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## Palestinian Women and Children in the Throes of *Islamikaze* Terrorism

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### Apologia

Even prior to September 11, and certainly much more so thereafter, Muslim clerics such as radical Sheikh Qaradhawi, the Sheikh of Al-Azhar Muhammad Tantawi, and Sheikh `Akrama Sabri, the hand-picked *Mufti* of the Palestinian Authority, and many others who took up residence in the West, such as Sheikhs al-Bakri and al-Masri who settled in London, pronounced themselves in favor of the *Islamikaze* killings for the sake of Islam, especially against Israelis.<sup>2</sup> Tantawi is perhaps the most duplicitous among them, for unlike others, who have been either clearly for (and this is the majority of those who articulated their thinking) or emphatically against, Tantawi has shown both by first attending the Alexandria Interfaith Conference in early 2002, where those acts of terror were denounced, but then his position constantly eroded. He came first to justify the *Wafa Idris* act of terror; the first perpetrated by a Palestinian woman, and then accepted in fact the indiscriminate attacks against civilians as legal. His position is particularly sensitive because while he responds to the Egyptian establishment and has to toe the official anti-terrorist line espoused by his government which appointed him, he is also in a responsible and prestigious enough location to heed the popular resentment of the masses against the US and Israel.

The involvement of women, first as victims of terror and then as its progenitors, was brought up by Syrian-born Sheikh `Umar al-Bakri, who took refuge in London and advocated at some point that “all homosexuals there ought to throw themselves down from the Big Ben,”<sup>3</sup> called the British MPs “monkeys”,<sup>4</sup> and vowed that the flag of Islam would “fly high on 10 Downing Street and at the Elysee”.<sup>5</sup> He justified and defended the September 11 New York and Washington horrors, which for him came as a “compensation for the atrocities the US had committed against Islam”, and exhorted Muslims to unite and fight, sacrifice themselves and their wealth in order to gain access to Paradise and to make the difference between “truth and falsehood, belief and heresy, oppressors and oppressed, the alliance of Satan against the

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Alliance of Allah”.<sup>6</sup> After the American attack against Afghanistan was launched, he issued a *fatwa* against Pakistani President Musharraf and other Muslim leaders who let their territory be used by Americans against a fellow Muslim state. In that verdict, for what it is worth, he raised, *inter alia*, many aspects of the status of women in Islam and in general, in the context of what we call terrorism and he insists on dubbing *jihad*. For him, the Muslims who collaborated with the US were *murtaddun* (apostates), if “at all they were Muslims to start with”, and since they are involved in the war against Muslims, the sentence of *murtadd harbi* (an apostate who should be fought) applies to them, to wit:

1. His life is free prey [it is permissible to kill him],
2. His marriage becomes invalid, as does his guardianship of his children and relatives,<sup>7</sup>
3. His property is free prey and he will not be able to bequeath it,
4. He cannot be buried in a Muslim cemetery,
5. He must be treated with animosity and hatred...
6. There is no difference between a man and a woman... It is permissible to shed the blood of a woman who is a heretic (*harbiyya*), even if her fighting is limited to singing... Thus acted the Prophet against the fighting women of the Qureish tribe. He permitted their blood to be spilled and even ordered them killed, although he generally prohibited killing women.<sup>8</sup>

This verdict, which allowed the killing of Muslim women under certain circumstances, appeared under the emblem of “The Shari`ah Court of the United Kingdom”, and was signed jointly by al-Bakri himself, under his title of “Shari`ah Court Judge in London”, and Muhammad al-Musa`ari, the Secretary General of the Committee for Protection of Legitimate Rights in Saudi Arabia, which lends to it authority and respectability. Its English version, however, was slightly different and signed by “Muslim Jurists from Syria, Lebanon, Kuwait, the Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Afghanistan and the United Kingdom”, with the names of the original two signatories, al-Bakri and al-Musa`ari, appearing at the bottom, with their phone numbers for further inquiries. In this version, the *Qur`anic* verse was added which threatened that

the punishment of those who wage war against Allah and His Prophet and strive to make mischief in the land, is only this – that they should be murdered or crucified, or their hands and feet should be cut off on opposing sides, or they should be imprisoned.<sup>9</sup>

And the section about the women of Qureish who were killed by the Prophet, was replaced by a paragraph that reads:

Therefore we ask Muslims with the capability, especially the armies of Muslim countries, to move quickly and to capture those apostates and criminals involved in these crimes, especially the ruler of Pakistan, King Fahd of Saudi Arabia and Rabbani of Afghanistan.<sup>10</sup>

The exposure of women to harrowing physical mutilation, on authority of the precedent set by the Prophet, though it was concealed in the English version, where women were omitted from those horrors, together with the determination to dissolve marriages of “apostate” men, naturally had an impact on the developing debate on the active participation of Muslim women (and by extension also children), in the *Islamikaze* attacks as actors, or on suffering the consequences thereof as passive spectators. For once the taboo was lifted on involving women (and children) in the course of Muslim violence during this brand of *jihad*, or in the hardships that resulted, no obstacles could be envisaged any longer for exempting them from taking part in that struggle. Here, we shall focus on Palestinian women and children, because

their people, who have been engaged in a murderous battle against Israel, have become the chief model of *Islamikaze* in the Muslim world. The Palestinians have emerged in effect, not only as the most active agents in the implementation of the idea, but have also widened the circle of its membership beyond the few self-sacrificing radicals, into a legitimate national form of struggle in which women and children have taken the initiative, or were led, to partake. Unlike al-Bakri and al-Masri's fantasies where they articulate their wishful thinking to confront the world, bring down the West, kindle a world Islamic revolution and subvert their Western countries of exile from within, Palestinian clerics are unified by the theme of what they perceive as a concrete, daily and all-pervasive national struggle to which they are pushed to provide theological responses. And once they sanctified *Islamikaze* as a legitimate form of struggle, indeed encouraged it, they could not exclude women and children from it, nor refute them when they pressed for participation. Other Muslim clerics were also dragged into the debate, but let us first focus on the Palestinian clerics' stated positions on *Islamikaze*, which by necessity generated the inclusion, first of individuals who did not belong to the Islamists of *Hamas* and Islamic *Jihad*, but were members of the avowedly "secular" *Fatah* and *al-Aqsa* Brigades, followed by women and then children, in those horrendous acts of terror.

### The Role of Palestinian Doctors of the Holy Law

A pertinent place to start would be the *Mufti* of the Palestinian Authority, Sheikh `Akrama Sabri, who was appointed by Arafat (not by the *Hamas* or some other fanatic group). Just one week prior to the disastrous act of *Islamikaze* against the discotheque in Tel Aviv, where 21 teenagers who were making merry were blown to pieces, in early June 2001, and as a sinister prophecy of things to come, he delivered a Friday sermon in the *Aqsa* Mosque in Jerusalem. By legitimizing and even praising the killing of Israeli children, just as the killing of women in general was justified by al-Bakri, both Muslim women and children would now become potential casualties for the sake of Islam. Sabri first praised the *Islamikaze* martyrs in general, criticized the Saudi *Mufti* who had prohibited these acts (in the meantime the said *Mufti* qualified his prohibition), and demanded that the Americans release the four Muslims who were convicted for the first attempt to blow up the Twin Towers in 1993. Then came the text of his sermon:

Oh Muslims!! Let me begin my sermon with a quote from the words of the Prophet's Companion... in a speech to his army before the battle of Mu`tah,<sup>11</sup> where he said: "Oh people, I swear by Allah that the thing you hate [meaning death] is what you are going out to seek today, namely the *shahada* (martyrdom)..."

We are not fighting with a large army nor with force. We are fighting only with this religion of Islam with which we have been blessed by Allah. So, attack and you will gain one of two blessings: either victory or martyrdom. In the eighth [*sic*, ought to be seventh] century, the Muslim army consisted of 3,000 fighters while the Romans [*sic*, ought to be Byzantines] had 100,000... Nevertheless the Muslim commanders decided to go into the battle...

Oh Muslims! The first Commander of the Muslim army sacrificed his life in Mu`tah..., so the command was taken over by another Companion until his right hand palm was cut off. He passed the banner to his left hand until that was severed too, so he continued to hold the banner with the two stumps of his severed hands until he was struck down... His body was cut in two, in his body there were 50 stabbings, but none of them entered in his back because he did not retreat... That is the nature of Believers who do not retreat at the time of assault. I am asking: "Was his breaking into the ranks of the enemy called 'suicide'? No!! Allah Forbid!! That was

martyrdom for the sake of Allah! The Prophet then named him *ja`far* (the flyer), because Allah granted him two wings when he reached Paradise, in place of his two hands lost in combat. He persisted in attacking the enemy until he attained martyrdom... We say this to those who think it is an act of 'suicide'... Be careful with your rulings..."<sup>12</sup>

[Finally, after the pool of commanders was depleted], came along Khalid ibn al-Walid [later a famous fighter in the conquests of Islam], fought fiercely and devised a brilliant plan for withdrawal, sustaining only minimal casualties... Before the Prophet sent the army to Mu`tah he gave instructions not to kill innocent people, women or children, not to uproot a tree or destroy a house. This is our great Islamic religion. It encourages good ethics and high morale in peace and in war... On the other hand, our enemies destroy houses, kill children...and uproot trees. They prevent pregnant women from reaching hospitals... They use airplanes against defenseless civilians. Yes, they are occupiers and do not deserve any sovereignty.

