

Palestinian suicide martyrs (Istishhadiyin): a tune of loyalty and a hymn of liberty

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Abstract

The study aimed at identifying the reality stories of the Palestinian suicide martyrs (Istishhadiyin). The findings revealed that their choice of martyrdom is nationalistic, is closely associated with the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories and the daily suppressive practices against the helpless and unarmed Palestinian people. Palestinian suicide martyrs (Istishhadiyin) lived a normal life with their families and society members. They neither ran from their problems nor their psychological, marriage and financial crises to face death. They had chosen this path based on a conscious decision of carrying the hopes of the Palestinian people and it's just cause towards achieving liberty and victory. The simplest humane and civilized duties are to encounter and resist the occupying enemy.

Key words: Palestinian suicide martyrs (Istishhadiyin), life makers, wills, real stories.

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“How beautiful for the splinters of my bones to be the response that blows up the enemy, not for the love of killing, but so we can live as other people live. We do not sing the songs of death, but recite the hymns of life. We die so that future generations may live”.

The Palestinian suicide martyr (Istishhady) Mohammed Al-Ghoul, Jerusalem operation on 18 June 2002

Since the beginning of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the Palestinian people have always been fighting and resisting the Israelis. This resistance evolved over sixty years of struggle and each utilized different techniques and methods till another mode of Palestinian resistance would emerge. In the first half of the nineteen nineties, a technique called the “*Al-Amaliyat Al-Istishhadiya*” [Martyrdom Operations] evolved. At the beginning, these operations used to be individualistic and soon they increased. The most noticeable was the commencement of the Al-Aqsa Uprising (September 2000) which became a general phenomenon that spread amongst the different sectors, groups, youth and social classes of the Palestinian people (Banat, 2010).

The Palestinian resistance factions were able to implement two hundred qualitative martyrdom operations. They utilized explosive, inter alia, cars, belts and bags that rocked Israel and raised a large scale wave of reaction both locally and internationally. This action constituted a turning point in the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The Palestinian suicide martyrs (Istishhadiyin) is a rare phenomenon unfounded in any other part of the world. This form of resistance has become exemplary among liberation movements throughout the world. Accordingly, the following critical questions raised: from where do Palestinian suicide martyrs (Istishhadiyin) emanate? Why do they sacrifice themselves? How does a person dare to blow him/herself up? How is the void between life and death reigned by the press of a button?

The first Palestinian suicide martyr (Istishhady), Saher Tamam from Nablus City, dedicated his martyrdom operation which he implemented in Beit Shean (Bisan) on 16 April 1993 to Marj Az-Zuhur Deportees in Lebanon. The deportees included 416 political Palestinian resistance leaders who were refused re-entry to Palestine. When the Palestinian suicide martyr (Istishhady) Tamam executed his martyrdom operation, it coincided with the “(Akfan) Casks March” which the deportees directed towards the Israeli checkpoint at Zamriya crossing, two kilometers from their camp in Marj Az-

Zuhur. The objective hereof was to pressure the Israeli entity for their unjust deportation.

On 13 September 1993, the Palestinian suicide martyr (Istishhady) Bahaa Najjar, stood before the television screens which broadcasted the signing ceremony of the Oslo Accords in the White House Garden. As he watched the live coverage, his feet trembled and he felt his soul was about to leap from his chest in protest and anger. He understood the weak conspiracies against his people as well as its reasons. He remembered the massive popular marches against surrendering which took to the streets in his Shati refugee camp which commenced at the Madrid Conference and ended with the Oslo Accords. He recalled the scenes of the past filled with anguish and agony; the refugees being left homeless and displaced as well as every corner and alley in the camp. He remembered the blood of martyr Ahmed Subih who passed away whilst carrying him from the gun shots fired at them by the occupation forces. The day following the signing of Oslo Accords (14 September 1993), Ahmed Subih undertook a martyrdom operation in Abbas Police Station in Gaza Strip where Israeli occupation forces were stationed. His motionless body was the first practical response to the state of humiliation and degradation that befell the Palestinian cause on the doorstep of a new world system.

Following the Ibrahimi Mosque massacre in Hebron City which resulted in the killing of 29 Palestinians at the hands of one of the extremist settlers on 25 February 1994, all voices were suppressed besides one; and swore to retaliate for the blood of the martyrs and the wounded. In a statement issued by Al-Qassam Brigades, it paid tribute to the Ibrahimi Mosque martyrs and swore to retaliate. The first retaliatory response was on 6 April 1994 that rocked the depth of the Israeli entity, especially Afula city which was executed by Palestinian suicide martyr (Istishhady) Raed Zakarneh. While engineer Yahya Ayyash was planning the second response, the Palestinian suicide martyr (Istishhady) Ammar Amarneh was selected to be the hero of this reprisal and implemented another qualitative operation in Hadera City on 30 April 1994.

