

Why They Blow Themselves Up

by

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TIME

**ALL
BOXED
IN**



“Why They Blow Themselves Up”

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- Time Magazine, April 8 2002

VIEWPOINT

Eyad Sarraj

Why We Blow Ourselves Up

A Palestinian doctor explains why so many of his people want to be martyrs

A FEW WEEKS AGO, MY SISTER, A PROFESSIONAL AND A mother of four, was visibly shaken as she watched, on television, Israeli tanks torturing the streets of a refugee camp and soldiers raping its homes. She shocked us all when she declared that she would like to become a martyr. A few hours later, a young Palestinian woman stunned the world when she turned herself into a human bomb and exploded in Jerusalem, killing one Israeli and wounding 150 others. In the weeks after, more women joined the queue of suicide bombers as the world stood alarmed and bewildered.

To understand why Palestinian men, and now women, are blowing themselves up in Israeli restaurants and buses is to understand the Arab-Israeli conflict. Ours is a nation of anger and defiance. The struggle today is how not to become a suicide bomber. We are told that there are long queues of people willing to join the road to heaven, and I believe it.

What propels people into such action is a long history of humiliation and a desire for revenge that every Arab harbors. Since the establishment of Israel in 1948 and the resultant uprooting of Palestinians, a deep-seated feeling of shame has taken root in the Arab psyche. Shame is the most painful emotion in the Arab culture, producing the feeling that one is unworthy to live. The honorable Arab is the one who refuses to suffer shame and dies in dignity.

This is the 35 years of Israeli military occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip has served as a continuous reminder of Arab weakness. But it was the destruction of the P.L.O. in Lebanon by Ariel Sharon that decisively shifted the Palestinian-Israeli confrontation to the occupied territories and Israel. Helplessness and shame gave way to anger that later poured into the streets as defiance. That was the first *intifadeh*.

Suddenly Palestinians felt that they were restoring their honor by fighting the aggressor, by not being helpless victims. Facing a superior Israeli army with its formidable arsenal, they felt morally victorious as the children of the stones became heroes of defiance. While that sense of victory served

Arafat as a psychological platform to launch his peace initiative and recognition of Israel, it was the Oslo agreement and the peace process that followed that disillusioned the Palestinians and threw them into a new episode of confrontation. The reluctance of Israeli governments to implement promised withdrawals from Palestinian land, and then the catastrophic failure of the Camp David talks, prepared the fertile soil for a new breed of militants and suicide bombers.

It was the re-entry of Sharon to the political scene that

sparked the new *intifadeh*. Scores of Palestinians were killed and maimed as Sharon declared his intention to cause as many casualties as possible. This time around, however, Israeli soldiers were not on foot and not even visible as they shot from their tanks. Palestinian militants shifted their target to the exposed Israeli civilians in markets and cafés. For the extremist militant, there is no difference between Israelis. They are the enemy; they are all the same.

In every case of martyrdom, there is a personal story of tragedy and trauma. A curious journalist once asked me to introduce him to a potential martyr. When the journalist asked, “Why would you do it?” he was told, “Would you fight for your country or not? Of course you would. You would be respected in your country as a brave man, and I would be remembered as a martyr.”

This is the influence of the teaching of the Koran, the most potent and powerful book in Arabia for the past 14 centuries. In the holy book, God promised Muslims who sacrificed themselves for the sake of Islam that they would not die. They would live on in paradise. Muslims, men and women, even secularists, hold to the promise literally. Heaven is then the ultimate reward of the devout who have the courage to take the ultimate test of faith.

What the young man did not say was that he was burning with a desire for revenge. He was a tearful witness, at the age of six, to his father’s beating by Israeli soldiers. He would never forget seeing his father taken away, bleeding from the nose.

As Sharon was taking Arafat hostage and grinding the salt of humiliation into the sour wounds, he was taking us into a new horrific level of madness. Another Palestinian girl blew herself up in Jerusalem last week, killing two Israelis and wounding more. She will not be the last.



AYAT AKHRAS was only 16 when she set off explosives outside a supermarket last week

Dr. Eyad Sarraj is a psychiatrist and founder of the Palestinian Independent Commission for Citizens' Rights

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1. Time Magazine editorial – April, 2002
2. Purpose & Plan will be to:
 - Review the Islamic theology of salvation/particularly the concept of no assurance
 - Overview of the concept of Jihad-
 - what is meant by Jihad
 - brief history of Jihad
 - what is required of Muslims related to Jihad
 - what is promised for Muslims who die in Jihad
3. Is suicide a permissible element of Jihad?
4. Christian perspective on salvation!