We tell them that as much as you love life, the Muslim loves death and martyrdom. There is a great difference between he who loves the hereafter and he who loves this world. The Muslim loves death and strives for martyrdom. He does not fear the oppression of the arrogant or the weapons of the blood-letters. The blessed and sacred soil of Palestine has vomited all the invaders and all the colonialists throughout history, and it will soon vomit, with Allah's help, the present occupiers.<sup>13</sup>

This statement of the preference for death over life, citing the precedents of the Companions of the Prophet, not only sanctifies martyrdom and posits it as an ideal in itself, and not only as a necessity, but pushes Muslims to fight against all odds, even when they are certain to die, as it posits martyrdom as a worthy alternative to victory. What is interesting is that the venerable Sheikh skips over the logic of his own sermon by:

- a. Bringing up the precedents of the Prophet who spared the lives of the innocent, but at the same time pushing young people to die amidst indiscriminate killing, which is in the nature of *Islamikaze* attacks where the maximization of civilian casualties is an ideal; and
- b. While he unremittably praised the martyrs, who fought against all odds, he also lauded the brilliant act of withdrawal of Kahlid ibn al-Walid, which is exactly the reverse of martyrdom, namely the admission of the vanity of sacrifice in the face of reality, and the praiseworthy abandonment of it and the election of life over death.

If this was the official Palestinian attitude prior to September 11, how much more so subsequent to it, when the escalation of the Palestinian *intifada* and the total mobilization of the Palestinian people against Israel produced a stepped-up resort to *Islamikaze* acts on a scale, with a frequency and continuity, and with a zealotry and rage, never experienced before by Muslims anywhere, and deserving of the comparison with the Japanese *Kamikaze* at the end of the Pacific War. But there was a difference: while the *Kamikaze* aimed at military targets in order to destroy the American fleet in the Pacific, the Palestinian *Islamikaze* aim primarily at Israeli civilian targets in order to maximize casualties, terror, disarray and demoralization among them, something akin to what the perpetrators of the Twin Towers horror had devised against the US. True, at first, Yasser Arafat tried to appear as negating acts of *Islamikaze* that the world had rejected with horror after the New York disaster, and he declared his siding with the war against terrorism. His troops even killed three jubilating *Hamas* youth, who could not hide their delight at the sight of terror-stricken America. But soon thereafter, not only the *Hamas* escalated their war of terror through martyrdom against Israel, but they were joined by Arafat's own forces, the *Aqsa* Brigades. In fact, the *Fatah*, Arafat's movement within the PLO, embraced the *Hamas* concept that martyrdom operations

had achieved a kind of balance of deterrence for the Palestinian people in their struggle against Israel, and they were in fact an “act of self-defense” against what they saw as “Israel’s aggression”.<sup>14</sup> Consequently, there was an intensification of the incitement to more *Islamikaze* attacks by *Imams* throughout the Palestinian Authority. Sheikh Ibrahim Madhi, who incidentally doubles as a lecturer in ecology at the local Aqsa University, delivered a clear message to his Palestinian audience on a Friday service at a mosque in Gaza:

...We are convinced of the victory of Allah, we are convinced that one of these days we shall enter Jerusalem as conquerors, and to Jaffa, Haifa, Ramla...and all Palestine as conquerors... All those who did not gain martyrdom yet will wake up in the middle of the night and say: “My God! Why did you deprive me of martyrdom, for the *shahid* lives by Allah... Our enemies now suffer more than we do, because we know that our dead go to Paradise while the Jewish dead go directly to Hell and to their cruel lot... This is the reason for our steadfastness, out of obedience to Allah... The Jews are expecting their false Messiah, but we are waiting for our *Mahdi* and for Jesus, Blessed be He. ...He will kill with his own hands the Jewish false Messiah, in Lydda, Palestine. Palestine will then be, as in the past, the cemetery for the invaders, as it had been for the Tatar, Crusader and the old and new colonialist invaders...

A *Hadith* says that, “The Jews will fight you, but you shall dominate them.” What could be more beautiful than this tradition? It will be Allah who would put the Muslim in a position of dominance over the Jew...until the Jew hides behind the rock and the tree. But the rock and the tree will say: “Oh Muslim, Oh servant of Allah! A Jew hides behind me, come and kill him!” Except for the *Gharqad* tree, which is the tree of the Jews...” We believe in this *Hadith*, we are also convinced that this *Hadith* heralds the spread of Islam and its rule all over the land...

Oh beloved, look to the east of the earth, and you will find Japan and the ocean. Be assured that these will be owned by the Muslim nation as the *Hadith* says “from the ocean to the ocean...”

Oh Allah, accept our martyrs in the highest Heavens...

Oh Allah, show the Jews a black day...

Oh Allah, annihilate the Jews and their supporters...

Oh Allah, raise the flag of Jihad across the land

Oh Allah, forgive our sins...<sup>15</sup>

This incessant self-aggrandizement of the Muslims as the future rulers of the entire universe on the one hand, and the incitement for action and glorification of death, which has seeped down to all the crevices of the grassroots of Palestinian society on the other, impel the Palestinian populace to identify instinctively with their martyrs and *ipso facto* to encourage more sacrifices among them. Thus, when visitors come to the homes of the martyrs to greet (not to bring condolences) the “delighted” (not bereaved) families of the *Islamikaze*, the mothers declare to the gatherings that are well publicized by the official press and television, their vow to send in the rest of the boys too, some present, some yet to be born, into *jihad* and acts of *Islamikaze*. Children from kindergarten age on also appear on Palestinian television during their regular “educational” activities, brandishing weapons and vowing, with visible excitement and joy over something they ill-comprehend: their desire to be martyrs. The constant nurturing of the flames of the *intifada* by this never-ending, ever growing, enthusiasm for *jihad* and martyrdom, which they say is well-rooted in Islamic history, is the most revolutionary and lasting contribution of the Palestinian leadership, clerical and political, to the idea of the Palestinian struggle. So much so, that when Arafat was confined to his office by the Israeli siege around and in Ramallah in April 2002, his most cited declaration

to the press was that he aspired to become a *shahid* (martyr) himself, among the million martyrs that he envisaged marching on Jerusalem.

### **The Debate over Children – *Islamikaze***

Interestingly enough, though the universal Palestinian jubilation *vis-à-vis* martyrdom has peaked during the *Aqsa Intifada* that broke out in October 2000, the Palestinians had been “educated” and prepared for martyrdom much before. There are tapes of incitement of school children to become martyrs dating back to 1998, though in most of them martyrdom *per se* is extolled without necessarily encouraging the young to blow themselves up in the process. Indeed, martyrdom is instilled in them as an ideal not only in the context of dramatic and much hallowed *Islamikaze* actions, but also as a routine of a grinding confrontation with Israeli troops, where the demonstrating children, imbued with the audacity to face the enemy and provoke him, could end up dying. In that case of passive death too, unlike the active search of death by the *Islamikaze*, they would be considered martyrs. Clips abound of young teenagers vowing martyrdom on Palestinian television, but the most dramatic and world renowned, which was played and replayed by the world media, concerned Muhammad al-Dura. In November 2000, at the very onset of the *intifada*, he was killed in crossfire, apparently shot by Palestinians as it later turned out, in an area of confrontation where children should have been kept away from in the first place. But since it is part of the Palestinian strategy to push their children to the front line and then turn their own callousness towards their children into a propaganda campaign against Israel, he was led there by his careless father, and the child paid the price of this life. But then, the Palestinian machine started operating for the glorification of al-Dura domestically, for accusing Israel of his death externally, and for calling other Palestinian children to follow his model.