Since the martyrdom of his friend Ali Imawi, the Palestinian suicide martyr (Istishhady) Hisham Hamad, executed the Netzarim operation on the Gaza Strip on 11 November 1994. This act of martyrdom was considered the first on the ground. Addressing his people, he wrote, “No peace with the sons of monkeys and pigs the enemies of Islam

and no reconciliation with the Jews the killers of prophets; we the sons of the Great Islam have to rise up to the occasion and stop this cancerous disease which is called Israel since its elimination is emphasized by the Quran. God has guaranteed victory to us only if we did not fail, weaken or falter. The battle is imposed on everybody, so do not stand in the lines of humiliation looking towards the horizons of tomorrow”.

The dual martyrdom operation implemented by Salah Shaker and Anwar Sukar on 22 January 1995 in Netanya City constituted a new tactic in the implementation of martyrdom operations by following the dual attack tactic against the Israelis. The act of martyrdom was Salah’s big dream which embraced him daily. He sensed and observed the Israeli hatred of his people since no house in Rafah refugee camp was neither left without scarifying a martyr, a wounded nor a detainee. His own home had experienced its share of grief and pain as he witnessed the Israeli army arrest his brother, Ahmed, an engineer by profession. Ahmed was imprisoned for three years without concrete evidence of wrongdoing. On another occasion, he saw the army arrest his brother, Mahmoud, a medical doctor, who was sentenced to a year and a half in prison and neither was Salah himself spared from arrest nor injury. On the day of the Al-Aqsa Massacre on 8 October 1990, Salah, the Palestinian suicide martyr (Istishhady), passed his training at Maqassed Hospital in Jerusalem to apply first aid to the wounded of the massacre. It was on this occasion that he witnessed the brutality and new crimes imposed on his people. These incidents motivated him to become a martyr, avenge the torture his people had to endure and draw a little smile on the faces of the wounded and unfortunate. He would say, “The only path to the one who seeks immortality is Martyrdom; I do say to those who fell behind and did not seek to become martyrs if I and you did not make a sacrifice who would”?

The Palestinian suicide martyr (Istishhady) Labib Azem, followed the news from Jordan of the Israeli crimes against his people. He was appalled by the humiliation and torture inflicted upon his people and the arrest of the homeless. This course of unfortunate and sorrow-filled events inspired him to follow the example set by Salah. He could not endure the sight of the brutality meted out against his people. He decided to leave his tertiary studies incomplete and head towards Palestine. He implemented a qualitative operation in Tel Aviv on 24 July 1995 which left the enemy (Israel) in comprehensively dumbfounded in attempting to identify the executor of the attack.

On the morning of 2 November 1995, Palestine was on the verge of retaliating the death of Dr. Fathi Shaqaqi, general secretary of the Islamic Jihad Movement who was assassinated by the Israeli Mossad in Malta on 26 October 1995. A dual qualitative martyrdom operation was executed by two Palestinian suicide martyrs (Istishhadiyin), Mohammed Abu Hashim and Ribhi Al-Kahlut. Each of them blew themselves up in an Israeli convoy of cars in Gush Katif settlement in the heart of the Gaza Strip.

The assassination of the engineer operations, Yahya Ayyash on 5 January 1996, led to Palestinian responses which ranged from denunciation, condemnation and conviction. The people took to the streets calling for revenge. Some preferred to express their feelings in a different way by blowing themselves up in the heart of the Israeli entity on one of the crowded buses. At the time when thousands of women, children and youth were wiping tears of anger over the assassination of Yahya Ayyash, engineer Hasan Salameh, the son of Gaza wiped his sweaty forehead as he prepared to set up two explosive belts worn by the Palestinian suicide martyrs (Istishhadiyin) Ibrahim Sarahneh and Majdi Abu Warda in the dual martyrdom operation on 25 February 1996 in Ashkelon and Jerusalem. This was the first counter attack in revenge for the assassination of Ayyash. With regard to the two Palestinian suicide martyrs (Istishhadiyin) from amongst the inhabitants of the Fawwar refugee camp, the hopes to return to the place of origin “Ajjur” and “Iraq Mansheya” inside the Green line (Palestine 1948) was never lost. This was adequate reason to follow the path of resistance in order to avenge the tyrant enemy which had settled on their land resulting in thousands of their own becoming homeless. The second response was by the Palestinian suicide martyr (Istishhady) Raed Shaghnoobi, son of Burqa, who lived in the north of Nablus City to execute Jerusalem operation on 3 March 1996. The third response was executed by the Palestinian martyr (Istishhady) Ramiz Obaid in a qualitative martyrdom operation on 4 March 1996 in Tel Aviv.

