rifles, etc.), sharp instruments (e.g., knives, daggers, and machetes), poisons (rat poisoning, pesticide, etc.), strangulation (ropes, wires), drowning (thrown in wells), burning, run-over by motor vehicles, and other techniques. Women are executed for instances of rape, infidelity, flirting or any other instance perceived as disgracing the family's honour and the woman is then killed by a male relative to restore the family's name in the community. Many women are also killed based on suspicions of a family member and are not given the chance to defend themselves. Sometimes rumour, belief or insinuation are enough to defile honour. The allegation alone is capable to defile a man's or family's honour, as “ardh does not require witnesses” (“El-'ardh ma 'allieha shuhoud”)^{xcix} and is therefore enough to justify the killing of the woman.^c It is a tragic irony, but in some cases, pathological examinations have shown that murdered women were still virgins at the time they were killed for having “illicit” sex. This was the case with a woman murdered in Bet Hanun, Gaza by her brother (Barron, 2002: 77).

The following stories of such killings that appeared in the news or were reported are indicative (but disgracefully not exhaustive) of the situation:

“Flirting was a costly mistake for Samera. She was only 15 years old when her neighbours in Salfeet, a small Palestinian town on the West Bank, saw her chatting with a young man without a male chaperone. Her family's honour was at stake; a marriage was quickly arranged. By 16, she had a child. Five years later, when she could stand the bogus marriage no longer, she bolted. In a place where gossip is traded like hard currency and a girl's chastity is as public as her

name, Samera's actions were considered akin to making a date with the devil. According to the gossips, she went from man to man as she moved from place to place. Finally, last July [1999], her family caught up with her. A few days later she was found stuffed down a well. Her neck had been broken. Her father told the coroner she'd committed suicide. But everyone on the grapevine knew that Samera was a victim of honour killing, murdered by her own family because her actions brought dishonour to their name. ... Here in the West Bank, the Palestinian Authority law allows honour killing. Samera's parents are walking the streets of their neighbourhood with their heads held high, relieved that the family honour has been restored" (Armstrong, 2000).

Twenty-two other women died in the Palestinian territories in the same year as Samera. The killings often spill over into neighbouring Israel, as with the killing of 40-year-old Ittihaj Hassoon near Haifa in 1995, which again made the news headlines:

"On Oct. 16, 1995, ... Hassoon got out of a car with her younger brother on a main street of Daliat al Carmel, a small Israeli Druze village ... Over 10 years before, Ittihaj had committed the unpardonable sin of marrying a non-Druze man. Now, after luring her back to her home village with promises that all was forgiven and her safety assured, her brother finally had the chance to publicly cleanse the blot on the family name with the spilling of her blood. In broad daylight in front of witnesses, he pulled out a knife and began to stab her. The witnesses quickly swelled to a crowd of more than 100 villagers who -approving, urging him on - chanted, ululated, danced in the street. Within minutes, Hassoon lay dead on the ground while the crowd cheered her killer, "Hero, hero! You are a real man! ...Ibrahim had agonized over his decision: 'She is my sister -- my flesh and blood - I am a human being. I didn't want to kill her. I didn't want to be in this situation. They [community members] push[ed] me to make this decision. I know what they expect from me. If I do this, they look at me like a hero, a clean guy, a real man. If I don't kill my sister, the people would look at me like I am a small person" (Zima, 1999).

It took 6 years for the Palestinian Al-Goul family to hunt down and kill their daughter Basma who ran away with a man after her husband suspected her of infidelity and divorced her. She married another man, but her behaviour was unacceptable for the Palestinian code of honour. When a woman has been thought to have crossed the line, like in Basmas case, the whole family is ostracized because of the misconduct. In this case her 8 sisters deemed unmarriageable and her brothers confronted taunts in the streets (Jehl, 1999). While the mother herself went to kill her daughter it was the girl's youngest brother who did finally the job. As her mother Um Tasher put it:

“We were the most prominent family with the best reputation...then we were disgraced. Even my brother and his family stopped talking to us. Noone would even visit us. They would say only 'you have to kil'”.



On April 8, 2005, Yusra al-Azzami (a young female university student from Beit Lahiya in the northern Gaza Strip) was brutally murdered, being suspected of “immoral behavior.” (Photo: Special Information Bulletin Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, May 24 , 2005)

The perpetrator, the typical “honour killer” is a man, usually the father, husband or brother of the victim. The murder of women to salvage their

family's honour results in good part from the social and psychological pressure felt by the killers. As they explain in their confessions, their immediate social circle, family, clan, village or others expect them and even encourage them to commit the murder, because from a society's perspective, refraining from killing the woman would debase the family (Feldner, 2002). Additionally, according to the society's culture, he who avoids "washing shame with blood" is perceived as a coward not worth living and "lesser than a man". This point takes on added significance when the concept of "rujuleh" ("manhood") is incorporated in the mental perception of the family. A man's ability to protect his female relatives' honour defines his social status and masculinity and his peers will view him as inferior if he cannot adequately protect a female relative's honour. One cannot remain a "rajul" ("man") if he remains silent towards perceived sexual transgressions by his female relatives. The following testimonies of Palestinian male honour killers are so revealing:

"I did not kill her, but rather helped her to commit suicide and to carry out the death penalty she sentenced herself to. I did it to wash with her blood the family honour that was violated because of her and in response to the will of society that would not have any mercy on me if I didn't...society taught us from childhood that blood is the only solution to wash the honour" (a 25 year old Palestinian who hanged his sister with a rope)^{ci}. "Before the incident, I drank tea and it tasted bitter because my honour was violated. After the killing I felt much better...I don't wish anybody the mental state I was in. I was under tremendous mental pressure" (a young Palestinian who murdered his sister who had been sexually assaulted)^{cii}

"I had to kill her because I was the oldest member of the family. The only motive to kill her was to get rid of what people were saying...I let her choose the way I would get rid of her: slitting her throat or

poisoning her. She chose the poison” (a Palestinian who killed his sister because she was fornicating)^{ciii}

Compiling reliable statistics on violence against women generally is difficult, because of the “private,” protected nature of the abuse. Yet, it is a reality in Palestinian everyday life, that women who have breached the moral norms live under a continuous terror of being threatened with death, from a living to an actual one. Even in cases where the woman in question is not killed, “she feels as if she is no longer a human being, that her value is not in her social function and contribution, and that she is transformed into a sexual object” (Shalhoob-Kevorkian, 1993). This eminent danger has led to an “emerging culture of modesty marginalized Palestinian women” (Hammami, 1997: 78). Talking with boys in the street, going out for a walk or exchanging letters can be seen as disgraceful behavior, resulting for the women to be beaten, locked in their homes, prevented from studying, placed under the strict control of the family, gossiped around and married off as soon as possible (Manasra, 1993).

Problematic Past of the Women Perpetrating Suicide Attacks

The personal problems that become a public and social issue behind the willingness of Palestinian female suicide terrorists to “sacrifice” themselves are stressed by most of those who deal with the phenomenon.^{civ} Their individual stories, seen through the prism of Palestinian social reality, speak for themselves and pose a question: Were these 8 women “pushed” to martyrdom by their society?