The clip on Palestinian Television was reenacted by actors, with the child Muhammad al-Dura being shown lying in the field and, interspersed with many violent scenes of battle, he is always shown in beautiful, peaceful places, running along the beach, or through the Plaza of the *Aqsa* Mosque, or alongside wonderful fountains, flying a kite in a green pasture, approaching a giant wheel. The soundtrack is telling the children that death in conflict with Israel will bring them to a child’s paradise, where Muhammad is tranquil, as we see him playing and waving to the audience of children to “Come, follow me here.” The main lyrics pass up and back from narrator to choir, to `A`ida, a popular woman singer (whose name incidentally means “the Returnee”), with long tresses and dressed in striking flowing red robes. The dead boy Muhammad talks to his father: “Till we meet, my father, till we meet! I go with no tears, with no fears, how sweet is the fragrance of the martyrs!!! I shall go to my place in Heaven, how sweet is the fragrance of the martyrs!!!” The narrator continues: “How sweet is the fragrance of the martyrs, how sweet is the fragrance of the earth, its thirst quenched by the gush of blood flowing from the youthful body...” The screen at this point is filled with two huge roses which are closing in slow motion, accompanying the narrative: “The earth, its thirst quenched by the gush of blood from the body of youth.” `A`ida continues: “How sweet is the scent of the earth, its thirst satisfied by the gush of blood, flowing from the body of youth.” These refrains are repeated several times ending with `A`ida singing: “Oh the children of the world say ‘till we meet, Oh Muhammad, till we meet!’” The clip closes with the following credit: “Produced by the Ministry of Information and Culture – the Palestinian National Fund.”<sup>16</sup>

These harrowing concepts that the children of Palestine are indoctrinated on their national television, by their own leaders, to adopt as their own, are supported by the clerics of the Palestinian Authority in general, chief among them is the same `Akrama Sabri cited above. In an interview with the Egyptian weekly, *Al-Ahram al-`Arabi*, the Sheikh not only laid claim, as

a matter of course, to all Israel, but he stressed the need for martyrdom of children in the process of “liberating” Jerusalem and all the rest of Palestine, in order to prove that the new generation will carry on the mission with determination. He said:

We have not sacrificed enough yet to be worthy of liberating al-Aqsa... To liberate Jerusalem, Salah a-Din al-Ayyubi made great sacrifices for a long time, and we have to sacrifice until Allah’s victory is completed... The land of Palestine is not only Jerusalem. This land stretches from the Jordan River to the sea. The Palestinian problem relates to all this land. We cannot establish a homeland only by liberating Jerusalem. It is true that Salah a-Din did not rest until he liberated Jerusalem, but this does not mean that the rest of this blessed land should be neglected or given up...

Every Palestinian is in fact in a state of *jihad*. I feel the martyr is lucky because the angels usher him to his wedding in Heaven... There is no doubt that the child martyr suggests that the new generation will carry on the mission with determination... The younger the martyr, the greater, and the more I respect him... One wrote his name on a note before he died... It said “I am Martyr so and so.” In every martyr’s pocket we find a note with his name on it. He sentences himself to martyrdom even before he becomes a martyr... The mothers [who cry in joy when they hear of their sons’ martyrdom] willingly sacrifice their offspring for the sake of freedom. It is a great display of the power of belief. The mother is participating in the great reward of the *jihad* to liberate al-Aqsa. I talked to a young man who said: “I want to marry the black-eyed women of Heaven.” The next day he became a martyr. I am sure his mother was filled with joy about his heavenly marriage. Such a son must have such a mother...

...I am filled with rage towards the Jews. I have never greeted a Jew when I come near one and I never will. They cannot even dream that I will. They do not dare to bother me because they are the most cowardly creatures Allah has ever created... Palestinian children are thus taught, almost from their birth to hate Jews and to glorify *jihad*, even to the point of their own death and martyrdom, as an essential part of their culture.<sup>17</sup>

In contrast with the clerics who encouraged acts of *Islamikaze*, obviously in response to the huge wave of popular support for that mode of struggle, there were some mainstream professionals, such as Ashraf al-`Ajrami, a columnist in the Palestinian Authority daily, *Al-Ayyam*, who realized the damage that the outrageous procedure of using children caused to national interest, and counseled to desist from it. He acknowledged the fact that “the phenomenon of martyrdom was on the increase, especially among minors,” but expectedly blamed the “Israeli occupation” for the “degradation of life which pushes many to disdain life and seek the shortest way to the hereafter”. But he also admitted that it was the “honor and esteem that the Palestinian people gives to the martyr that has had a crucial effect on the emergence of this phenomenon”. He also imputed importance in this regard to the “funerals of the martyrs and the celebrations held in their honor, which have always been accompanied by talks of everlasting life and eternal serenity in Paradise”. Therefore, the rationale goes, why wait through the tribulations of life if one can take a shortcut to Paradise by pressing a button or purposely come in range of Israeli shooting? At the same time he contends that the enthusiasm among minors to be hailed as heroes and martyrs might encourage their gratuitous exploitation by others. He also concedes that some Gaza children are influenced by mosques and schools, an admission to the ruinous character not only of religious sermons, but also of the Palestinian textbooks,<sup>18</sup> some funded by the European Union, which cultivate the senseless *Islamikaze* death.<sup>19</sup>

The columnist, who appears to be well updated on the techniques and motivations of the young *Islamikaze*, delves into terrifying details and counsels to desist from this practice, not

for the moral burden it puts on the Palestinian leadership but for the damage it causes to Palestinian propaganda:

Some are willing to arm them for money – with pistols, hand grenades, and readily available pipe bombs that cost only a few shekels. These brainwashed children are imbued with motivation to approach the nearest settlement where they are shot dead by the soldiers of the occupation...

The children's martyrdom promotes the hostile propaganda of the enemies, particularly in reinforcing their claims that the Palestinians send their children to the front line. These are false claims aimed at justifying the indiscriminate shooting at all the Palestinians... The phenomenon also causes the children to rebel against their parents, insofar as the children threaten their parents that they would martyr themselves if the parents did not meet their demands or did not turn a blind eye to their inappropriate behavior... Moreover, some of the children have used pipe bombs during arguments amongst themselves...

Collective efforts should be made to contain this phenomenon... All activities having an ill-effect on the children's emotional stability, pulling them in directions outside the normal matters of children, must be monitored... The security apparatuses should apprehend the arms traffickers and collaborators, who are acting among the youth to make money or to exterminate this generation with its nationalist enthusiasm and its will to fight... It is also important to stop the mosques from engaging in exaggerated political activity and providing grounds for anyone who wants to abuse the minds of youth and minors... The Palestinian media also have a role in refraining from broadcasting pictures affecting the emotional state of children, and from exaggerating in reporting tragic news that arouses the children's feelings of frustration and despair...<sup>20</sup>

A rare courageous Arab voice against the self-immolation of children was raised by a female Arab journalist, Huda al-Husseini, who was incensed at the systematic sacrifice of children in a war they did not initiate and perhaps ill-comprehended:

Some Palestinian leaders...consciously issue orders with the purpose of ending the childhood [of their youth], even if it means their last breath. I want to know why we, the Arabs, insist on dying rather than living for our homeland. If these children have nothing to lose, and they think the training is a game, are we supposed to continue pushing them with hypocrisy and stupid enthusiasm to actually lose their lives? Have we exhausted all means and used every argument, have we exhausted our brains, having nothing left but to gamble with the lives of children and push them to confront Israel? Or maybe the Palestinian leaders – those who are in the PA or those who get ready to fill a role in it – put their trust in the humanity of Israel? If this is what they do, they are wrong... What kind of independence is based on the blood of children while the leaders are safe and so are their children and grandchildren? Are only the miserable destined to die in the spring of their lives? Those children who are killed may not, in their short lives, have enjoyed a fresh piece of bread, slept in a warm bed, felt the happiness of putting on a new piece of clothing, or carried books with no torn pages to school...

The time for Arafat and those around him has reached its dusk... First of all, these children deserve to live, before we push them to find death. But, what are we doing to them? We abuse their innocence, we supply them with tons of stones, while we sit in our offices and commend their death. Then we accept an invitation for a working lunch or dinner and talk about those children who died holding stones, those that died, probably hungry...<sup>21</sup>

But others in the Arab world, including supposedly enlightened academics, and certainly populist self-made clerics who do not conform to the establishment, as well as non-Palestinian

jurists and other notables, remained unflinching in their support to the *Islamikaze*. For example, Halim Barakat, a professor at Georgetown University, castigated the Arab states for their oppression of their populations, but credited the Arab people for their awakening from their slumber. He created a rule of thumb whereby “the more technologically advanced the people, the less moral and more barbaric it becomes,” implying that Western countries like the US, which has given him asylum, and Israel, are so technologically advanced that they qualify for his definition of barbarism in their actions against the Muslims in Afghanistan and Palestine, thus turning on its head the definition of terrorism: the barbarians are not those who blew up the Twin Towers or the restaurants and buses in Israel, but those who moved decisively to eliminate them.<sup>22</sup> Another “enlightened” person, in the person of the Saudi Ambassador to London, wrote a poem praising the Palestinian *Islamikaze*. The man, Dr. Ghazi al-Ghosaibi (interesting that many of the most ardent supporters of the martyrdom attacks proudly carry the title of PhD, a sign to their Western education), an acknowledged Arab poet, heaped laudatory terms on Ayat al-Akhras, the 18 year-old Palestinian girl who blew herself up in a Jerusalem supermarket, killing two Israelis and wounding 25.<sup>23</sup>

The respectable Ambassador, who had been serving his country in London for a decade, so that one could suspect that some civility may have rubbed off on him, wrote of teenager Ayat that “doors of Heaven are opened to her” and that “the heart of the White House was filled with darkness.” The British Foreign Ministry, which released a statement dubbing “suicide bombing as a form of terrorism”, pledged that some senior official would make clear British views to the Ambassador, but did not rebuke the Ambassador nor undertook any other measure against him. The Board of Deputies of British Jews stated that it was “appalled”, but no action was taken to oust from civilization the author of that appalling statement.<sup>24</sup> Another Saudi notable, also a holder of a PhD, Dr. Ibrahim al-Sa’adat, a columnist in the government-owned daily, *al-Jazira*, came out with a campaign of idolization of `Abd-al-Baset `Oudeh, who detonated himself in the Netanya hotel during the Passover *Seder*, killing 29 people and wounding scores of others, and also the young Ayat al-Akhras. His description of his “heroes” is almost as horrendous as the acts themselves:

May Allah have mercy on you, *Mujahid* and martyr, the quiet hero who infiltrated so elegantly and spoke so gaily. You defended your religion, your homeland, and your people... Courageously, full of willingness to wage  *jihad* ... you executed your assignment and sacrificed your pure soul... The Israeli military, armed to the teeth, did not remove a hair of your head... You knew the Zionists do not honor promises, treaties and understand only the language of resistance and  *jihad* ...