Ramiz Obaid who was known since childhood as an artist decorated the walls of Khan Yunis refugee camp in Gaza Strip with slogans and paintings of an Israeli bus shattered into pieces and bodies scattered in it everywhere. These paintings were sketched on 25 December 1994, the same day as Palestinian suicide martyr (Istishhady) Ayman Radi executed the Jerusalem operation. His family still recalls one of the foreign journalists who enquired whether he was just painting for the sake thereof or was it the sensation

and wish he felt to express the martyrdom incident. Ramiz told the foreign journalist that he wished to become a Palestinian suicide martyr (Istishhady) and he would call on God to bestow this blessing upon him. On the fourth of March 1996, Ramiz succeeded in reaching Tel Aviv. He wore a belt which stored more than fifteen kilograms of explosives. He blew himself up among crowds of settlers which rocked the entire Tel Aviv. It served as a reminder to the Zionist entity that the retaliation oath he had taken and made public on the walls of the camp represented the blood of his martyr friend Ayman and the blood of the martyr of Palestine and the nation Dr. Fathi Shaqaqi the general secretary of the Islamic Jihad Movement was a long lasting oath against the Israeli aggression at the lands of Palestine.

Palestinian suicide martyr (Istishhady) Suliman Tahayna, was often disturbed by the frequent visits by the Israeli soldiers. They were in pursuit of his wanted brother Salih on the first occasion, while during their second visit, to arrest him. The absence of his brother whom he loved and admired the path he had chosen which had landed him in prison made him even more anxious to fight for his beloved country. After the cowardly behaviour of the occupation forces which had led to the brutal assassination of his brother Salih, he swore to avenge his death. He was exposed daily to crimes by the occupier who killed, wounded and arrested his people at random for no reason. These acts of atrocity culminated in aggression. He was shot at point blank range which resulted in the amputation of his right leg. He lived the rest of his life with an artificial leg. This made him more determined and insistent on implementing the dual Jerusalem operation with his comrade, Yousef Izghir, on 5 November 1998.

He was greeted daily by the tragedy of his people and the homeless families in the refugee camps filled with grief, homelessness, loss, starvation and pain. The Palestinian suicide martyr (Istishhady) Hashim Najjar was born to parents who suffered throughout their lives and eventually died homeless in his village, Falouja, in 1948. The picture of this village was vividly painted in his mind and it inculcated determination and affirmation of revenge and retaliation for his people in the Beit Shean (Bisan) operation on 22 December 2000. The following he expressed in his will prior to the act of martyrdom: "The way to Palestine and the Aqsa does not pass through Oslo Accords, Washington or the round tables of negotiations but through jihad (holy war), resistance, bodies, blood and tears".

“The person who thinks that Jihad will win without blood is for sure disillusioned”. These were the words which the Palestinian suicide martyr (Istishhady) Mahmoud Marmash wrote before he left his house in the eastern neighborhood of Tulkarem City to execute the Netanya operation on 18 May 2001. He wrote in his will: “I will make out of my body a bomb that explodes into the bodies of Zionists in revenge for every drop of blood fell on the soil of the holy land the path of our prophet Mohammed May God’s Peace Be Upon Him from which he ascended to heaven, in revenge for the sons of Palestine, its women, its elderly, its children, in revenge for Iman Hijo which had shaken my heart, body and emotions; this four month old baby girl was killed by a Zionist shelling of Khan Yunis in Gaza Strip”.

Although Abdel-Muti Assar was one of the first ten students to receive the highest average at secondary school (Tawjihi) in Khan Yunis City where he qualified to enroll in the Engineering Faculty at the Islamic University, he refused all certificates but one: the certificate of excellence entitled, “Istishhad” (Martyrdom). The Palestinian suicide martyr (Istishhady) Abdel-Muti Assar was one of the executors of the dual operation, Erez checkpoint in the Gaza Strip on 29 May 2001 with his partner the Palestinian suicide martyr (Istishhady) Ismail Ashour. They could not stand the injustice and contentiousness of the occupation forces. They stated in their will that they had chosen to turn their bodies’ fuel in order to burn the enemy and shed a light that would illuminate the path for their fellow fighters.

Nor the borders or the geographical distance prevented the Palestinian suicide martyr (Istishhady) Said Al-Hutari who lived with his people who suffered in the Diaspora. He travelled from Jordan to Qalqilya City north of the West Bank where he executed the Tel Aviv qualitative operation on 1 June 2001 in retaliation for the daily crimes committed by the occupation forces against the Palestinian people. In his address to the Palestinian people, he wrote: “You captives, you wounded, you martyrs, you widows, on your behalf all, I offer my soul for the sake of God the Almighty and revenge for your agonies, pains and wounds. I will make from my body splinters and bombs that will hunt Bani Zion blow them up and burn their remains and please the believers by this action”.