Wafa Idris, the one who led the way of suicide martyrdom was known not only for having an independent mind and a profound feeling of resentment against the “occupation”, she also had a reputation as a troubled young woman who was prone to bouts of melancholy and depression. She had been a constant target for mocking after her husband divorced her, because she couldn't have children. Wafa knew she could probably never marry again, because a divorced woman for the Palestinians is tainted and, as her mother said, when Wafa was very young she was bowed because the only thing that made her “a prize” was that she was young and would have more years to bear children; but now after the divorce “she was young, intelligent and beautiful, and had nothing to live for” (Victor, 2003). Wafa's mother bluntly put it that if Wafa had been able to have kids, she probably wouldn't have killed herself.

The personal story of the first Palestinian female suicide bomber (Victor, 2003), has been indeed one of deep grief: In 1991, at the age of 16, she married her first cousin Ahmed, who also lived in the al-Amari refugee camp. After years of trying to conceive a child, in 1998 Wafa delivered prematurely a stillborn daughter. The family was devastated and the husband humiliated, as at first his family blamed Wafa and after they blamed him, for being “too weak to provide an infant that would survive in her womb”. After the trauma of the stillbirth, a local doctor told Wafa and her husband, in the presence of their families, that she would never be able to carry a child to full term.^{cv} After she lost her baby, Wafa stopped eating and stopped talking. She stayed in bed all day and all night, and she refused to get up to clean the house or cook meals. Her husband consulted Wafa's brother and his spiritual

leader, a local imam, who quoted to him from the Qur'an a special passage that offered instructions about disobedient wives, since "in the marriage institution the husband is the driver of the car, he is at the wheel and it is he who sets the rules that guides the family to serenity and happiness. When it comes to handling problems, Allah has set down rules or guidelines that a man can follow when a wife is disobedient". This disobedience in the Qur'an translates either in "rebellion" or just "simple disobedience" and the imam suggested that before the husband could define his wife's particular case, he should watch a weekly television talk show broadcasted from Egypt called "Life is Sweet", which featured a certain Dr Mohammed al-Hajj, a professor of Islamic faith at the University of Amman. Wafa had merely disobeyed her husband when he had ordered her to get out of bed and take care of the house, the meals, the family and the first step in her "rehabilitation" was to be banished from her husband's bed, according to the imam's instructions. After that, Wafa had grown gaunt and thin because she refused to take any nourishment and her hair had begun to fall out. A week later, Ahmed proceeded to the second step, which was gentle admonition, accompanied by another video that he was given by the imam to play for Wafa at home, about the proper behaviour of a woman toward her husband. After several weeks of this crash course in "good wifely behaviour", instead of getting better Wafa grew even worse. She cried inconsolably day and night. The presence of her mother, her sisters-in-law and her friends did nothing to assuage her grief. The wisdom of Islam, the imam told Ahmed, was vast and since his wife was suffering from a physical ailment, she would be spared from the usual subsequent punishment as stated in the Qur'an: a beating with a thick block of wood, but never in the face or hard enough to cause

fractures or wounds. Instead, Ahmed was instructed to give her a “gentle beating” with a handkerchief or a toothpick. When she still did not improve, however, Ahmed broached the possibility to take another wife, as was permitted in Islam, on the advice of his family and his spiritual guide. Finally, in the spring of 1998, he divorced her and two weeks later married another woman. Wafa Idris watched Ahmed's marriage procession winding its way down the main road of the al-Amari refugee camp from her bedroom window. But what made the situation even more unbearable for her was that the entire camp knew the reason why she had been cast aside. “Sterile” they whispered behind her back - an incomplete woman, unable to bear children, unable to provide soldiers to fight the Israeli occupation. Less than a year later, Ahmed and his new wife had their first child and a year after that, their second. After the children were born, Wafa wanted to return to her husband, but he told her that his current wife was against it and had already threatened that she would leave him and would take their children if he allowed that to happen.

So Wafa Idris was a talented young woman, married and divorced because she was believed to be sterile. She was desperate because she knew perfectly well there was no future for her in any aspect of the Palestinian society. All her problems with the failed marriage and sterility made her an abnormal person, because “she could never remarry and her chance to be self-sufficient was zero” (Victor, 2003: 48). In this situation it does seem that the only way for her to come out against this miserable situation was actually to kill herself in a way that would restore her reputation and name. She carried an inner turmoil and pain for years, plus the loss of a child may have been

the culminating factor that made the process come closer to a final resolution. She knew her own society and the limitations they put on her and on women like her and she was aware that she had nothing left - no hope, no future. Her funeral and what the Palestinian leadership said about her, calling her a “national flower” and the “embodiment of Palestinian womanhood,” proves that her “martyrdom” was indeed the best way for her to leave the margin of the outcast and enter the zone of glorious in the Palestinian society.

The background of Reem Raiyshi doesn't seem to have been brighter or less of problematic than Wafa's. The Israeli newspaper “Yediot Ahronot” was the first to report that the woman was compelled to carry out the attack as atonement for betraying her husband with another man, followed by the “Associated Press,” citing Israeli security officials, about Raiyshi being an adulteress forced to carry out the attack to restore her family's honour. According to the reports, Raiyshi's husband is a “ Hamas” operative who urged her to carry out the suicide mission^{cvi} and even drove her to the Erez, while the illicit lover was the one to recruit her and give to her the suicide bomb belt.

To understand the weight of Raiyshi's “sin”, one must keep in mind that- as presented before- it is not uncommon for Palestinian women accused of adultery or of having sex generally outside marriage to be killed by their families trying to rid themselves of the perceived disgrace. Actually an adulterous woman “must” be killed (Bukay, 2002: 23) It is also surprising

that after the bombing, Raiyshi's family refused to speak to reporters, a rarity in these cases, and did not set up a mourning tent for her.

Hanadi Jaradat at the age of 29 was still unmarried. Rahmeh justifies her daughter not been yet married, because “she was always ambitious even as a child. She said she wanted to be a lawyer even then. And she refused to get married because she wanted to continue her studies. She turned down a few suitors” (Toolis, 2003). The proud words of the mother cannot defy the cruel – and strange indeed to us Westerns – Palestinian reality that if a woman remains single by age 25 her chances of getting married are quite glimpse. She might have been a bright lawyer, an educated woman, but still in the eyes of her community she was in the threshold of being a “spinster”. So when the 29 years old Yasser Obeidi, married with two children, military commander of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad met her, became her lover, seduced her and promised her that in Paradise they would find eternal happiness together as a man and wife (Victor, 2003: 301-302), his offer was a catch!

Darin Abu Aisha suffered also because of her decision not to marry. “Sometimes people teased her and called her names because she refused to marry and have children. Her parents suffered because of this” (Victor, 2003: 101). Again, this girl was a victim of what the Palestinian society expects from women:

“There was an enormous pressure on her to marry. Her family was pleased with her academic achievements but they still felt that she was at university only until she married and had children. They were very

upset when she announced that she had no intention of ever marrying because she had no intention of becoming a slave...she knew absolutely that regardless of her achievements at university, her fate as a Palestinian woman was sealed- an arranged marriage, six or seven children, a husband who probably wouldn't have the same hopes or curiosity about life as she did. Eventually she became nihilistic. Nothing mattered...Her parents were putting a lot of pressure on her to be an obedient, full-time childbearing and child-rearing spouse in a family where the husband was all-powerful and had absolute authority. Darine resisted that. She told me she should rather die” (Victor, 2003: 103-105).