May Allah have mercy on you, `Abd-al-Baset, the beloved son of the Arab nation. You evoked hope that had begun to dissipate, you restored life [by killing 29 innocent civilians] that had begun to expire, you revived the Arab pride, chivalry, valor and sacrifice that had begun to die, and you caused pain to the people who had begun to celebrate and sing atop the bodies of the children, youth and mothers of your people... You entered silently, with the faith and the confidence with which Allah inspired you... You reached your destination, you sat down at one of the tables, talked, told a few jokes and laughed with them, and then Allah decreed for you a martyr’s death. What heroism, courage and strength – almost unmatched on the face of the earth!

May Allah have mercy on you Ayat al-Akhras! You left your home for the path of martyrdom and Paradise... You proceeded with a determination, will and strength rarely found, even impossible to find, in a 16 year-old girl...

You did not seek advise with American or Russian governments...you knew that the hand of Allah is supreme, that self-sacrifice is the highest form of *jihad*. You were not tempted by, nor did you rejoice in the life of this world... Oh, beloved of the Arab nation of 16 springs. Marriage was before you, you were a girl engaged and looking forward to...wed, except you chose Allah, Paradise and martyrdom... You taught the Arab nation a lesson never taught in the schools and universities, and you breathed your last and awakened in us the sensations that had begun to disappear... May Allah have mercy on you, you Ayat and all male and female *Mujahideen*. We ask Allah that the angels welcome you as righteous martyrs, and beseech Allah to give you the highest level of Paradise.<sup>25</sup>

### The Debate over Women

We have thus a new situation in which terrorism by *Islamikaze*, though hitherto solely the trademark of Muslim radicals, and rarely so, has become since September 11, an acknowledged universal and common *modus operandi* in and by Muslim societies, as a mind-boggling comment of displeasure about domestic or international politics. On September 11 alone, 19 self-sacrificing young Muslims died in the US; and since, about one hundred Palestinian terrorists died in the same fashion, taking with them the lives of hundreds of Israelis. The crossover from an extreme act to a current and routine way of action, not only necessitated the widening of the circle of volunteers within Palestinian ranks, but also engendered a new attitude towards the participation of women and children in this sort of battle. Hitherto, Muslim clerics have frowned upon active military service of women in any of the Muslim countries, and the heads of *Hamas* and Islamic *Jihad* have reserved for their women the role of educators and “manufacturers of men”.<sup>26</sup> The current cross-gender and cross-national universalization of *Islamikaze* terrorism, however, has widely opened the door towards banalization and routinization of this stunning phenomenon. Because what it takes from now on is not a trained and resolute fighter, with high physical skills, battlefield experience, endurance under stress and technical sophistication, but only a common person, male or female, adult or child, indoctrinated and eager to die for Allah, who knows how to push a button and evaporate instantly into Paradise, while pushing his victims and their loved ones into Hell.

The debate surrounding the “martyrdom” of Wafa Idris, the first Palestinian woman *Islamikaze*, who has been followed by others since, is in itself indicative of the new mood. Arafat’s “*al-Aqsa* Brigades”, took responsibility for Wafa’s explosion in the central street of Jerusalem in January 2002, killing one woman and maiming dozens of others. Much of the initial debate went over her motivations to sacrifice herself, citing personal difficulties.<sup>27</sup> But when fellow Palestinians began to justify her act, quoting the precedents of other renown Palestinian women-fighters, like Laila Khalid, and predicting that more women might follow suit,<sup>28</sup> the religious aspect of it all broke into the open. *Hamas* leaders said that *jihad* was an obligation that applied to women also, and that Islam had never differentiated between men and women in the battlefield, based on a precedent of the Prophet who used to draw lots among women who wished to join the battle.<sup>29</sup> Jamila Shanti, the Head of the Women’s Activities of the Palestinian Islamic Movement, concurred to the idea of equality of women in the struggle, “provided they avoided inappropriate behavior”. However, the women-martyrs are allowed, to her mind, to relinquish the veil for the occasion in order to “mislead the enemy”. She believes that since the clerics share a consensus that *Islamikaze* operations are the highest form of martyrdom, there is nothing wrong with them.<sup>30</sup> The head of *Hamas*, Sheikh Yassin, however, had some reservations, stating that while women had a role in *jihad* and martyrdom, their uniqueness warranted that they must be accompanied by a chaperon,<sup>31</sup>

exactly as puritanical Muslims would not allow women to drive or to roam the streets unaccompanied by a brother, a father or a husband.

Yassin, bowing to operational requisites, later amended his position, realizing that the lone operation of the woman-martyr would become unfeasible if she is accompanied by someone who would attract attention and might himself die in the attack. Therefore, he stated that only if the woman was to stay out for the day and the night, for operational considerations, she needed company, while if her absence was shorter, like in the case of martyrdom where she was not supposed to return, she might go alone.<sup>32</sup> But a would be woman-martyr, who had been arrested by Israel for attempting to blow herself up, and was released after the Oslo Accords of 1993, invoked a *Hadith* where the Prophet was said to have allowed women to go to *jihad* even without their husbands' consent, in case the land of Islam was invaded, which she thinks was the case now.<sup>33</sup> Thus, for her, as for Yassin, necessity permitted the usually prohibited. At al-Azhar University, where disputes converge in expectation for the rulings of Sheikh Tantawi, an internal debate ensued. While Sheikh Abu-al-Hassan decreed that the act of *jihad* by women against Israelis was permissible, especially when the enemy has "plundered even one inch of Muslim land", in which case they are entitled to "wage *jihad* even without their husbands' consent, and the slaves without their masters' permission", Tantawi ruled in favor of those acts provided they were not directed against civilians. Abu-al-Hassan also quoted precedents from the time of the Prophet when women were said to have been allowed to fight and kill men from among the enemy Infidels.<sup>34</sup>

Although Yassin explained that women were simply not needed in the *Hamas* ranks of martyrs for the moment, because more male volunteers were available than his organization could absorb,<sup>35</sup> the debate continued to rage in the Arab world. Egypt's *Al-Sha`b* glorified the woman who could teach all Arab men, rulers, princes and women a lesson in heroic defense of her country, in "the battle of martyrdom which petrified the heart of the enemy's entity, and shocked the enemy with her meager, thin and weak body...when with her exploded all the myths about women's weaknesses, submissiveness and enslavement."<sup>36</sup> A Jordanian columnist, who prided himself for the "dignity that women enjoyed in the Arab and Islamic world", accused the Western human rights activists of "robbing women of their rights to be human, and viewed them as bodies without souls", and stressed that Wafa, "never dreamt to own a BMW or a cellular phone, and never carried makeup in her bag, but rather explosives to fill the enemy with horror..." He said that it was the West who demanded that Eastern women should become equal to men, and that was the way the martyr Wafa understood equality. "Oh Wafa Idris!!! Mercy upon you and shame upon us!!!" was his concluding cry.<sup>37</sup> Similarly, *Afaq `Arabiya*, the mouthpiece of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt, accused the West of wasting money in vain, attempting to "disrupt the consciousness of the Muslim women and make them believe that their bodies and needs were most important." The writer, sociologist Dr. al-Maghdoub, launched an all-out attack against that Western intervention, which "invokes women's liberation, equality with men, and their right to be prostitutes, to strip, to reveal their charms", and assured that those concept were doomed to fall on deaf ears.<sup>38</sup> For this "enlightened" sociologist, those Westernized "superficial women" served the West by

Giving [Arab] countries their drug addicted young men and women...who have perverse [homosexual] relations, commit rape, theft, and murder... But they are still a minority, even if they make a lot of noise. The majority of young Muslims are still in good shape. It is true that they are silent, but we have seen how the silence of Wafa Idris ended.<sup>39</sup>