Palestinian suicide martyr (Istishhady) Ashraf Saed was at his usual place selling cocktails in the heart of Nablus City when one of the brothers hurried towards him out

of breath. He explained to him (Saed) the details of the explosion that rocked Nablus. The Israeli had assassinated the two leaders, Jamal Mansour and Jamal Salim from the Hamas Movement. The impact of the news on Ashraf was like a rock that fell on his chest just like the shell which the Israelis fired from an Apache fighter at their office. It led to their death and six others including the two children Hilal and Bilal Khudeir. The scene of the pieces of the martyrs flesh was repulsive. The crowds only managed to salvage minute pieces of the body. The raging fire inside Ashraf was wiped by blowing himself up among the Israelis. He was the first to retaliate for the assassination of the two leaders when he implemented an operation on Hamra checkpoint near Nablus on 8 August 2001.

The Palestinian suicide martyr (Istishhady) Ezzedeen Al-Masri was greatly influenced by the bloody incidents during the Al-Aqsa Intifada and the brutal massacres that had been committed. Day after day the Intifada gained momentum and became an organization to be feared. Many of the people whom he knew fell as martyrs, wounded or were detained. Every incident that took place during the Intifada made Ezzedeen more determined display loyalty for the blood of the martyrs and the agony of the afflicted and the wounded. His heart grew more vengeful of the occupier who killed, arrested and displaced his people by the thousands. The hour of retaliation had arrived for the martyrs. It was time of avenge the enemy who did not differentiate between an elderly and a child or an infant. The retaliation came in a martyrdom operation in Sbaro restaurant in Jerusalem on 9 August 2001.

The Palestinian suicide martyr (Istishhady) Mohammed Hbaishe Nahariyya expressed his motive for martyrdom in his will before the operation was executed on 9 September 2001 expressed that: "Ever since I was born and raised on this earth, I have always seen and heard about massacres one after the other against our disarmed people at the hands of the usurping Jews; I am honored by God to be one of the Palestinian suicide martyrs (Istishhadiyin) of the Al-Qassam Brigades and to hold the banner of Jihad and resistance. I pray to God to accept my martyrdom for His sake; let it be a message of revenge for the blood of the martyrs of Kufr Qasim, Deir Yassin, Qibiya, Sabra, Shatella, Qana, Al-Aqsa, Ibrahimi Mosque and Nahaleen massacres. It is also for those whose houses were demolished in Rafah and Khan Yunis and other areas in Palestine and to revenge for the martyrs who fell in Sakhnin, Araba, Nazareth and all the martyrs

who fell in the occupied Palestine of 1948 and the martyrs of Gaza Strip and the West Bank”.

The Hamas Movement and its military wing Ezzedeen Al-Qassam Brigades did not let the assassination of their leader Mahmoud Abu Hnud and his companions in Nablus pass by unheeded. Hamas took it upon itself to avenge their demise in every conceivable place the Israeli enemy can be found. Its reprisal came when Palestinian suicide martyr (Istishhady) Taysir Ajrami from Jabaliya refugee camp turned himself into a human bomb that exploded in the midst of the Israelis forces on 6 November 2001 at Erez checkpoint in the Gaza Strip. The self-sacrifice took place where thousands of Palestinian labors were exposed to humiliation everyday on their way to work inside the occupied Palestine since 1948.

When the Palestinian girls sacrificed themselves to become martyrs, it constituted another challenge for the Israeli security establishment which realized that they were facing a phenomenon in which the Palestinian people sought young men and women carry out such operations. The first Palestinian female suicide martyr was (Istishhadiya) Wafa Idris from Amari refugee camp. She was the executor of the Jerusalem operation on 27 January 2002. She worked with the emergency services team at the Palestinian Red Crescent Society where she witnessed almost on a daily basis tens of wounded Palestinians. She helped to carry the bodies of the martyrs who were killed by the occupation soldiers. She always spoke about the nature of the unbearable scenes. On several occasions she came home filled with sadness. She narrated stories about the injured and the martyrs whose heads and bodies were blown up by the bullets and shells fired by the occupation. These incidents had a severe impact on her which eventually pushed her to carry out a martyrdom operation. The latter was related by her brother, Khalil who was witness to her daily distraught. During the last two weeks before her act of martyrdom, she cradled a 15 years old boy, Samir Kosbeh, who was hit in the head by a bullet fired by the Israeli soldiers. The clash took place just outside the West Bank headquarters of the Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat. The boy lapsed into a coma for a week, and then died, two days before Idris detonated herself.