Hiba has a story of even more troubled past. She was raped when she was fourteen by a mentally retarded uncle. The shock was so great that the girl did not allow anyone to touch her anymore and not even allow her own mother to see her uncovered (Victor, 2003: 296). A normal future, with a good marriage and respectable life was less than certain.

These women saw their lives in the Palestinian surroundings as too difficult to handle and they reached that stage in their minds where taking out the enemy was an opportunity to regain self-worth and be a hero. The question became compelling: “Why not redeem myself and redeem my family's name?” For someone whose life otherwise has little significance, transcendent fame can be a powerful motive. If life is intolerable with no hope and if there is a promise that if you die as a martyr you'll have a new and better life, why not really take the chance? (El-Sarraj, 2002: 73).

Unlike animals, most human needs and desires are not physical they are social (Durkheim, 1897/1954). The Palestinian society could be described as

a mechanical solidarity society where members are very much alike and there are a few individual differences among them. The members of such a society have the same world view (common consciousness) and have the same understandings of right and wrong (common conscience) (Durkheim 1893/1947). The strong authoritarian and patriarchal society casts out those who deviate from its way or who act against its interests. The individual does not and cannot exist by her own right and social ostracism, the “tashmis”^{cvii}, is a terrible punishment. “In this society you can’t run away, leave your family and friends, because if you do, you are a disgrace. The burden on you is even greater than if you stay. The disgrace on your family is even greater” (Victor, 2003: 47). Hence, the Arab saying “it is better to die with honour, than to live in humiliation” (Bukay, 2002: 23) fits exactly in the picture of Palestinian women suicide bombers. It is a “logical decision between the framework of faith” as they choose a “worthy death”.^{cviii} They “clean their reputation”, and elevate their status. They prefer to die “upgrading their status” instead of being killed in honour crimes. To these women, to these “extremists”, terror appears to be the simple answer to problems that burden them (Parry, 1976: 527).^{cix}

Woman's honour is something she is born and grows with and if she loses it, it can never be restored back. This is the basis of female conduct in the Islamic society. Palestinian women without a husband live under a stringent of social and religious rules, very stiff and rigid. If they are too educated they are considered abnormal and it is hard for them to find a man. If they look at a man, they risk exclusion. If they refuse to marry, they are

considered out of control and if they sleep out of wedlock and stay pregnant they disgrace the family and risk death:

“Women in this society know very well that behaving contrary to social norms could very well lead to their death.”^{cx}

The following poem gives in a very subtle and eloquent way the very desperate and inhuman dilemma that these women entering the suicide operation arena face. They are women that have reached a point where they are obliged either to spread horror or live it themselves:

“Suicide Sister

*Of course I think of her all the time,
walking with her belly in the streets of Jerusalem,
thinking all the time that at any minute
she might make herself give birth to the rusted nails, shrapnel,
bullets in one big explosion
that might enter the eye or the heart
of the bay in the stroller
wheeling towards herself at this very moment.
Or maybe she stops, suddenly
seeing a face in the Jewish crowd that recalls her own grandmother
bent even now over shopping
And turns back to face
whatever humiliations that await a living woman.”^{cx}*

The women who exploded themselves had very traumatic personal stories and issues. They were suffering a stigma “disqualified from full social acceptance”, stemming from negatively held attitudes towards them (Goffman, 1963:5). Those things, combined with the horrors of living under occupation, could have provoked them to act. It would be quite interesting to compare this traumatic personal situation and problematic social position of the Palestinian female suicide terrorists, with the one of the Chechen women suicide bombers, since early- at least- research presents similarities.^{cxii}

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The making of a female suicide bomber is a multileveled and complicated process taking place in the special Palestinian social settings. Many factors are contributing and they have to be seen in combination and not in solidarity. Most possibly, we have an explosive mix and the recipe demands all the elements to deliver its terrifying results. Yet, the catalyst – not the most important ingredient maybe, but the one that makes the combination work and gives the spark – probably is religion; present everywhere, influencing everything, a mentality, a way to see and interpret facts, a whole way of life.

More than one criminologist has pointed out that the disciplines of theology, religion and philosophy have had important things to say about terrorism (Stitt, 2003; Kraemer, 2004). It is also a fact that about a quarter of all terrorist groups and about half of the most dangerous ones on earth are primarily motivated by religious concerns. They believe that God not only approves of their actions, but that God even demands their actions. Their cause is sacred and consists of a combined sense of hope for the future and vengeance for the past. Most religious traditions are filled with plenty of violent images at their core and destruction or self-destruction is a central part of the logic behind religion-based terrorism (Jurgensmeyer, 2001).

Yet, not all Muslim women (or men for that matter) – fortunately – but quite a few readily embrace the violent inclination and are willing to actually explode themselves up. Islam, though central because of the indoctrination

power of religion and central focus in Palestinian society, cannot be considered alone the sole and exclusive key behind the “martyrdom” culture. “To be tempted to go to Paradise means that life on earth is hell” (Victor, 2003: 178-179). The dramatic situation and violence of the conflict are unmistakably influencing the phenomenon. “The kind of human suffering rampant in the Middle East is a breeding ground for hatred and anger” (Davis, 2003: 22) and this could not be truer than in the little piece of land disputed by Israelis and Palestinians. While academics can theorize for years, the fact remains that the “Occupied Territories” are a place of torment for the Palestinians (and the Israeli soldiers who fight there), where misery, violence, despair and loss of hope rule. Suicide violence is in a large percent a by-product of the lack of viable political and social alternatives to the “Palestinian problem”, faced by the Palestinians, who claim (rightly or wrongly is beside the point anymore) the liberation of their land. In that sense nationalism accompanies religion, and makes its own contribution.

But again, the picture stays incomplete. Nearly all Palestinians feel oppressed, violated; they want their homeland freed and they believe in a religion that calls for “Jihad” and “holy war” against the “infidel” Jew, the responsible occupying force that stole their land, their “Holy Land” and made suicide operations the latest social trend, embraced and venerated. Despite that, not all Palestinians go to carry out a suicide mission. More importantly and relevant to the subject, not all Palestinian women become human bombs spreading death. Most of them stay at home.

It appears that the dynamics of female suicide bombers are driven primarily by issues related to honour and revenge rather than ideology and this is an

important part of the deadly equation. In this case the idea that women's crime is deeply affected by women's place in society starts to explain women's contribution to suicide violence. Personal systems of meaning gain effectiveness by the link to the community in which they are embedded; meaning and individual are intertwined. Suicide terrorism has a special appeal to those women marginalized in a personal or societal way. People identify themselves and their actions in a social order by means of the system of meaning-bearing structures. The "Shahida" is actually a problematic woman, not a hero, and neither Islamic fundamentalism nor national heroism can explain her "martyrdom" without this parameter of problematic social past. The female "human bomb" is "thrown" by the canon of the Palestinian society, forced to kill the enemy in dignity and gaining perdition to her social "sins", instead of getting killed-anyway- in shame.