In Egypt and the rest of the Arab world, words of support for Wafa Idris also abounded. Dr. Samia Sa`d a-Din, a woman herself, proclaimed the end of gender classification in the Palestinian struggle, once Palestinian women have decided to "write the history of their

liberation with their blood and will become time bombs in the face of the Israeli enemy.” They will not “settle for being mothers of martyrs” any longer, she assures.<sup>40</sup> Another columnist from the same mouthpiece of the regime, *Al-Akhbar*, found it strange that while the Swedish Foreign Minister, Anna Lind, was criticizing the American position [of support to Israel], Wafa carried out her act of martyrdom; and when Lind spoke up, men kept silent for fear to do so *vis-à-vis* American policy. Thus, one brave woman spoke up while another brave woman acted.<sup>41</sup> For *Al-Ahram* columnist Zakariyya Nil, Wafa Idris was nothing less than a modern Joan of Arc,<sup>42</sup> and another, `Abd al-Halim Qandil, of the weekly *al-`Arabi*, elevated her to new heights, asserting that “a nation who has in it Wafa Idris can never be defeated...for she became the most beautiful of women in the world, and in the world to come, once she rose to Heaven.” He considered her martyrdom as “a death which instilled life” and “a chunk of flesh and blood transformed into illuminating spirit and purity for the generations to come.” He praised her beauty when she liberated the Arabs from their sins and “elevated the humiliated nation to Paradise”.<sup>43</sup> No one, however, reached the summit of praise for her as the Egyptian psychologist, Dr. `Adel Sadeq, the Head of Psychiatry at Cairo’s Ein Shams University, who compared Wafa to no less than Jesus Christ. He said that perhaps the Holy Spirit that placed Jesus in the womb of Mary did the same by “placing a bomb in the heart of Wafa and enveloped her pure body with dynamite”, and it was no coincidence for him that “the enemy in both instances was the same [the Jews].”<sup>44</sup>

While it was to be expected that the Palestinian terrorist organizations who dispatched Wafa to her death would eulogize her in laudatory terms for her martyrdom,<sup>45</sup> it is much harder to explain in any rational terms the swelling support, symbolic and otherwise, that her act produced throughout the Arab world. For if one can understand the political machinations of Saddam Hussein, when he decided to erect a memorial in her honor, one is aghast when a woman film-director, an Egyptian PhD to boot, Amira Abu-Fattuh, writes under the headline, “An Oscar-Winning Film”:

This is not a movie like all other movies. The heroine is the beautiful, pure Palestinian woman, Wafa Idris, full of faith and willpower. I could find no one better than she, and I could find no film more wonderful than this, that shocked Israel’s heart... From Paradise where she is now, she shouts with all her strength: “Enough glorification of the dead! Enough glorification of the victories of your forefathers!!!” They have played their part, and now it is your turn...<sup>46</sup>

This short-lived but symbol-laden “Wafa Festival”, was triggered by the London-based Arabic daily, *al-Quds al-`Arabi*<sup>47</sup> but was immediately picked up, like other sensational issues in the Arabic press, and repeated like a mantra, by Arab and Muslims writers of all political convictions. It was as if their oppressed frustration and hatred for Israel and the Jews, regardless of the “peace” accords that their countries (Egypt and Jordan) had signed with Israel, at a considerable cost to the latter, were merely a new starting point to force her to disarm, to absorb attacks and to duck for more, at the hand of new heroes like Wafa. She was seen as “a spark of light and hope in the midst of darkness, and courageous in deeds, not words”,<sup>48</sup> a Mona Lisa, only more beautiful than the original, with her “dreamy eyes and the mysterious smile on her lips”, and in general “more beautiful than any picture of a woman painted by any artists”;<sup>49</sup> or her suitcase of explosives that carried her to her death as “the most beautiful prize any woman can possibly win. Her spirit was raging, her heart filled with anger and her mind convinced by the calls of peace and coexistence...”<sup>50</sup> Even the horrifying detail of her act sounded like music in the ears of those columnists:

...she quietly made her decision, sought explosives, went to pray, and then chose her target carefully. She went to a big restaurant with dozens of customers. She asked Allah for a martyr’s

death and victory...she kissed the soil of the homeland and went calmly to her fate. She inscribed her name on the forehead of history.<sup>51</sup>

What is even more terrifying is the wish of the writer that the number of victims could have been higher, because the assassin killed “only” one victim, an 81 year-old lady-passerby in the main street of Jerusalem, but the over-enthusiastic columnist carried her in his dreams to a “restaurant with dozens of customers”. This time he was wrong, but at other times, other terrorists like Wafa did kill dozens of unsuspecting civilians, children and entire families of customers in restaurants, much to the delight, one has to assume, of that zealous writer and opinion-maker.

And so Wafa the martyr was made a model of behavior in one Arab paper after another, by columnists of all walks and opinions, government and opposition, especially in “moderate” Egypt, and her act of “donning the belt of explosives and talking to Israel, America and the world, in the only language they understand,”<sup>52</sup> was made the ideal for other youth to emulate. A female columnist, Nagwa Tantawi, dismissed Western culture and pledged victory to the superior culture of the Arabs and Muslims. She just forgot to say explicitly whether the values she was boasting about included martyrdom and wanton killing, but one could infer that from her comparison of Wafa with President Bush’s daughters:

Bush, who leads an oppressive campaign to educate the world, cannot even educate his own daughters. Note the difference between Wafa, the daughter of Arabism and Islam, and Bush’s daughters. The difference is the same as the difference between our culture, based on beautiful and noble values, and on the values of homeland and martyrdom, and the materialistic culture [of the West]. This proves that whatever developments will be, victory will be ours – because we have culture and values.<sup>53</sup>

There was yet another, rather debasing, aspect touching upon women’s position in the Islamic world, in connection with the *Islamikaze* acts of terror, and that was the discussion of the sexual rewards the male-martyrs were promised in Paradise, something that has no parallel with regard to the female-martyrs. The rewards of the hereafter after martyrdom are the most concrete promise, indeed certainty that pushes the *Islamikaze* to cross fearlessly the last obstacle of hesitation and embark on the martyrdom venture. Therefore, it is within the Palestinian community, which has trained and sent to self-immolating *jihad* the greatest proportionate numbers of its sons, daughters and children, that these promises are the most vividly described and debated, once they have become a matter of practical and close at hand routine, and no longer of theoretical and remote theology. The debate did not begin in the aftermath of the September 11 events, but it began to rage at the end of the 1990s in the context of the *Hamas* and Islamic *Jihad* activities within Israel and against Israelis and Jews. On August 19, 2001, barely three weeks before the New York horrors, CBS’s “60 Minutes” aired a program on the *Hamas* in which one of its operatives, Muhammad Abu Wardeh, was asked to tell of his recruiting activities among would-be *Islamikaze*. He said, *inter alia*, that part of his technique was to describe to the novices the way Allah would reward them after they became martyrs by “giving them 70 virgins, 70 wives and everlasting happiness”.<sup>54</sup> Embarrassed by the carnal temptations that were involved in what was to be a pure act of self-sacrifice for the sake of Allah, Muslim leaders in the West (not in the Islamic world where this doctrine enjoys widespread currency), raised questions about the accuracy of the translation of the interview and tried to discredit CBS, accusing it of “fabrication” and defamation of their faith, and demanding retraction and apology.<sup>55</sup>

The controversy centered around the translation of the *huriya* term, which all Muslim conventional interpretations, including the Muslim ones as we shall see below, are proud to

render as “virgins”, usually with the epithet of “black-eyed”, while some Muslim organizations in the West insisted that it was a metaphoric appellation of “angels” or “heavenly beings”. While it was much less important to focus on sexual fantasies than on the horrific acts of indiscriminate killing among the innocent, perpetrated all the same by the *Islamikaze*, the newsworthy sexual controversy persisted nonetheless. To counter those denials, Sheikh Palazzi, an Italian Muslim leader, gave references in the *Qur`an* as well as in Islamic tradition (*Sunna* or *Hadith*) where the doctrine of the 72 (not 70) “black-eyed” “wives” is elaborated in rich and plastic detail,<sup>56</sup> and took the other Muslim leaders in the West to task for their ignorance of the sources. Among Muslim clerics in the Muslim world, there is no equivocation, things are clearly and unabashedly stated. In response to an Australian Muslim query about the reward of female martyrs in Paradise, in comparison with the males who got the black-eyed virgins, the Deputy Director of the authoritative al-Azhar University, Sheikh `Abd al-Fattah Jam`an responded:

The *Qur`an* tells us that in Paradise, Believers get the black-eyed, as Allah [namely the *Qur`anic* text] has said: “And we will marry them to the black-eyed.” The black-eyed are white and delicate, and the black of their eyes is blacker than black, and the white [of their eyes] is whiter than white. To describe their beauty and their great number, the *Qur`an* says that they are “like sapphire and pearls”,<sup>57</sup> in their values, in their color and in their purity. And it is said of them: “They are like well protected pearls in shells,<sup>58</sup> that is they are as pure as pearls in oysters and are not perforated, no hands have ever touched them, no dust or dirt adheres to them, and they are undamaged.” It is further said: “They are like well-protected eggs,<sup>59</sup> that is their delicacy is as the delicacy of the membrane beneath the shell of an egg.” Allah also said: “The black-eyed are confined to pavilions,<sup>60</sup> that is they are hidden within, save for their husbands...”