In her will, Darene Abu Aisha, who implemented the suicide martyrdom operation at Maccabim settlement checkpoint near Ramallah on 27 February 2002, expressed her motivation for the martyrdom. She wrote: “Because the role of the Muslim Palestinian

woman is equal to that of our mujahidin brothers, I wholeheartedly offer myself for God's sake to retaliate for corpses of our martyred mujahidin, in revenge for the sanctity of our religion and mosques, sacredness of Al-Aqsa Mosque and Houses of God which were turned into bars where all obscenities forbidden by God are practiced in defiance of our religion and the message of our Prophet Mohammed May God's Peace and Prayer Be Upon Him. We will turn our bodies into human bombs that are scattered everywhere in order to wipe out the illusion of the Israeli security. Let the cowardly Sharon know that every Palestinian woman will deliver an army of suicide martyrs (Istishhadiyin) even if he tried to bury them alive in the wombs of their mothers at the Israeli death barriers".

The Palestinian suicide martyr (Istishhady) Akram Nabtiti who executed the Jerusalem operation on 17 March 2002 wrote in his will as if he was addressing the sons of his country: "The only reason why I decided to go on with this martyrdom act is to revenge for the pure blood of our people which is shed every day and even every hour as a result of the strong hatred of Sharon and the Zionist army which did not have any mercy on our women, elderly or children; it is in defense of our right to live in freedom and dignity on our pure land. I carry out this act and I am fully convinced of what I am doing. It is the only choice to stop humiliation and suppression which the enemy planes, tanks and soldiers are practicing on top of our land".

Palestinian suicide martyr (Istishhady) Abdel-Basit Odeh from Tulkarem executor of the largest martyrdom operation ever launched against Israel since its establishment in Netanya on 27 March 2002 led to the death of 29 Israelis and wounding more than 150 others. He did not wait long after the occupation forces closed in on him to implement his future plans. It did, however, prevent him from traveling to Iraq to get married to his fiancée and have a family and enjoy life. His operation coincided with the brutal crimes of the occupation army inside the Palestinian territories which he called: "The Lion of the Holy Revenge".

The Palestinian female suicide martyr (Istishhadiya) Ayat Al-Akhras family was uprooted by the Israelis from their village, Qatra, in 1948. She was the daughter of the Dehaisha refugee camp, the camp of the uprooted and homeless. Its inhabitants suffered from the poor unhygienic conditions. She implemented the Jerusalem operation on 29 March 2002; three months before she was to marry Shadi Abu Laban. Her martyrdom

influenced their matrimony in spite of the fact that the couple dreamt of naming their first born baby "Adi". This operation came in response to the Israeli killing of the Palestinian Issa Faraj which was as the result of a rocket that shelled his house adjacent to Ayat's. She was the one who found him drowning in his blood and rushed him to hospital. She saw his two year old daughter playing in her father's blood according to her mother, Um Samer. The mother was also arrested in 1969 as the first Palestinian female captive, in addition to the several arrests of Ayat's brothers Samer and Ismail. Ayat wrote in her will that "What is the use of life if death chases us from all directions? We will go to it before it comes to us and revenge for ourselves before we die".

The female suicide martyr (Istishhadiya) Andaleeb Taqatqa did not wait till Sunday 14 April 2002 to celebrate her twentieth birthday because she preferred to celebrate it in a different place and in a different manner. Instead of blowing her twentieth birthday party candles in her father's humble home in Beit Fajjar village in Bethlehem governorate south of the West Bank, she quenched her revenge on the Israelis on Friday 12 April 2002 in Jerusalem. Her elder brother "Mohammed" considered that the continuous occupation was the motive behind this heroic act which every Palestinian is proud of. He stressed that, "The more she watched the occupation crimes and bloodshed, the spirit of revenge for the martyrs and the wounded increased inside her; through her explosive body of only 40 kg, she sent a message to the leaders of the Arab nation to move and save our Palestinian people; she also stressed that her tiny body was capable of doing what Arab armies failed to do", as stated in her will.

On hearing the blasts from the Israeli shells on 22 May 2002, Palestinian suicide martyr (Istishhady) Jihad Titi rushed to the Balata refugee camp graveyard in Nablus where he found the body of his cousin Mahmoud Titi, leader of Aqsa Martyrs Brigades in the West Bank and the bodies of two of his companions torn to pieces following an Israeli tank shell attack. Within less than a week, he implemented his heroic operation in Tel Aviv city on 27 May 2002.

One cannot find any words better than those of the Palestinian suicide martyrs (Istishhadiyin) to express their choice written with their blood and flesh. It is a tune of loyalty and a hymn of liberty. In this regard, the Palestinian suicide martyr (Istishhady) Mohammed Al-Ghoul, operation Jerusalem on 18 June 2002 said in his will: "How beautiful for the splinters of my bones to be the response that blows up the enemy, not

for the love of killing, but so that we can live as other people live. We do not sing the songs of death, but recite the hymns of life. We die so that future generations may live”.