Of course, one can observe rightly that the patriarchal structures and traditions are legitimized and fostered by the dominance of religious institutions and jurisdictions (Herrman, 1997). An important dimension of patriarchal ideology is again religion and in order to understand the position of women in Palestinian society and the whole notion of honour, shame and sexuality, one should consider the Islamic context, as it constitutes a fundamental socio-cultural and organizational background of the Palestinian society and gender role.

There are no easy victories over the phenomenon of terrorism and we cannot expect to eradicate it, anymore than we can expect to end murder and any other kind of crime. About combating female suicide terrorists the only

solution proposed widely until now has been hiring more security guards, who are able to search women”. This is the least to say an inadequate and simplistic measure. Yet, there are things to be done. While “we must not be diverted from dealing directly and swiftly with terrorists when they can be identified and found” (Bialkin, 1986), the more the policy establishment avoids facing the deep roots of violence, the deeper these roots will reach. A more balanced method should be used, one taking account the root causes, with an investigation of the complex social, economic, cultural and religious conditions. We are not dealing with an isolated, minuscule group of politically agitated mad people; they are social beings like everybody else and perhaps more so. The strategy should have to include policies to alter the political, cultural and even socio-economic contexts that perpetuate suicide attacks.

Counterterrorism policies have also to deal with the very important religious parameter. They need to focus more on undermining the “Jihadi socialization process” that inculcates values of “martyrdom” and the structures that support and sustain relevant cultural systems in places like the Palestinian territories. The Muslim religion itself has no organized leadership or central authority and this also makes it easier for cults to spring up within Islam as alternative sources of social cohesion. The religious rationale of the radicals and extremists should be debunked. Changes in behaviour will occur when the community no longer views suicide bombings as accepted, normal and even heroic and divinely inspired behaviour. There should be plead to and encouragement of moderate Islam. “Only respected, moderate Muslims can speak to the young men and women who make up the backbone of the

radical movements in order to stop their flight into the ranks of the Jihadees as an outlet to their rage. These youths need to be convinced of the truth of another Islam. They need to be convinced of Islam's preference for peace” (Davis, 2003: 196).

Last but not least, the call for the emancipation of women is eminent. Patriarchal mindsets should be challenged and effectively confronted. The vulnerability of women in the Palestinian reality calls for a deep freedom, democratization and gender equality process. Palestinian women should be made aware of the liberties they deserve, their human value and stand up to male dominance. Programs sponsored to ensure and promote education and work could help them find an active place in their social surroundings. When they stop being victims themselves and they become free people, able to choose and enjoy their lives, then they will stop being the easy prey and ammunition for terrorists' organizations.

Closing, let us think on the following: Palestinian women may be accepted to explode themselves, but it seems as if death is the only dimension they can claim and enjoy equality in. The same organizations that send them to die in suicide operations, do not accept as participant members in the groups making and taking any decisions and this implies a cynical use of women.

“The differences between men and women in a society steeped in fundamentalism and a culture of double standards do not disappear even within that extraordinary concept of martyrdom” (Victor, 2003: xi introduction). The proof? Despite women's great utilitarian importance in

suicide operations, the families of the dead female martyrs receive a monthly allowance of 200 dollars (Flamini, 2004), which is half of what the male martyrs do...

NOTES

ⁱ Actually it was the Second World War that highlighted women's role primarily in reservist or support units (including work in munitions factories) in the German and British forces and, in the case of the Soviet Union, their direct participation in the fighting as members of all services and units "constituting 8% of the total armed forces" (Krill, 1985: 337-363). Since then, women have assumed a much greater role and are more frequently joining the armed forces, voluntarily and involuntarily, performing both support and combatant roles.

ⁱⁱ For example in Germany it seems as if women "have been drawn" to terrorist organizations. The terrorist group "Red Zora", active between the late 1970s and 1987 recruited only women. In "Raf" during 1985 the 22 core activists included 13 women, while in 1991 the 50% approximately of the members were women. Of the 8 people on Germany's "Wanted Terrorist" list in 1991, five were women (Becker, 1977). Significant role was played by female members also in Italian terrorist organizations. According to research, 18% of the individuals who were arrested or wanted by the Italian police for terrorism from January 1970 to June 1984 were women (Weinberg and Eubank, 1987a; Weinberg and Eubank, 1987b: 248-253). Of special interest is the group "Weather Underground", operating in the US during the '70s. It splintered from the "Students for a Democratic Society", the group had female factions that became very powerful and in fact moved to the leadership. The "WU" openly espoused an extreme feminism translated among others in the need for the decline of the traditional family and supported homosexual love to free women from the male psychic and physical domination (Georges-Abeyie, 1983: 71-84). Also the Sendero Luminoso had a female squad, quite notorious (Tarazona, 1992).

ⁱⁱⁱ When 24 Sandinistas struck Nicaragua's National Palace in Managua in August 1979, the second in command appeared to be the 22 year old Commandante Dora Maria Telles Arguello. Several female terrorists of the 19th April Movement participated in the takeover of the Dominican Embassy in Bogotá, Colombia in 1980. Also Genevieve Forest Tarat of the Basque terrorist organization "ETA" active in Spain played a key role in the ETA-V bomb assassination of Premier Admiral Carrero Blanco on December 20 1973, as well as in the bombing of Café Ronaldo in Madrid. The Price Sisters ("Sisters of Death") were a part of the IRA 1973 bombing campaign in London, while Ella O'Dwyer and Martina Anderson

were sentenced to life imprisonment for their involvement to the organization's plot to bomb London. Other women notorious for their terrorist activity include Norma Ester Arostito, co founder and chief ideologue leader of the "Argentine Montoneros"; Mario Torres, co leader and co founder with her husband Carlos Torres of the "Puerto Rican Armed Forces of National Liberation" (FALN); Fusako Shigenobu, leader of the "Japanese Red Army" (JRA), to name but a few (Hudson, 1999; Hacker, 1996: 39).

^{iv} Actually Russia and women terrorists go way back to history, to the time of the Russian Revolution, when Tatiana Leontiev assassinated in Switzerland whom she believed to be the Russian minister of interiors. Also, Vera Zasulich attempted to assassinate Governor Trepov and Vera Figner layed mines on the route to be taken by the Tzar (Gaucher, 1968:54-55).

^v This conflict has been one of the most long and perplexed in the Middle East. For some it dates back even to the B.C era, when the "Land of Milk and Honey" is promised to Abraham and his descendants. In the beginning of this century immigration waves of Jewish diaspora from Europe begin, that peak after World War II and the horror of the Holocaust. Officially, the clash between Palestinians and Israelis erupted in 1948, when the State of Israel was founded. The present dissertation, though inevitably touches the subject, cannot and does not deal with the history, roots, reasons of the conflict- at least not in depth, detail and as a priority- neither takes the side of any of the parts.

^{vi} The Arabic term "Intifada" means the "uprising" and has been used to describe the fight of the Palestinians against the Israelis.