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I. The Islamic Concept of Salvation

A. God is the author of creation:

“it is God who has created the heavens and the earth, and all between them, in six days” Sura 32:4
including Adam

“we created man from sounding clay, from mud molded into shape” Sura 15:26

“We said, O Adam! Dwell thou and thy wife in the Garden and eat of the bountiful things therein” Sura 2:35a

B. In the garden, Adam and Eve were prohibited from partaking of a particular tree –
“but approach not this tree, or ye turn into harm and transgression” Sura 2:35b

C. Adam and Eve sinned and ate of the tree - “So by deceit he brought about their fall: when they tasted of the tree” Sura 7:20-21

D. They are expelled from the Garden apparently after receiving forgiveness.

“Our Lord! We have wronged our own souls: If thou forgive us not And bestow not upon us Thy Mercy, we shall Certainly be lost.”

“Get ye down, With enmity between yourselves. On earth will be your dwelling place.” Sura 7:20-25

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E. Islam, however, views man's fall as

- possibly allegorical
- as essential for earthly dominion
- as being an act of forgetfulness or weakness not as rebellion or transgression against God!
- Man is born therefore not into a state of sinfulness but into a natural state of purity or “fitrah”

“So set thou thy face Truly to the religion being upright, The nature in which Allah has made mankind:” Sura 30:30

“As turned out from the creative hand of Allah, man is innocent, pure, true, free, inclined to right and virtue...That is his true nature”

Koranic version published by the King Fahd Holy Quran Printing Complex

“all people are born as true Muslims, innocent, pure and free (Sura 30:30). There is no single act which has warped the human will.”

Cited in Geisler and Saleeb – p 48

Kateregga and Sheuk, pp. 17-18.

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F. Salvation, therefore, is a matter not of redemption, and transformation as it is of duty, performance and obligation.

It is achieved by

1) Good works

“Then those whose balance (of Good Deeds) is heavy,
They will attain salvation:” Sura
23:102

2) Islamic duty

- a) Shahadah – confession and belief
- b) Salat – 5 times of daily ritual prayer
- c) Swam – keeping the fast of Ramadan
- d) Zakat – giving of 2.5 % of one’s income
- e) Haj – pilgrimage to Mecca

3) Keeping the balance scale of good deeds tilted in your favor
“Then those whose balance is heavy, - They will attain salvation:
But those whose balance is light, will be those who have lost
their souls:” Sura 23:102-3
Allah alone knowing when this is so



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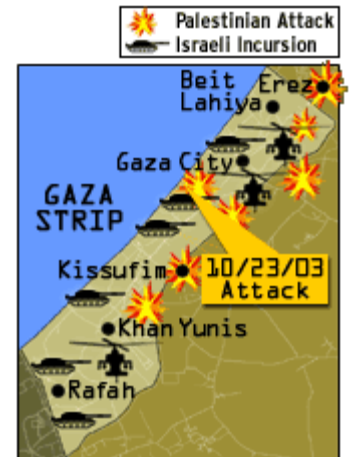
G. Finally NO ASSURANCE is provided

1) Allah may be merciful to some:

“Say: ‘O my Servants who have transgressed against their souls! Despair not of the Mercy of God’.” Sura 39:53

2) There is no guarantee that he will be merciful to any.

3) There is no historic redemptive event.



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II. JIHAD – ITS MEANING AND SIGNIFICANCE

A. JIHAD = “Struggle”
JIHAD ≠ “holy war”

B. What about a “lesser” or a “greater” Jihad?

C. The experience of the “Prophet.”

- death of “Ibnu’l – Ashraf”
- beheading of Jewish men (600 to 900)
- death of Jewess
- Lead numerous battles to protect and propagate the influence of Islam

D. The legacy of Islam

- conquered Damascus in 635
- conquered parts of Iraq in 636
- conquered Jerusalem in 638
- conquered Persians in 642
- conquered Armenia in 643
- by 709 complete control of North Africa
- by 711 conquered Spain



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E. Jihad in the Koran/sample verses

“Fight in the cause of God those who fight you...
And slay them wherever ye catch them...
And fight them on until there is no more tumult
or oppression and there prevail justice and faith in God...
” 2:190-193

“Fighting is prescribed for you and ye dislike it. But it is possible that you dislike a thing which is good for you, and that ye love a thing which is bad for you.”
2:216