In Jordan, the Palestinian suicide martyr (Istishhady) Iyad Radad, executor of Tel Aviv operation on 19 September 2002, family said that he always talked about jihad and mujahidin inside Palestine and the suffering of its people under the yoke of the occupation which usurped his land and made its people homeless. He always followed up the news and was greatly influenced by the scenes of the wounded women and children crying. His heart was attached to Palestine for he was born in Nablus. He was certain that this right which was stolen from the Palestinian people by force can only be regained by force and Jihad for the sake of God.

“Martyrdom has no laws; it is not carried out by those who are young or old; it is required to be fulfilled by any Muslim whether married, single or very old”. These were the words uttered by the Palestinian suicide martyr (Istishhady) Rafiq Hammad one day prior to his martyrdom operation in Tel Aviv on 10 October 2002. He was succeeded by four children and a wife whom he loved very much and could not stand being away from them, however, the call of martyrdom and homeland was stronger than a father’s emotions.

Out of the largest, strongest and most populated refugee camp called Balata in the West Bank which offered eleven Palestinian suicide martyrs (Istishhadiyin) who implemented their operation inside the Israeli depth, came the Palestinian suicide martyr (Istishhady) Ahmed Al-Khatib from Fateh Movement who followed the path of his jihadist family. He carried out the Kefar Sava operation on 24 April 2003 in his family's previous village Kufr Sava which was occupied in 1948. Al-Khatib’s family struggled and resisted the Israeli occupation forces which pursued his elder brother Mohammed on charges of resistance. His uncle was sentenced to life for killing the Israelis while his cousin was detained for belonging to the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades. His cousin Majdi was assassinated by the Israel in April 2002 together with Qais Adwan, leader of Ezzedeen Al-Qassam Brigades in Jenin City. It also assassinated one of his relatives Imad Al-Khatib when it fired its shells on 22 May 2002 at the camp graveyard which targeted Mahmoud Titi, leader of Aqsa Brigades.

The Palestinian suicide martyr (Istishhady) Basem Al-Takruri from Hebron executed the Jerusalem operation on 18 May 2003. In spite of his achievements at school where he obtained an average of 90% in the secondary school exam (Tawjihi) and admitted to study engineering at the Palestine Polytechnic University which was shut down by the occupation forces several times, he chose to be a martyr. The city of Hebron suffers from siege, torture and isolation as a result of the settlers' presence. Their number does not exceed 300-400 settlers inside the city which holds about 150 thousand Palestinians in addition to the large number of Israeli checkpoints which paralyze the citizens' movement. Perhaps the experience of Hebron City under occupation was and still is one of the most distinguished experiences of violence and victims of strife. The city residents are facing one of the fiercest occupations that history ever witnessed. The general picture of the daily life of the Palestinian citizen and the Hebronite in particular, is harsh and painful in light of the conditions of suppression and aggression of the occupation perched on the chest of this city which was torn into several parts. Due to the Hebron Agreement which is one of the appendices of the Oslo Accords, the city was divided into two zones. H1 is under the jurisdiction of the Palestinians in terms of security and civil issues while the Israeli security control remains on H2 which includes the old city and the surrounding stretch of land. The civil services except the settlements are subject to Palestinian Authority. This led to the establishment of the Temporary International Presence in Hebron (TIPH) which is an international monitoring delegation in the city. It was established following the killing of 29 Palestinians at the hand of one of the extreme settlers on 25 February 1994 (Banat, 2005) who were praying at the Ibrahimi Mosque. The Palestinian suicide martyr (Istishhady) Basem used to cross the Israeli death checkpoints spread inside the city everyday while on his way to the university. He would witness the humiliation and everyday suffering of his people. His sister Nivin also added, "Basem used to feel great sorrow at the sight of the injured and the martyrs especially infants; I used to feel that there was inside him a suppressed wave of rage".

Palestinian female suicide martyr (Istishhadiya) Hiba Daraghme'h's father used to dream of the day when his daughter in the Faculty of Arts/English Major at Al-Quds Open University obtains a PhD in English Literature. However, she dreamt of another certificate that he knew nothing about. It was the implementation of the Afula operation on 19 May 2003, immediately after she witnessed the state of destruction and damage in

Jenin refugee camp as a result of the Israeli incursion. Her mother contemplated that the Israelis and their brutality were the reasons that pushed Hiba to execute the operation. Hiba's brother was shot in the stomach and intestines six years prior and was hospitalized in the intensive care unit for six months before being transferred to prison. Till this day he is still in prison on charges of allegiance to the Fateh Movement. The Israeli soldiers tore her secondary school (Tawjihi) textbooks and insulted her and her friends as they would pass the Israeli checkpoints on their way to school to write their final exams. Hiba had developed such hatred for the occupiers that she resorted to blow herself up.

The Palestinian suicide martyr (Istishhady) Abdel-Muti Shabaneh who executed the Jerusalem operation on 11 June 2003 stressed in his will addressed to the members of his people, the leaders, military and politicians that his painful retaliation would be in response to the massacres committed by Sharon. In this context, his mother asserted that: "He felt great sadness when he saw the scenes of the Israeli massacres against his Palestinian people, the last of which was the martyrdom of his friend Hamza Al-Qawasmeh who was studying with him in the same school".