^{vii} Religion, is a well known tool of "moral disengagement", a theory that encompasses all the ways in which people neutralize or remove any inhibitions they have about committing acts of violence. Some common patterns include exactly imagining one's self as a hero, portraying one's self as a functionary, minimizing the harm done, dehumanizing the victim, or insulating one's self in routine activities. In the current case, religious incitement has been used as a moral disengagement method to fight the fear of death, redeem the horrible act and dehumanize the target, despite the character ("secular" or religious fundamentalist) of the terrorist group initiating the attack. Through the Mosques, the Palestinian organizations, the Palestinian Authority or even the family up-bringing, strong religious messages are transmitted. The Islamic notions of "martyrdom", "Jihad", "infidels", the heavenly compensations for all Muslims (including women) dominate the Palestinian environment and are very important in order to lead the female perpetrator to defy death, deny life, family life and also kill innocent civilians (sometimes even school children). The enemy is demonised and is deprived of his human value (Jews are portrayed as evil, animals, "satans", "apes", vile race etc.). The violent act looses any negative meaning and becomes a righteous deed, saving the soul and "real life" of the "martyr" who gives a testimony of faith. All suicide bombings that have been

perpetrated to date by their female actors, are presented and propagandised by the Palestinian groups above all as 'martyrdom' and sacrifice operations with strong and eminent religious dimensions (Bandura, 1999; Zimbardo, 1995).

^{viii}Nationalism enters the arena through the theory of "differential association", which asserts that a person becomes delinquent because of an "excess" of definitions favorable to crime over definitions unfavorable to it. Criminal behavior is learned, in interaction with other persons in a process of communication. The principal part of the learning of criminal behavior occurs within intimate personal groups. When criminal behavior is learned, the learning includes techniques of committing the crime (which are sometimes very simple), the specific direction of motives, drives, rationalizations, and attitudes. When people become criminal, they do so not only because of contacts with criminal patterns but also because of isolation from anti-criminal patterns. The above socialization can be traced through the Palestinian community's appraisal, acceptance and very promotion of the suicide attacks carried out by women. The Palestinian female suicide bomber is viewed as a national hero and projected as a role model for the young generation. The violent act is conceived and applauded as a heroic contribution that also women should do for the liberation of their country as the only solution against the military superior Israeli enemy. Her behaviour as such is encouraged by family support (breeding of "martyrs"), school education (school texts, teacher's guides, educational material etc.), university and neighbourhood (children games), Palestinian Authority rhetoric and strategy (summer camps, Palestinian TV). The Palestinian female suicide terrorists are exactly linked from the stage of early age with different versions of intimate social networks in various levels (and some of them overlapping) that encourage and promote "martyrdom"-suicide attack operations (Cressey, 1960; Akers, 1985).

^{ix} Women's honour culture is linked with "rational choice". This theory holds that people engage in crime after weighing the costs and benefits of their actions to arrive at a rational choice about motivation after perceiving that the chances of gain outweigh any possible punishment or loss. Humans are purposive, goal oriented and have sets of hierarchically ordered preferences, values or utilities, so choosing lines of behaviour, they make rational calculations with respect to the utility of alternative lines of conduct with reference to the preference hierarchy, the costs of each alternative in terms of utilities foregone, and the best way to maximize utility. Criminals must come to believe their actions will be beneficial to themselves, their community, or society and they must come to see that crime pays, or is at least better than their situation. The decision to engage in suicide violence is made by Palestinian female individuals choosing their best fate option according to the possibilities their society provides them, the axis of values in their settings and the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The strong honour notion and tradition of the patriarchal Islamic society has a direct impact in the involvement of women in suicide terrorism. Women with honour problems (personal or even family ones),

bad reputation and problematic societal status, instead of facing humiliation, exclusion, expulsion or even being victimised in 'honour killings', choose to clear their names, restore, elevate their status or the family's and even gain paradise through the suicide attack (Becker, 1976: 169-217).

^x For example, looking just at Palestinian attacks between 2000 and 2002, suicide attacks represented only 1% of the total number of attacks but they caused about 44% of the Israeli casualties (Moghadam, 2003).

^{xi} This has been used even in conventional terrorist attacks, where Palestinian insurgents disguised as women to avoid Israeli counter-fire.

^{xii} Shalom Harari, expert Arabist (Victor, 2003: 13).

^{xiii} On Israeli channel Ynet3, June 21, 2005.

^{xiv} On February 9, 2002, the *New York Times* reported that an Israeli government investigation concluded that Wafa Idris was in fact a suicide bomber. The investigation had been ordered since circumstances surrounding the attack were initially unclear, especially the question of whether Idris had attempted to plant a bomb and escape, or whether she had intended to die in the attack (Bennet, 2002).

^{xv} According to the law in Israel when a Palestinian suicide bomber dies or is killed while committing an act of terrorism against civilians or soldiers within Israel, his or her body is never released to the family. Instead, it is buried in an unmarked grave in a large cemetery in the north of Israel.

^{xvi} All of the sources about the reaction on Wafa Idris by the Arab world are from "The Celebration of the First Female Suicide Bomber, Part III", *Inquiry and Analysis*, February 14, 2002, MEMRI (a).

^{xvii} Editorial of Al-Quds Al-Arabi, May 29, 2002.

^{xviii} Al-Wafd Columnist Sa'id Sadeq.

^{xix} Jordanian Islamist, Yasser Za'atrah, in the Jordanian Al-Dustour

^{xx} According to a columnist of the Egyptian newspaper Al-Wafd (Coperland, 2002)

^{xxi} This is the comparison that Adel Sadew, a psychiatrist who heads the Psychiatry Department in the University of Cairo (Victor, 2003: 26).

^{xxii} During the first "Intifada", the involvement of women was huge, pivotal, but very different. Women took the streets to join numerous demonstrations and marches organized by women's committees. Women of all ages and social classes threw stones, burned tires, transported and prepared stones, built roadblocks, raised Palestinian flags, and prevented Israeli soldiers from arresting people. Much has been written about the role of women in the first "Intifada" (Strum, 1992; Abdo, 1991).

^{xxiii} This is why even during the first "Intifada", women's "supportive" roles were undertaken in dangerous circumstances and they were visibly seen in public spaces carrying rocks to the youths, shielding them from arrest, organising food and health care for the community under curfews, petitioning for the release of prisoners etc. Within their traditional social structures this behaviour would shame Palestinian

women, but as a result of the domestic sphere being a target of the military (night raids, house demolitions etc.) women began to transgress social norms engaging in “unconventional” activities (Mayer, 1994).

^{xxiv} “Bearing more children for the revolution” was a motto repeatedly heard by the late Yasser Arafat as he inspired women to have no less than 12 children each (Naajjar, 1992: 258; Abdulhadi, 1998: 655). There is a general issue on how during conflicts nations engage in demographic wars that leave women with limited control of their bodies (Davis, 1989: 9).

^{xxv} Hamas Charter issued in 1993 abstract (Hammer, 2000: 300-301).

^{xxvi} Even in the past the case of the notorious Leyla Khaled was actually an exceptional one, even in the “secular” past of the Palestinian struggle.