Most of the black-eyed were first created in Paradise, but some of them are women who acceded to Paradise from this world and are obedient Muslims who observe the words of Allah: “We created them especially and have made them virgins, loving and equal in age.” This means that when the women of this world are old and worn out, Allah recreates them after their old age into virgins who are amiable to their husbands; “equal in age” means equal to one another in age. At the side of the Muslim in Paradise are his wives from this world, if they are among the dwellers of Paradise, along with the black-eyed of Paradise...

If a woman is of the dwellers in Paradise but her husband in this world is not among them, as in the case of Asia, the wife of Pharaoh, she is given to one of the dwellers of Paradise who is of the same status. Regarding the woman who was married to more than one man in her lifetime, and all her [former] husbands are dwellers of Paradise, she may choose among them, and she chooses the best of them... Thus, it is known that women in Paradise also have husbands. Every woman has a husband. If her husband in this world is a dweller of Paradise, he becomes her husband in Paradise, and if he is an Infidel, she is given to one of the dwellers of Paradise who is suited to her in status and in the intensity of his belief.<sup>61</sup>

It is quite understandable that these verses that are attributed to Allah, may be taken as folkloric metaphors by some Muslims who are remote from the front of combat of the *Islamikaze*. There is no doubt, however, that for Muslims whose pursuit of *jihad* is an active and preponderant aspect of their lives, particularly so among the Palestinians, the question of reward in Paradise has been constituting a crucial portion of their worldview, and playing a major role in their battle motivation. In the Palestinian press and the death announcements of martyrs, which are usually pre-recorded in person by the *Islamikaze* and then kept as part of the cultivated patrimony of martyrdom, that the Palestinians weave in order to then impart it to their youth, there is no mincing of words; indeed, there is boasting, desire, expectation and impatient eagerness to take the shortcut and join in one stroke the pleasures of Paradise.

Chilling wordings as they may sound, such announcements as “Greetings will be accepted immediately after the burial and until 10:00 PM... at the home of the martyr’s uncle,” or “With great pride the Palestinian Islamic *Jihad* marries the member of its military wing, the hero Yasser al-Adhami, to the black-eyed,” appear prominently in the Palestinian press,<sup>62</sup> both before and after September 11.

The *Hamas* mouthpiece, *Al-Risala*, for example, published the will of Sa`id al-Hutari who carried out the horrendous massacre of 23 teenagers at the Dolphinarium Discotheque in Tel Aviv on June 1, 2001. It said:

I will turn my body into bombs that will hunt the sons of Zion, blast them and burn their remains... Call out in joy, Oh Mother! Distribute sweets, Oh Father and brothers! A wedding with the black-eyed awaits your son in Paradise.<sup>63</sup>

Similarly, the bombing of the Sbarro pizza restaurant in Jerusalem (August 9, 2001) was “celebrated” by the *Hamas* with the announcement that the *Islamikaze*, Izz al-Din al-Masri’s relatives had “distributed sweets and accepted their son as a bridegroom who married the black-eyed, not as someone who had been killed and buried in the ground”.<sup>64</sup> Other Palestinian youth announced their preference for the black-eyed rather than marrying “women of clay” in this world, while their leaders confirm to them that “if the martyr dreams of a black-eyed, he will get her.”<sup>65</sup> When Jack Kelley of *USA Today* visited a *Hamas* school in Gaza, he saw an 11 year-old boy speaking to his class: “I will make my body a bomb that will blast the flesh of the Zionists, the sons of pigs and monkeys... I will tear their bodies into little pieces and will cause them more pain than they will ever know.” His classmates shouted in response: “Allah Akbar!!” and his teacher shouted: “May the virgins give you pleasure.” A 16-year-old youth leader in a refugee camp told Kelley: “Most boys cannot stop thinking about the virgins.”<sup>66</sup> Convinced more and more, literally *ad nauseam*, of the inextricability of the expected heavenly wedding from the senseless death of Palestinian youth,<sup>67</sup> at the prime of their age, they commit the act, pulling with them to the abyss of death and destruction hundreds of innocent civilians, and wiping out entire families.

Similarly, Palestinian clerics and “educators” such as Dr. Yunis al-Astal of the Islamic Law Department in Gaza University, Sheikh Sabri, already cited above, and the Palestinian Police Chief *Mufti*, Abu Shkheydem, spoke chillingly about the weddings of the *Islamikaze* with the black-eyed in Paradise, and the joy of their mothers. Al-Astal asserted that Paradise was the abode of the martyrs, and in it were “the black-eyed confined to pavilions, and also there were women with downcast eyes whose chastity had not been violated before by either man or *jinn* (Devil)”, and that the world that the Americans and their Arab “eunuchs”, i.e. those who supported them, figured to themselves, was “in our eyes, not worth the wing of a mosquito”. As a bonus, the Sheikh of the police force, which is probably actively engaged in recruiting those young would-be martyrs, promised them that

from their first drop of spilled blood, they will not feel the pain of the wounds, and they are forgiven for all their sins; they see their seats in Paradise; they are saved from the torments of the grave; they marry the black-eyed; they vouch for 70 members of their families; they gain the crown of honor, the precious stones of which are better than the entire world and everything in it.<sup>68</sup>

The most prominent Palestinian cleric in Israel, Sheikh Ra`id from Umm al-Fahm, who served as mayor of his town for more than 10 years, asserted in no uncertain terms in an interview to the major Israeli daily, *Ha`aretz*, that he “had proof” that the story of the virgins had a leg to stand on and that was, of course, the writings in the *Qur`an* and the *Sunna*. He specified that the *shahid* received from Allah six special gifts, including 70 virgins, no

torment in the grave and the choice of 70 members of his family and his confidants to enter Paradise with him.<sup>69</sup> In the instructions given to the *Islamikaze* of September 11, a copy of which was found in Nawwaf al-Hamzi's car, the black-eyed were mentioned twice:

Do not show signs of uneasiness and of tension; be joyful and happy, set your mind at ease, and be confident and rest assured that you are carrying out an action that Allah likes and that pleases Him. Therefore, a day will come, Allah willing, that you will spend with the black-eyed in Paradise... Know that the gardens of Paradise have been decorated for you with the most beautiful ornaments and that the black-eyed will call to you: "Come, Faithful of Allah", after having donned their finest garments.<sup>70</sup>

### Sad Conclusions

The centrality of martyrdom in Palestinian life after the outbreak of their September 2000 *al-Aqsa Intifada*, is reflected not only in their writings, broadcasts and the written media, but also in leaflets that are disseminated in the territories under their rule, as well as audio- and video-cassettes that extol acts of *Islamikaze*, sanctify their perpetrators and cause families who have sacrificed one of their sons to pledge the souls of the rest of them for the sake of Allah. Wasn't it Arafat himself, who in the heat of the battle against Israel coined the war-cry, "We are coming to Jerusalem, as martyrs in the millions!!"? Here is one of those poems, ominously addressed to the Israelis, that became popular in the Palestinian street:

Because I am a Palestinian  
 Because I am enamored of fate  
 And my fate is to have my blood  
 Turned into songs,  
 That sketch out the road to freedom,  
 My fate is to become a human bomb,  
 Because I am a Palestinian.  
 Oh, lovers of cruelty, we  
 Inform you in the name of our hopes  
 Either I will meet Allah by means  
 of perfume and musk<sup>71</sup>  
 or I will live on my land in  
 Freedom and honor.  
 Much to your distress,  
 we will not forget Haifa and Acre  
 To your distress,  
 all of Palestine is ours  
 Because I am a Palestinian.  
 We have nothing for you but death  
 Plant as many Gharqad trees<sup>72</sup> as you like  
 Build as many shelters and hiding places as you desire,  
 And, if you want, create your own artificial peace.  
 Your history is black and covered  
 Your ancestry is a tree whose  
 Branches are corrupt,  
 Because I am a Palestinian.  
 And the Arab rulers in this homeland  
 Lie in a perpetual sleep

Eating from the fruit of your tree  
 And drinking of your humiliation  
 As if they were not Muslims.  
 Because I am a Palestinian,  
 Because I bear the flag  
 And long for the memory of Hittin,<sup>73</sup>  
 I will place the parts of my body as bombs  
 In your hatred, in your origin  
 In your accursed fruit  
 And in spite of you, they will germinate  
 The most beautiful of flowers  
 They will germinate the most beautiful Palestine  
 Because I am a Palestinian.<sup>74</sup>