The Israelis paid a high price for their desperate attempt to assassinate Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, the spiritual leader of Hamas in two martyrdom operations that rocked Tel Aviv and Jerusalem and led to the killing of 15 Israelis and 60 wounded. The operations, which were implemented by Ihab and Ramiz Abu Salim on 9 September 2003 came at a time when the Israeli forces escalated their aggression against the Palestinian people, the last of which was the martyrdom of three citizens including a child in an incursion into Hebron City during the same period.

The Palestinian female suicide martyr (Istishhadiya) and lawyer Hanadi Jaradat from Jenin governorate expressed herself with great passion in her will: "By God's force and determination, I have decided to be the sixth Istishhadiya who would make out of her body separate explosive fragments to kill the Zionists and destroy every settler and Zionist since it is not us alone who have to pay the price and harvest the price for their crimes". She carried out a qualitative martyrdom operation in Haifa on 4 October 2003 to avenge the Israelis who killed her brother Fadi and cousin Salah in Jenin on 12 June 2003 in cold blood. Furthermore, she was greatly influenced by the brutal Israeli

aggression against the Jenin refugee camp in particular and the Palestinian people in general.

A day before Palestinian suicide martyr (Istishhady) Ali Ja'ara turned 24, he prepared himself for another celebration in Jerusalem on 29 January 2004. He was a son of one of the families whom the Jews expelled in 1948 from their village in the Dir Iban Hebron district. His family is well-known for its history of resistance and struggle in the ranks of the Fateh Movement. Each of his uncles was imprisoned by the Israeli for extended sentences. Ali's aunt Sarah was imprisoned for ten years on charges of stabbing an Israeli soldier. She said: "Ali has raised the honor and pride of the family; he is the nephew of the deported fighter Jihad Ja'ara who was besieged by the occupation authorities together with tens of fighters in the Nativity Church in April 2002. Jihad was suffering from a serious foot injury and the wound decayed during the siege and he was later deported to Cyprus then to Germany. She added that Ali was in pain for the departure of his uncle and he was strongly shaken by any situation that influences the humanity of humans". The Palestinian suicide martyr (Istishhady) addressed his will to the Israelis as follows: "Although you hurt our bodies you will never touch our determination and strong will". He informed the Palestinian people that he had decided to offer his life for the sake of Al-Aqsa and the liberation of its people. Moreover, he wished that his blood had been sacrificed before those martyrs who sacrificed themselves for the liberation of the Palestinian nation. .

Suicide Palestinian martyr (Istishhady) Mahmoud Salem, one of the executors of the dual operation in Ashdod city on 14 March 2004, addressed his will to the Palestinian people: "We have to defend our blessed land against the occupiers until the last drop of blood in our veins. We will fight them until Jaffa, Haifa and Ashkelon return". He called on them to retain courage, faith in the Almighty Allah and embrace and execute their belief in Jihad and martyrdom. They should worship God unwaveringly, pray five times per day, especially the dawn prayer and recite the Quran.

The Palestinian university student martyr (Istishhady) Samer Hammad, executor of the Tel Aviv operation on 17 April 2006 expressed himself in his will that his decision to carry out the operation would not be futile. It came as a result of his awareness of a well-defined plan by the Palestinian resistance which consisted of recruited soldiers who were firm believers of their role in elevating the word of God and the Islamic

banner in the face of violations inflicted on the Palestinians by the occupation. He wrote: "I offer myself so cheaply for the sake of raising high the Islamic pillar: "La Ilaha Ila Allah wa Mohammed rasul Allah" (There is no God but God and Mohammed is his prophet). This operation comes in reprisal to the crimes and massacres of the occupation against our people in the West Bank and Gaza Strip; I do say to the enemy that our operations will continue and the Palestinian martyrs (Istishhadiyin) are coming, for they love death and martyrdom the same as you cherish life".

Two days after the Israeli army had fired upon a group of Palestinian mothers on their way to the Beit Hanoun Mosque in Gaza Strip, killing 50, mostly women and children; suicide martyr (Istishhadiya) Mervat Massoud from Gaza Strip blew herself up among Israeli army troops at Beit Hanoun on 6 November 2006. Mervat Massoud was a student at the Islamic University of Gaza. In her videotaped will, she asked for the forgiveness of her parents: "I love you very much, but I love Palestine and God more".