^{xxvii} Yet, the story about female involvement in the general framework of Palestinian fighting comes from further back, even if with different forms and modalities. Back in 29 August 1968, Leila Khaled, a young PFLP activist, participated in the hijacking of the Rome-Athens flight. Arrested and then released in exchange with other prisoners, today she lives in Damascus and is the mother of two children. In 1978, nineteen year-old Dalal al-Mughrabi, close to the Fatah organization, was head of a group of 11 attackers (with a second woman in the group) that hijacked an Israeli bus. The attack ended up with 39 deaths, 72 wounded and 9 victims amongst the attackers (and Dalal herself). In the traditional Middle East, there is also a precedent for the use of female suicide bombers. On March 10, 1985, 18-year old Sumayah Sa’ad drove a car loaded with dynamite into an Israeli military position in Southern Lebanon, killing twelve Israeli soldiers and wounding fourteen others. Roughly two weeks later, on March 25, 17-year old San’ah Muheidli drove a TNT-laden car into an IDF convoy, killing two soldiers and wounding two more. The two women were posthumously awarded the honouring title of “Brides of Blood” (Ricolfi, 2004; Taheri, 1987: 126-129; Salameh, 1986).

^{xxviii} *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat* (London), January 31, 2002.

^{xxix} Middle East News Online, January 28, 2002.

^{xxx} “Sheikh Fadlullah Justifies Martyrdom Operations for Women,” Lebanon-Palestine, Arabic news.com, Politics February 4, 2002.

^{xxxi} *Al-Sha’ab* (Egypt), February 1, 2002.

^{xxxii} Inappropriate behaviour according to the Muslim code of conduct.

^{xxxiii} *Al-Sha’ab* (Egypt), February 1, 2002.

^{xxxiv} Though it was unexpected, at least as many researchers would think in the past. See the interview of Massimo Introvigne, author of the book “*Hamas: Fondamentalismo Islamico e Terrorismo Suicida in Palestina*,” published in 25 August 2005 in *Elledici*, where he would find- like most at that time- difficult that “Hamas” would recruit women suicide bombers.

^{xxxv} An important land mark in Islam and female suicide bombers has come also from the Chechen. “The use of female suicide bombers used to be a clear indication of

secular terrorism. Yet, the growth of the number of Chechen women involved in suicide operations signalled a change in the Islamic fundamentalist organizations (Zerdalis, 2004: 11).

^{xxxvi} “Lebanese Muslim Cleric OK’s Female Suicide Bombers,” *Business Recorder*, April 2, 2002.

^{xxxvii} All of the experts I interviewed agreed on the fact that behind the phenomenon of female suicide terrorism in Palestinian society lies a strong combination of religion and nationality.

^{xxxviii} Of course, to this day, Islamic scholars continue to debate generally whether suicide attacks against Israelis are legitimate, regardless whether the perpetrators are men or women. Those who believe suicide operations to be a legitimate form of resistance, organize the attacks and eventually carry them out, are usually associated with the radical Islamist branch of the Muslim tradition. It is interesting that even Hezbollah's decision to use suicide bombings had raised internal objections at the beginning, specifically by Shaykh Fadlallah, who was unwilling to praise such tactics. However when the strategy of suicide horror started to pay-off with the multinational peace-keeping force pulling out, the religious debate lost importance (Sprinzak, 2000: 4).

^{xxxix} According to Sheikk Yussef Qaradawi, an influential cleric based in Qatar, who issued a fatwa ruling that Palestinian women can indeed reach Paradise through suicide bombings (Bennet, 2002). The importance of this decree is shown by the fact that there have been cases like the one of Tawriya Hamamra, a young Palestinian suicide bomber to be, who did not continue with her plan partly- as she stated- because she would have to dress like a modern Israeli woman and this would be against her religious beliefs (Jacobson, 2002).

^{xl} According to a man identified as a women's trainer in the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (Daraghme, 2003).

^{xli} For instance, the radical rabbi from Brooklyn Meir Kahane has advocated the use of suicide operations for the sake of victory for Israel claiming: “A man who volunteers for such operations will be called a hero and a martyr” (Hoffman, 1998: 105). Of course violent trends exist generally in religious groups (Keppel, 1995). Though it is only Islamist terrorists today that seem to be causing major threats to international security, at different points in history, every religion has produced religious killers (Shittier, 1987).

^{xlii} According to Dr. Nizar Rayan, a lecturer of Islamic Law and father of suicide bomber Ibrahim Rayan, quoted by Palestinian Psychiatrist Dr. Iyad Zaquout (Himmel, 2002).

^{xliii} “This is the most supreme sacrifice I can make. The only way we can achieve our eelam [homeland] is through arms. That is the only way anybody will listen to us. Even if we die”, as a young 17-year-old girl named Vasantha, recruited by the Tamil Tigers (Hoffman and McCormic, 2004: 260).

^{xliv} Written by Mahmoud Ahmed Marmash, 21 years old, who blew himself in Netanya on May 2001, in a letter he left to his family (Margalit, 2003).

^{xlv} Excerpts from the Friday (August 17, 2001) sermon broadcast live on Palestinian TV from the Sheik 'Ijlin mosque in Gaza. The preacher Sheik Isma'il Aal Ghadwan is speaking, "PA TV Friday Sermon Calls for Jihad and Martyrdom."

^{xlvi} Article 15, Hamas Charter.

^{xlvii} Actually Baitul-Maqdis was the first Qibia, direction towards which Muslims face when praying, before that was changed to Kaaba in Mecca..

^{xlviii} Especially when repeatedly the Arabs have faced military defeats in any and every military confrontation with the Israelis.

^{xlix} The holiness of this geographical region has promoted more than Islamic terrorism. On November 4 1995, Yigal Amir, a law student of Bar-Ilan University and religious extremist assassinated the Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, for the had to stop the peace process, perceived to him as a threat to the spiritual and territorial integrity of Eretz Yisrael.

^l Actually the deliberation of Jerusalem is a quest for all fanatical Muslims. On October 18 1979, Ayatollah Khomeyne issued a "fatwa" calling for the preparation for the liberation of Jerusalem and the eradication of the State of Israel on the last Friday of each Ramadan. This last Friday is called "Jerusalem day" and it is observed by Islamists worldwide.

^{li} A very interesting case is that of the "LTTE" and "PKK" groups, which are supposed to be secular. Both have used suicide attacks extensively and with a very big involvement of women. Yet, these two groups are in a sense "religious": they have operated like religious sects under the God-like figures of their leaders (Velupillai Prabhakaran and Ocalan-"Apo" relatively) who had full and absolute political and spiritual authority (Radu, 2003).

^{lii} Actually even in the atheist Narodniki of the 1870-80s in Russia religion had its role. Andrei Zhelyabov during his trial declared himself "a follower of Christ" and it has been account of terrorists stopping before an icon en route to their assignment and crossing themselves with one hand while holding the bomb with the other (Parry, 1976: 530).

^{liii} The "flag of Islam" seems to have an appeal, this is why there is an "Islamic cover", even for the secular Palestinian organizations.

^{liv} Over the years and following the collapse of the Soviet Bloc the leftist Palestinian organizations had to gradually increase their preference for nationalistic principles in place of the ideological ones

^{lv} For example Islamist "Hamas" and "PIJ" call the suicide operations the bombers participate "Amaliat Istishadiyah" ("martyrdom" operations) and the "secular" PFLP and Fatah call them "Amaliat Feda'iah" ("sacrificial" operations).