“To fight in the cause of Truth is one of the highest forms of charity. What can you offer that is more precious than your own life.” Footnote 236 – Koranic version published by the King Fahd Holy Quran Printing Complex

“...For the Unbelievers are unto you open enemies.” 4:101

“The punishment of those who wage war against God and His apostle and strike with might and main for mischief through the land is: execution, or crucifixion, on the cutting off of hands and feet.” 5:36



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E. Jihad in the Koran/sample verses – (cont'd)

“Let not the unbelievers think that they can get the better (of the godly). They will never frustrate (them). Against them make ready your strength to the utmost of your power, including steeds of war, to strike terror into (the hearts of) the enemies of God and your enemies.” 8:59-60

“O apostle! Rouse the believer to the fight. If there are twenty amongst you...They will vanish two hundred.” 8:65

“...fight and slay The pagans wherever ye find them...
And seize them, beleaguer them,
And lie in wait for them In every stratagem (of war); 9:5



“...it is only when the four months of grace are past, and the other party show (sic) no signs of desisting from their treacherous designs by right conduct, that the state of war supervenes – between Faith and Unfaith.

Koranic version published by the King Fahd Holy Quran Printing Complex

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III. What Is The Reward of Jihad – particularly for those who die in its execution?

“And if ye are slain or die in the way of God, forgiveness and mercy from God are far better than all they could amass. And if ye die, or are slain, ho! It is unto God that ye are brought together.” Sura 3:157-158

It results in:

- Forgiveness of sin
- Mercy from Allah
- Eternal Life



“Think not of those who are slain in God’s way as dead. Nay, they live finding their sustenance in the presence of their Lord.” Sura 3:164

“Those who have...fought or been slain, verily I will blot out from them iniquities and admit them into Gardens with rivers flowing beneath; a reward from the presence of God...” Sura 3:195

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III. What Is The Reward of Jihad – (cont'd)

“Let those fight in the cause of God who sell the life of this world for the Hereafter. To him who fighteth in the cause of God whether he is slain or gets victory, soon shall we give him a reward of great (value). Those who believe fight in the cause of God and those who reject faith fight in the cause of evil, so fight ye against the friends of Satan, feeble indeed is the cunning of Satan.”
Sura 4:74-75

- rejecting faith is fighting in the cause of evil
- if Jihad is a “spiritual” struggle how is it that one may lose their life in pursuing it?



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IV. Suicide Bombing

A. What Does the Koran Say About Suicide?

1. Sura 4:29-30

“O ye who believe! Eat not up your property among yourselves in vanities . . . Nor kill (or destroy) yourselves: for verily Allah hath been to you Most Merciful! If any do that in rancor and injustice soon shall We cast them into the Fire;”

2. “. . . There are Muslim defenders of suicide bombing. They deny that those who blow themselves up in public places are actually committing suicide at all, since their intention is not to kill themselves but to use their bodies as an instrument to kill unbelievers. As such the bombers are martyrs.” Robert Spencer, *Onward Muslim Soldiers*, p. 256

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IV. Suicide Bombing – (cont’d)

3. They refer to Sura 9:111

“Allah hath purchased of the believers their persons and their goods; for theirs (in return) is the garden (of Paradise): they fight in His cause, and slay and are slain: a promise binding on Him in truth. . .”

And Sura 47:4-6

“When ye meet the Unbelievers (in fight), smite at their necks . . . But those who are slain in The Way of Allah, He will never let their deeds be lost. Soon will He guide them and improve their condition, and admit them to the Garden which He has announced for them.”

And Sura 2:154

“And say not of those who are slain in the way of Allah: ‘They are dead.’ Nay, they are living, though ye perceive (it) not.” “Because I loved my son, I encouraged him to die a martyr’s death for the sake of Allah . . . Jihad is a religious obligation incumbent upon us, and we must carry it out. I sacrificed Muhammad as part of my obligation. This is an easy thing. There is no disagreement [among scholars] on such matters.” Spencer p. 257

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IV. Suicide Bombing – (cont'd)

B. Practical Syllogism

1) The Koran commands Jihad.

2) The Koran promises Paradise to those who are slain in Jihad.

3) Suicide bombers are considered by many as fighters who die in Jihad.

4) Therefore suicide bombers go to Paradise.



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Conclusion

- 1) A Christian Response - John 3:16
- 2) God is the cause behind salvation.
- 3) God determined and paid Himself the cost of salvation.
- 4) God set the condition of salvation.