This petrifying idealization of violence and death that has been expanding to ever wider circles, beyond the radical Islamic groups which had adopted it in the first place, and under the instigation of the Palestinian leadership, religious and otherwise, is rooted in the wide-ranging and all-encompassing theology that lay at its base; in the embrace that non-radical Muslims groups have given to this ideology in order not to be seen as lagging behind their radical rivals in the national struggle; and the callous modes of behavior adopted by the Palestinians, which lend legitimacy to the application of this ideology and turn it into a horrifying and matter-of-course routine. On the theological level, none other than the Chief *Mufti* of Jerusalem, Sheikh `Akrama Sabri, an Arafat appointee, criticized the Muslim authorities who did not approve of *Islamikaze* attacks, and stated that the acts are justified and to be encouraged. He meant Sheikh Tantawi of Egypt who had prohibited such attacks in general, and then limited the prohibition to only innocent civilians, and a Saudi *Mufti* who also banned these kinds of operations. According to the Palestinian *Mufti*, the rulings of those clerics were the result of international pressure, and admonished “those who do not have the courage to speak the truth but remain quiet and not say things that create confusion.” He added that “resistance is legitimate, and those who give up their lives do not require permission from anyone,” and that “we must not stand in the way of the *intifada* and *jihad*. Rather, we must stand at their side and encourage them.” When asked whether no differentiation should be made between civilians and fighting personnel, he clarified: “Who is civilian and who is military? There have been many more Palestinian civilians than fighters killed in the *intifada*, school children whose bodies were torn to pieces, pregnant women who were prevented from reaching hospitals, and many times the mother and child died.”<sup>75</sup>

If this was the position of the highest cleric of the Muslim establishment of the Palestinian Authority, how much more so for the *Hamas*, which rebels against that authority and often virulently accuses it of “collaborating” with Israel against the martyrs?<sup>76</sup> In fact, the mouthpiece of the *Hamas*, *Al-Risala*, posited the struggle waged by the *jihad* martyrs as a veritable clash of civilizations, which it is well worth citing in full:

...The starting point of Islamic civilization is the basic fact that the *Umma* is guided in all its deeds in the divine Straight Path, which constantly oppresses the natural propensity of humans towards evil... Conversely, their [Western] civilization, was not blessed with that enlightened aspect, which should have oppressed their desire to control others and to rob their resources... Therefore, violence has come to characterize Western civilization throughout its history... Let us respond to some of their false accusations that they try to market...

They accuse us of violence. For example, they take the rapid Islamic conquest of many countries, by the force of the sword in their view, to be the best evidence of violence in Islam.

Our response is that the only way to explain the Islamic conquests is that they were in implementation of Divine Will, which charged the Muslims with the responsibility to disseminate it, in consequence obliging Muslims to transmit that message to those who did not receive it yet. When that message reaches non-Muslims, they only face two choices: either to convert to Islam or pay *jizya*<sup>77</sup> to the Muslim government, which today may be interpreted as taking up civil obligations [under the Muslim state].

As to conquest by the sword, Islam does not resort to that means unless it feels impelled to remove obstacles in the way of the Divine Message. If we examine that principle thoroughly, we would find its parallel in modern Western civilization, which regards the freedom of speech a sacred right. Therefore, if no obstacles are put on Islam's road to deliver that Message, it would have no need to use the sword... History proves the peace-loving nature of Islam. Caliph `Umar captured Jerusalem peacefully, and the inhabitants of the conquered countries were acculturated to the Islamic *Umma* and enjoyed the same rights and duties. In other words, Muslims did not go to those countries as colonialists who oust the native inhabitants and replace them, as America had done with the Indians and Israel with the Palestinians. For example, when the Muslim armies conquered Samarkand, its inhabitants applied to the Muslim judge, claiming that they were not given the choice between conversion, paying the *jizya* [i.e. *dhimmitude*], or waging war [to the finish] that the Muslim conquerors had customarily accorded to others. Thus, the Muslim judge had no option but to order the Muslim armies to evacuate the city... How can one then say, that Islam is a violent civilization?

Conversely, Western civilization was profoundly influenced by [Roman] civilization which sanctified force and used to throw gladiators to the arena to fight each other or be swallowed by lions, in order to satisfy their own inferior bestial instincts. The characteristics of this civilization consist of oppressing the other and robbing his resources. It is known for its egotism and arrogance towards the weak. Many wars broke out only to enable it to lay its hand over more wealth. The peak of its appetite was evinced in its kindling two world wars within a quarter-century, in the latter of which nuclear bombs were used that annihilated hundreds of thousands of people...<sup>78</sup>

This understanding, even sympathy for the *Islamikaze*, by intellectuals, professionals and journalists, some of them at the hub of supposedly moderate and pro-Western Arab societies, goes a long way to teach us about those societies, more than about the bestiality of the attacks by those hallowed "martyrs" who blow up indiscriminately innocent civilian people. For the voices of sympathy and support are those of public opinion-makers, who have a great impact on their crowds, through the press, talk shows, etc. What is particularly puzzling is that those self-righteous "humanists" and "enlightened" intellectuals, not only have no words of condemnation for those horrendous acts that any civilized person should disown, and certainly no words of condolence for the victims, but by elevating those acts to the level of heavenly missions and national heroism, they thereby contribute to building up legitimacy of such acts, expectation among the crowds for more, and the motivation among young Muslims to flock to the ranks of the *Islamikaze*. No wonder then, that those words of encouragement feed the spiral of senseless *Islamikaze* attacks, and forces their victims to adopt harsher measures of defense against them. So, in the final analysis, even according to the logic of these machines of death, they are bound to bring more destruction and bereavement, including the loss of young men and women, to their own people and supportive audiences who now applaud them.

The tragedy inherent in this seemingly across-the-board all-Arab unqualified lack of concern for human life, with no "ifs, ands, or buts", their inability to sympathize with innocent victims, and their self-centered sentiment of being the victims of the West, have all combined

to create this distorted state of mind which enables them to glorify the *Islamikaze* and to regard it as a “glowing light” that would lead them somewhere. Where exactly, it is not known. It would seem that it is much more important for them to destroy the West whom they demean because they cannot be like it, than try to rise to its level. They want to destroy it (and Israel) because they cannot help compare their drab existence and gloomy future with the more attractive alternative they see in their Western neighbors, but are unable to appropriate to themselves and therefore they support any violent means likely to destroy that alternative so as not to have to face their own impotence. Because they are incapable of reaching the technological superiority of the West, on which they depend much to their chagrin, they despise it culturally and claim to have an edge on it. And if they cannot face the humiliation of technological inferiority, then they would use the ultimate weapon of *Islamikaze* terrorism to terrify Western populations, with their women and children participating in that chilling national endeavor, be it in New York or in Tel Aviv. This is the underlying state of mind which not only condones indiscriminate killings of civilians, but sanctifies them and encourages their festering.<sup>79</sup>

## Endnotes

- \* The author is indebted to The Middle East Media Research Institute (Memri) for their references and translations of the Arabic press cited herewith. Their website can be seen at <<http://memri.org>>.
- <sup>1</sup> For this terminology, that was suggested as a more precise description of what is called erroneously “suicide-bombing”, see R. Israeli, “*Islamikaze* and Their Significance”, *Journal of Terrorism and Political Violence*, Fall 1997. The word is a combination of the Japanese Kamikaze and Islam.
- <sup>2</sup> See e.g. al-Jazeera Television (Qatar), September 16, 2001; Memri, No. 227, September 26, 2001 <[www.lailatqadr.com/stories/p4040401.shtml](http://www.lailatqadr.com/stories/p4040401.shtml)>, April 4, 2002; Memri, No. 363, April 7, 2002; *Al-Quds al'Arabi* (London), July 21, 2001.
- <sup>3</sup> *The Times*, September 9, 1996; *The Guardian*, September 9, 1996.
- <sup>4</sup> *The Mercury*, cited in <<http://artsweb.bham.ac.uk/bmms/sampleissuejan2001.asp>>.
- <sup>5</sup> *Le Monde*, September 9, 1998.
- <sup>6</sup> Agence France Press (Paris), September 14, 2001.
- <sup>7</sup> Even in relatively moderate Egypt, whose regime is one of the closest to America in the Muslim world, a case became *cause célèbre* recently, when an outspoken woman writer, Nawwal Sa'dawi, who criticized the *Hajj* to Mecca as an act of paganism, was declared heretic by Islamists, and her husband was ordered to divorce her. Previously, an academic from Cairo University, Dr. Nasir Hamid abu-Zeid, who had been equally accused of heresy, was ordered to divorce his spouse and created a worldwide outrage. He exiled himself to the West rather than submit. For this note, I am indebted to my colleague, Dr. Rivka Yadlin.
- <sup>8</sup> <[www.obm.clara.net/shariacourt/fatwas/fs3.html](http://www.obm.clara.net/shariacourt/fatwas/fs3.html)>.
- <sup>9</sup> *Sura*, 5:33.
- <sup>10</sup> Op. cit., <[www.obm.clara.net/shariacourt/fatwas/fs3.html](http://www.obm.clara.net/shariacourt/fatwas/fs3.html)>.
- <sup>11</sup> In the year of 629 AD, after the reoccupation of Syria by the Byzantines, the Prophet sent a 3,000 men expedition to Mut'ah in southern Syria which made a show of force there. For the general context, see Marshall Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, Vol. I, University of Chicago, 1974, p. 194.
- <sup>12</sup> Reference is made, obviously, to the Saudi *Mufti* mentioned above, before retracting his *fatwa* by qualifying it very heavily.
- <sup>13</sup> Memri, No. 226, June 8, 2001.