^{lvi} Schoolbook "History of the Arabs and Muslims", Grade 6, 34.

^{lvii} As Sheikh Ahmed Yassin told Barbara Victor, though when asked specifically where the rewards are mentioned in the text of the Koran he replied: "It's my job and the job of others sheikhs and Imams to interpret the Koran..." (Victor, 2003: 113).

^{lviii} A similar call was in the will of Sa'id Al-Hutari, who carried out the June 1 2001 suicide bombing outside the disco near the Dolphinarium in Tel Aviv. He wrote: "Call out in joy my mother; distribute sweets, oh my father and brothers; a wedding with the 'black eyed' awaits your son in Paradise", see newspaper *Al-Risala*, July 7 2001.

^{lix} Excerpts from the broadcasted statements, from BBC News, Wednesday, 14 January, 2004.

^{lx} According to Hiba Daraghmeh's friends and relatives (Bennet, 2002).

^{lxi} Ahrin Ahmed (Levy-Barzilai, 2003).

^{lxii} Israeli TV's *Channel 10*, June 20, 2005.

^{lxiii} Public Opinion Poll, June 2001, the Jerusalem Media and Communication Centre, accessed <http://www.jmcc.org/publicpoll/pop/01/jun/pop4.htm> (June 25 2001).

^{lxiv} In late October 2003 for example 74,5% of Palestinians supported suicide attacks, according to data provided by the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research in Ramallah, West Bank (Hafez, 2004: 19).

^{lxv} Yosef Aref, teacher in Nablus and member of Palestinian Islamic Jihad (Prusher).

^{lxvi} It is interesting to note that the famous, quite moderate and against the tactics of suicide bombings psychiatrist Sarraj admits in a published article of his that even he supports the 'martyrs' families: "as a Palestinian, as an Arab, as a Muslim, and as a human being, I feel obliged to support them" (El-Sarraj, 2002).

^{lxvii} Most experts and people who know the Palestinian society agree that the money is not the significant factor behind the willingness to be killed killing.

^{lxviii} This was also the finding during a very interesting and important research concerning 35 incarcerated Middle Eastern Terrorists in Israeli jails (Post, Sprinzak and Denny, 2003: 173).

^{lxix} As the well known journalist covering for about 15 years Middle East issues for the Italian newspaper "Corriere della Sera" Guido Olympio verified, during an interview in most cases the candidates are related as friends or family with someone belonging to a Palestinian organization.

^{lxx} As Palestinian Psychiatrist Dr. Iyad Zaquout explained (Himmel, 2002).

^{lxxi} An example is the ceremony that took place honouring Izz Al-Din Al Mashri, who carried out the suicide attack of the Sbarro Pizzeria in central Jerusalem on August 9, 2001. According to " Hamas" official Ashraf Sawaftah "His relatives distributed sweets and accepted their son as a bridegroom married to the "black eyed", not as someone who had been killed and was being laid in the ground", see newspaper *Al-Risala* August 16, 2001.

^{lxxii} There have been reports about parents who proudly supported their child's self-sacrifice. Hassan Hotari, father of the Dolphinarium bomber, reacted to his son's attack by saying "I am very happy and proud of what my son did and, frankly, am a bit jealous...I wish I had done [the bombing]. My son has fulfilled the Prophet's wishes. He has become a hero! Tell me, what more could a father ask? (Kelley, 2001).

^{lxxiii} Palestinian parents in general are named after their children, so they are called "Father of A", or "Mother of B".

^{lxxiv} According to sociologist, specialist in Islam Dr. Asraf Zahedi (Drexler, 2003).

^{lxxv} She was a poet who converted to Islam during the time of the Prophet Muhammad. She is considered the "Mother of the Shahids", because when her four sons died in the battle of Qadasiyya in 637 AD, not only she did not mourn, but she thanked Allah who had honoured her with their deaths! The famous Umm Nidal Farhat, the mother filmed helping her son Muhammad leave the home to carry out a suicide bombing on March 20 2002, has been honoured by being called "Khansaa Falastin".

^{lxxvi} Research has shown, however, that this only delays grief. Months later, many parents express regret and doubts about their son or daughter's sacrifice, and they mourn the loss of their child (Victor, 2003: 168-171; Butler, 2002: 74-75).

^{lxxvii} Doctors treating mothers of "martyrs" have noted an increase in psychosomatic problems, stomach disorders, dizziness and loss of appetite. While at first they find support from their communities' approbation, "six months later you see nothing but grief", according to Palestinian psychologist Eyad Sarraj, expert on suicide attacks (Drexler, 2003).

^{lxxviii} This videotaping of the martyr plays a very important role. It is primarily a ceremony intended to establish an irrevocable personal commitment of the suicide candidate to carry out the mission. This ritual constitutes the point of no return, from which exists the "living martyr" ("al-shahid al-hai").

^{lxxix} Words of Mohammed Akras (Hazboun,)

^{lxxx} Vivian Khamis, Palestinian professor of Psychology at Bethlehem University (Coperland, 2002).

^{lxxxii} A Palestinian girl's words (Simon, 2003).

^{lxxxii} The way Tanzim militants tried to pursue her as she narrated to Israeli Defence Minister Ben-Eliezer during his visits to prisons to meet with suicide bombers (Levy-Barzilai, 2003).

^{lxxxiii} This clip was shown to participants of the International Policy institute for Counterterrorism's 3rd International Conference, Herzilya, Israel, 7-10 September 2003, among whom was the hereby.

^{lxxxiv} To understand better the Palestinian society structure, one has to go back to its origin. The basic social unit in Palestine was a group of families linked one to another by agnatic ties, the Hamula. The head of the Hamula was the chief decision

maker in most aspects of social life. Today, three structurally different types of family can be found in the Palestinian society of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Camps and especially villages are in most cases highly cohesive structures where extended family units are still the basis of social life. The nuclear family consists of father, mother and the unmarried children. This family type is found in towns of the West Bank, but not often in the Gaza Strip. The transitional family, a mixed structure of nuclear and extended family where also uncles and unmarried aunts belong, can be found in both the West Bank and the Gaza strip. The extended family, or hamula, is still the most common family structure in the Occupied Territories and consists of all the sons descended from a common grandfather, their wives, children, including five generations (Manasra, 1993).

^{lxxxv} Indicative of the are the following: until recently Palestinian women could not even register the birth of their children, a man or another male relative could only do so (Barron, 2002: 82).

^{lxxxvi} Sameera, a Palestinian woman interviewed in a research about Palestinian women in “Intifada” (Hammer, 2000: 309).

^{lxxxvii} Even Islamist women have expressed their support to proposals for reform of the current Shari’a legislation. Some of these dynamics can be seen in an interesting documentary film, *Women under the sun*, by Subhi Zebeideh, Refugee Camp Productions 1998.

^{lxxxviii} Ramalla academic commenting on Palestinian women (Warnock, 1990: 138).

^{lxxxix} Im Hassan interviewed (Jarrah, 1990).

^{xc} In his attempt to discourage divorce, Mohammad said: “Marry but divorce not, as divorce shakes the throne of God” (Mogadham, 1993: 42).

^{xc i} “The First ‘Intifada’ pushed Palestinian women out of the kitchen” as is often commented. Yet this first uprising where the taking part of women was vast, did not have any lasting and definite result in changing and upgrading women's status.