The dual martyrdom operation implemented by the two Palestinian suicide martyrs (Istishhadiyin) Shadi Izughayyar and Mohammed Al-Herbawi from the Hamas Movement on 4 February 2008 in Dimona was in response to the unjust siege of the Gaza Strip and in solidarity with the besieged Palestinians. The afore-mentioned martyrdom confirmed the ability of the resistance led by Ezzedeen Al-Qassam Brigades to penetrate the fortifications of the enemy and hit sensitive Israeli targets when and where it decides. The two suicide martyrs appeared in a video tape and stressed that the operation was a continuation of the Jihad, that is, resistance and revenge for the blood of the Gaza martyrs. They also stressed that more sieges, blockades, massacres and martyrdom operations would continue unceasingly.

That was the narrative: one of revenge for the homeland, captives, wounded, martyrs, children, women and leaders. The revenge was (and still is) as the result of; inter alia, desperation and frustration imposed by the oppressive Israeli occupation, unemployment and confinement, imprisonment and torture, hopelessness, racism and discrimination. It is the story of the resistance in the face of the foreign occupier who stole, killed and displaced. It is the story of the Palestinian suicide martyrs (Istishhadiyin) who refused to ascend to the heavens but only after they had painted the chapters of the story with their blood.

A simple analysis of the above stories emphasizes that the motives for martyrdom are nationalistic and are closely associated with the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories and the daily oppressive practices against the helpless and unarmed Palestinian people. The simplest humane and civilized duties are the encounter and resistance of the occupying enemy. Resistance with all its forms is a national duty as long as there is occupation. The Palestinian people cannot stand hands-folded and endure the brutality of Israel people to please the world public opinion which failed to provide international protection to the distraught, abused and slaughtered people (Banat, 2010).

It is firmly embedded in the collective memory of the Palestinians and in their collective conscious that the Israeli occupation of Palestine is the solitary reason for resistance. Continued occupation simply purports that the Palestinian people will resume all forms of resistance including martyrdom operations which had achieved a terror balance with an occupation that kills Palestinians daily without any deterrence or will to having anyone to deter or impede it for good. Moreover, resistance is a legitimate right guaranteed by all heavenly and existentialist faiths and legislation (Abu Al-Ghuzlan, 2003; Hussien, 2003).

The Palestinian suicide martyrs (Istishhadiyin) did not run from their problems nor from their psychological, marriage and financial crises to face death. They chose this path based on a conscious decision to carry the hopes of the Palestinian people and it's just cause towards achieving liberty and victory. It is also accepted that they would take this path in light of the presence of occupation since they are adamant on liberating Palestine from the yoke of the occupation. This feeling is shared by the free citizens in the rest of the societies of the world. Based hereon, their conscious sacrifice of martyrdom was towards the fulfillment of their political objectives (Aliq, 2004). In this context, Sheikh Salah Shihadeh, one of the leaders of Al-Qassam Brigades in Palestine, stated in an interview conducted prior to his martyrdom that: "The desire of the Palestinian youth to be martyrs is a proof to the well-being and conscious of the society. It is not considered as wrong action or an escape form the state of despair". He added, "The individuals who take this path are numerous and they are ready to offer their souls which are the dearest thing a human has, yet we cannot provide an operation to each one of them since the

targets are limited and the Israeli sites a well-protected” (Islam online, 2002; Nirab, 2002).

If we wish to examine the real lives of those Palestinian suicide martyrs (Istishhadiyin), we would find that they had lived a normal life in the midst of their social medium, family and society members. They were producers and contributors like others towards the building and development of the Palestinian society and defending it. They studied at its schools and universities, went to mosques and lived its cause. They considered that God and homeland deserve this act of martyrdom. The Palestinian suicide martyr (Istishhady) Suliman Tahayna, executor of the Jerusalem operation on 5 November 1998 told his wife one day prior to his martyrdom: “My children are not dearer to me than God and homeland”.

The Israeli violence committed against the Palestinians can only generate violence and constitute a greater incentive for revenge. In this context, the suicide martyr (Istishhady) Jamal Nasser, who carried out a suicide martyrdom operation at the junction of the Jewish settlement Shafi Shamron in the West Bank on 29 April 2001, stated passionately by graphically expressing the horror of the Israeli violence against the Palestinians: “Who among us would not become angry and have a sense of revenge when he walks at the funeral processions of martyrs, especially the mass funerals in Nablus? Who among us would not go mad and have a strong feeling for revenge when he sees mothers of martyrs, their wives, or their children on television? Who among us would not feel with the owners of houses and shops that have recently been demolished in Khan Younis, Rafah and Hebron? Who among us would not become angry at the killing of children, cutting of trees and bombing of cities? Etcetera... By God’s name, the Jews have transgressed beyond all bounds in the country and heaped therein mischief”. In the same context, the suicide martyr (Istishhady) Maher Habisheh, Haifa operation on 2 December 2001, said in his will, “I wish I had so many lives to avenge time and time again and respond to the many massacres and insults perpetrated against the Al-Aqsa Mosque, the Ibrahim Mosque and the Palestinian people”.

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