- <sup>14</sup> See the announcement released by the *Hamas*, commenting on Arafat's speech of December 17, 2001 which pledged to close the *Hamas* down and put an end to terrorism.
- <sup>15</sup> Palestinian Authority Television, April 12, 2002; Memri, April 17, 2002.
- <sup>16</sup> I am indebted to my colleague Dr. Daphne Burdman, who brought to my attention the transcript of the clip that was repeatedly shown on Palestinian television throughout 2001 and 2002.
- <sup>17</sup> *Al-Ahram al-'Arabi*, October 28, 2000. Memri, cited by David Kupelian, in 2000 <WorldNetDaily.com>; see also Gerald Steinberg, *The Jerusalem Post*, October 27, 2000.
- <sup>18</sup> For details on Palestinian textbooks, see R. Israeli, "Education, State Building and the Peace Process: Educating Palestinian Children in the Post-Oslo Era", *Journal of Terrorism and Political Violence*, January 2000.
- <sup>19</sup> *Al-Ayyam* (Palestinian Authority), May 3, 2002; Memri, No. 376, May 6, 2002.
- <sup>20</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>21</sup> *Al-Sharq al-Awsat* (London), October 27, 2000; Ibid.
- <sup>22</sup> *Al-Hayat* (London), April 4, 2002.
- <sup>23</sup> BBC News, April 18, 2002.
- <sup>24</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>25</sup> *Al-Jazirah* (Saudi Arabia), April 1, 2002; Memri, No. 367, April 12, 2002.
- <sup>26</sup> See Articles 17-18 in the *Hamas* Charter; R. Israeli, "The Charter of Allah: The Platform of the Islamic Resistance Movement", in R. Israeli, *Fundamentalist Islam and Israel*, The University Press of America, 1993, pp. 144-5.
- <sup>27</sup> See *Al-Sharq al-Awsat* (London), February 2, 2002; *Al-Ayyam* (the Palestinian Authority), January 31, 2002; *Kul al-'Arab* (Israel), February 1, 2002. All in Memri, No. 83, February 12, 2002.
- <sup>28</sup> *Kul al-'Arab*, February 1, 2002.
- <sup>29</sup> Middle East News Online, January 28, 2002; *Al-Sha'b* (Egypt), February 1, 2002.
- <sup>30</sup> *Al-Sha'b* (Egypt), February 1, 2002.
- <sup>31</sup> *Al-Sharq al-Awsat* (London), January 31, 2002.
- <sup>32</sup> *Al-Sharq al-Awsat* (London), February 2, 2002.
- <sup>33</sup> *Al-Sharq al-Awsat* (London), January 31, and February 2, 2002.
- <sup>34</sup> *Afaq Arabiya* (Egypt), January 30, 2002; *Al-Quds al-'Arabi* (London), January 31, 2002.
- <sup>35</sup> *Al-Sharq al-Awsat* (London), January 31, 2002.
- <sup>36</sup> *Al-Sha'b* (Egypt), February 1, 2002.
- <sup>37</sup> *Al-Dustour* (Jordan), February 5, 2002.
- <sup>38</sup> *Afaq 'Arabiya* (Egypt), February 7, 2002; *Al-Quds al-'Arabi* (London), February 8, 2002.
- <sup>39</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>40</sup> *Al-Akhbar* (Egypt), February 1, 2002.
- <sup>41</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>42</sup> *Al-Ahram* (Egypt), February 2, 2002.
- <sup>43</sup> *Al-'Arabi* (Cairo), February 3, 2002; *Al-Quds al-'Arabi* (London), February 4, 2002.

- <sup>44</sup> *Hadith al-Madina* (Egypt), February 5, 2002; *Al-Quds al-`Arabi*, February 6, 2002; Memri, No. 84, part II.
- <sup>45</sup> *Al-Ayyam* (Palestinian Authority), February 1, 2002. Memri, No. 85, February 14, 2002.
- <sup>46</sup> *Al-Wafd* (Egypt), February 7, 2002; *Al-Quds al-`Arabi* (London), February 8, 2002.
- <sup>47</sup> *Al-Quds al-`Arabi*, January 28, 2002.
- <sup>48</sup> *Al-Wafd* (Egypt), February 3, 2002.
- <sup>49</sup> *Al-Ahram* (Egypt), February 10, 2002.
- <sup>50</sup> *Al-Dustour* (Jordan), February 24, 2002.
- <sup>51</sup> *Al-Wafd* (Egypt), *Al-Quds al-`Arabi* (London), January 28, 2002.
- <sup>52</sup> *Al-`Arabi* (Egypt), February 3, 2002; *Al-Quds al-`Arabi* (London), February 2 and 4, 2002. See also *Al-Ahram* (Cairo), February 3 and 5, 2002; *Al-Wafd* (Egypt), February 1, 2002; *Al-Gumhuryya* (Egypt), January 31, 2002; *Sawt al-Umma* (Egypt), February 3, 2002.
- <sup>53</sup> *Al-Wafd* (Egypt), February 3, 2002; *Al Quds al-`Arabi* (London), February 4, 2002.
- <sup>54</sup> Cited in print by Memri, No. 74, October 30, 2001, article by Yotam Feldner.
- <sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>56</sup> There are no less than 6 references to the virgins and the black-eyed in Paradise that are mentioned or hinted to in the Holy *Qur`an*, and massive elaborations on those brief references in the vast literature of the *Hadith*. Palazzi specifies that those women are available not only to martyrs but to any Believer who accedes to Paradise.
- <sup>57</sup> *Surat Al-Rahman*, verse 58.
- <sup>58</sup> *Surat Al-Waqi`a*, verse 23.
- <sup>59</sup> *Surat Al-Safat*, verse 49.
- <sup>60</sup> *Surat Al-Rahman*, verse 70.
- <sup>61</sup> Cited in Memri, No. 74, October 30, 2001, article by Yotam Feldner.
- <sup>62</sup> *Al-Ayyam* (Palestinian Authority), July 21, 2001; *al-Istiqlal* (Palestinian Authority), October 4, 2001.
- <sup>63</sup> *Al-Risala*, July 7, 2001; another case of such a posthumous “wedding” was publicized by *Al-Hayat al-Jadida*, also within the Palestinian Authority, October 4, 2001.
- <sup>64</sup> *Al-Risala*, August 16, 2001.
- <sup>65</sup> *Al-Hayat al-Jadida*, of August 17 and September 11, 2001.
- <sup>66</sup> *USA Today*, June 26, 2001.
- <sup>67</sup> *Al-Risala*, October 11, 2001.
- <sup>68</sup> *Al-Hayat al-Jadida*, September 17, 2001; see also Palestinian Authority Television, August 17, 2001.
- <sup>69</sup> *Ha`aretz*, October 26, 2001.
- <sup>70</sup> *Al-Sharq al-Awsat* (London), September 30, 2001.
- <sup>71</sup> According to Muslim tradition, the bodies of the martyrs do not putrefy, but give off the scent of musk.
- <sup>72</sup> According to Muslim tradition, which is incidentally also cited at the end of Article 7 of the *Hamas* Charter (see R. Israeli, “The Charter of Allah...” op. cit. p. 137), on the Day of Judgment, the

Muslims will fight the Jews [and kill them], and the Jews will seek to hide behind rocks and trees, which will cry: “Oh, Muslims! A Jew is hiding behind me! Come on and kill him!!!” This will not apply to the *Gharqad*, a sort of raspberry bush which is considered a “Jewish” tree. As rumor among the Arabs has it, Israel has been planting many of those trees in order to avoid the massacre awaiting her.

- <sup>73</sup> That is the decisive battle in which Saladin routed the Crusader armies in 1187 and evicted them from much of Palestine. In Palestinian and Arab imagery, Israel is often likened to the Crusader Kingdom whose days are numbered.
- <sup>74</sup> By Ayman al-Skafi, an unknown poet, *Al-Istiqlal* (The Weekly of Islamic Jihad in Gaza), December 13, 2001.
- <sup>75</sup> *Al-Hayat* (London), December 7, 2001, cited by *Ha'aretz* (Israel), December 9, 2001.
- <sup>76</sup> A leaflet distributed in the streets of the major Palestinian cities on November 27, 2001, accused the Palestinian Authority of exchanging intelligence with Israel and bringing about the liquidation of many *jihad* fighters. Citing a verse from the *Qur'an* (17:18), the statement promised that its “truth would smash the Authority’s lies”, and that the latter would literally be sent to Hell.
- <sup>77</sup> The *jizya* was limited to the Scriptures (Jews and Christians), while pagans were subjected to the sword. The payment of *jizya* symbolized the subjugation of the *dhimmi*s to Muslim rule, and in return for it they received protection from the Muslim state, the assumption being that no other state was legal.
- <sup>78</sup> *Al-Risalah* (Palestinian Authority), October 11, 2001.
- <sup>79</sup> See David Brooks’ excellent and insightful article in *The Atlantic Monthly*, June 2002.

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