^{xc ii} “Palestinian Women Throw Off Their Veils,” *The Economist*, April 4, 1998, 44.

^{xc iii} A very interesting work on the subject of Palestinian women's shame is the one of Laila Nazzal, “The Role of Shame in Societal Transformation among Palestinian Women in the West Bank,” unpublished Ph.D Thesis, University of Michigan, 1986.

^{xc iv} According to tribal leader Tarrad Fayiz, in *The Jordan Times*, February 15 2000.

^{xc v} Another alternative to murder can be marrying the woman off, either to the person who violated her honour, or to someone else, in order to start fresh and protect the girl and family from the social stigma (Feldner, 2000).

^{xc vi} The former United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, Coomaraswamy, examined “honor” crimes in 2002 in her report on Cultural Practices in the Family that are Violent towards Women. According to the Special Rapporteur, “By controlling women’s sexuality and reproduction, they become the custodians of cultural and ethnic purity...The woman’s body is considered to be the ‘repository of family honour.’ Alarming, the number of honour killings is on the

rise as the perception of what constitutes honour and what damages it widens.” See Report of the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, its Causes and Consequences”, submitted in accordance with in accordance with Commission on Human Rights resolution 2001/49,” (Fifty-eighth session), U.N Document E/CN.4/2002/83, January 31, 2002.

^{xcvii}The honour killings “is a complicated issue that cuts deep into the history of Arab society...what the men of the family, clan, or tribe seek control of in a patrilineal society is reproductive power. Women for the tribes were considered a factory for making men. The honor killing is not a means to control sexual power or behaviour. What’s behind it is the issue of fertility or reproductive power”, according to Sharif Kanaana, professor of anthropology at Birzeit University (Ruggi, 2000: 394).

^{xcviii} It should be noted that according to Palestinian sources the importance of “honour” has been an object of exploitation by the Israelis in the context of the conflict. There have been accusations against Israeli interrogators exploiting the concepts of honour and shame to bring Palestinian prisoners to confession. Using methods as threatening with rape and attempting to tear up their clothes (Warnock, 1990: 149-153 and “Il Ruolo delle Donne Palestinesi nella Lotta Nazionale,” O.L.P. Italia, Roma 1979: 28-32).

^{xcix} This attitude is quite contrary to Islamic principles governing such cases. A woman cannot be accused of fornication under Islamic principles unless four credible adults bear witness that they observed her in the act of coitus.

^c Honour killings have also been reported in Bangladesh, Brazil, Ecuador, Egypt, India, Italy, Jordan, Morocco, Pakistan, Sweden, Turkey, Uganda and the United Kingdom (Nebehay, 2000). Because these crimes often go unreported, it is difficult to determine the actual number of victims in honour killings. The United Nations Population Fund estimates as many as 5000 females being killed each year. Honour killings tend to be prevalent in countries with a majority Muslim population, but many Islamic leaders and scholars condemn the practice and deny that it is based on religious doctrine. This practice of ‘honour killing’ is a form of murder without trial, which is contrary to Islam. For a case to even be brought before a Muslim court, any accusation of illicit sexual behaviour must have been seen by four witnesses and they must have been witness to the act of sexual intercourse itself Islam upholds the sanctity of human life, as the Holy Qur’an declares that killing one innocent human being is akin to killing the entire human race (Qur’an 5:32, 6:151, 17:33). Like all other faith traditions, Islam considers all forms of life as sacred. There is certainly no justification for such a practice of “Honour Killing” in Islamic Law (Shariah). It is pertinent here to consider this issue in more detail. Honour killing is actually a pre-Islamic, tribal custom stemming from the patriarchal and patrilineal society's interest in keeping strict control over familial power structures.

^{ci} Newspaper *Al-Ayyam*, June 1 2000

^{cii} Newspaper *Al-Hayat al-Jadida*, May 6, 2000

^{ciii} Newspaper *Ar-Risala*, June 11, 1998

^{civ} Indicative has been the research of Barbara Victor who travelled throughout Gaza and from one West Bank town to another, interviewing the families and friends of four women who had succeeded in giving their lives, as well as approximately 80 girls and young women who had tried and failed. She discovered that it was never another woman who recruited the suicide bombers and that without exception, these women had been trained by a trusted member of the family- a brother, an uncle, an esteemed religious leader, teacher, or family friend, all of whom were men. But most important, she found out that all four women who had died- plus the others who had tried and failed to die a martyr's death- had personal problems that made their lives untenable within their own culture and society, in a social environment that pushed these young women over the edge of personal despair. Questioning male recruiters- some of whom were in jail- she examined how by virtue of their powerful role in these women's lives, they had managed to convince them, that given their 'moral transgressions', or the errors made by another male family member, the only way to redeem themselves and the family name was to die a martyr's death. Only then would these women enjoy everlasting life filled with happiness, respect and luxury, and finally be elevated to an equal par with men. Only in Paradise, and only if they killed themselves (Victor, 2003).

^{cv} Surprisingly Wafa's ex husband revealed to Barbara Victor that she didn't see a prenatal specialist or a fertility expert, and in fact she had been diagnosed by a general practitioner rather than a gynaecologist. She had no particular tests such as an MRI or a sonogram, and it was only after her ordeal that the hospital staff determined she could never have another child.

^{cvi} "Suicide Mother's Disappearing Crutches," *Debkafile Special Report*, January 15 2004.

^{cvii} Literary meaning "exposure to the sun".

^{cviii} The cases of Rajman Kurbanova, the Hadziev sisters, Aset Gislurkaeva, Maliza Mutaeva, Zareta Dolhaeva, Zarema Inarkaeva, Marina Bisultanova, Hava Baraeva, Zulihan Elihadziena, Zarema Muzahoeva, Hadcat Ganieva, Zaira Jupaeva, Sekimat Alieva, all Chechen female suicide bombers verify the above assumption in another Muslim arena. According to the research conducted for more than a year by journalist Julia Jujik published in her book "Le Fidanzate di Allah", (Kujik, 2004), the Chechen women suicide terrorists are women with disgraced honour that have no other option and way out from their strict society.

^{cix} Military prosecutor dealing with cases like this was interviewed by the hereby and he argued that the reason behind female part in suicide operations is reputation problems that organizations take advantage of and blackmail to reveal unless the woman cooperates. He mentioned an example of "Fatina", mother of 7 who was accused of extra marital relationships. There is this general argument that Palestinian groups aim for recruitment the vulnerable and "problematic" people.

^{cx} Words of a Palestinian tribal notable (Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2000: 51).

^{cxⁱ} Poem by the noted Israeli poetess Karen Alkalay-Gut, *Palestine-Israel Journal*, 113.

^{cxⁱⁱ} Interesting is the case of a Chechen failed female suicide bomber Zarima Muzhikhoyeva, caught with 1.5 kilograms of explosives she failed to detonate. Her husband was killed in the first war in Chechnya when she was pregnant with her daughter and she was desperate and full of debts. A female friend offered to help her and agreed to pay her debts and give to her grandparents' money, provide for her daughter, if Zarima chose to follow the true path of Allah (Zerdalis, 2004: 10).

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