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"Ordinary People" and "Death Work": Palestinian Suicide Bombers as Victimizers and Victims

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Applying criminological/victimological concepts and theories, the study addresses the social processes involved in Palestinians' suicide terrorism and describes Palestinians' pathways to suicide bombing. The data are derived from in-depth interviews of 7 male and female Palestinians serving prison sentences in Israel for attempted suicide bombing. The social background, context, and experiences of the interviewees, including their recruitment, interactions with the organizations that produce suicide bombing, the tangible and intangible incentives and rewards that motivated them to become suicide bombers, their preparation for the mission, and the strategies employed by the organizations to sustain recruits' resolve to conform to the plan are described and analyzed. The implications of the findings for theory and public policy are drawn and discussed.

The "war on terrorism" [i] declared by President G.W. Bush, in the wake of the September 11, 2001 events, has led to new laws, security regulations, and the restructuring of government. The 19 Islamic hijackers who took their own lives in order to kill and terrorize have left the Western world apprehensive and bewildered. The idea that some communities would rejoice over suicide, death and destruction has been particularly baffling.

Contentious debates about the political, social or cultural milieu that produces candidates for suicide, the role of religious/cultural convictions in their recruitment and willingness to die, and the conditions wherein the ideology of martyrdom flourishes, have since engaged politicians, academics, military personnel and public policy makers. As a unique and "extreme" form of terrorism, suicide in the service of national causes or religious convictions has aroused the public's fascination.

The U.S. was first victimized by suicide bombing in Lebanon in 1983, when a suicide bomber blew himself up in the U.S. Embassy in Beirut, killing 63 people, including 17 Americans. Six months later another suicide attack killed 241 American servicemen who were stationed at Beirut International Airport to help keep the peace.[ii] In the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, suicide terrorism has occurred for over a decade.[iii] The phenomenon has been accompanied by a fierce debate over definitions of suicide bombers (see Ganor, 2001; 2002), or their presentation in the media or other forms of communication[iv]. Palestinians and their supporters have praised suicide bombers as freedom fighters, portraying their action as the ultimate altruism in advancing one's religious or national interests.[v] Israelis and their allies have referred to the act as barbaric terrorism and to its perpetrators as cold-blooded murderers (Erez, 2005).[vi] In both camps, mystification of the phenomenon grew, as speculations about perpetrators and their motives flourished.

The phenomenon also initiated scholarly explorations into the roots, organization and structure of suicide bombing. The recent involvement of Palestinian women in suicide bombing[vii] (Beyler, 2003; 2004) has been particularly intriguing. Although women have been previously involved in terrorism, generally, prevailing notions through history and across cultures that women should be sheltered from participation in war activities, and near-total exclusion of women from combat forces, have worked against women participating in war-related activities (Goldstein, 2001). Furthermore, Islamic tradition– to which Palestinian women involved in suicide bombing typically belong – explicitly relegate females to the private sphere, and restricts their participation in the public domain. By and large, national movements striving for independence (e.g. Yuval-Davis, 1997), and Palestinian leaders in particular,[viii] have emphasized the domestic aspects of women's contribution to national causes, limiting it to bearing and raising children and caring for the family, the basic unit of the nation.

It is generally believed that it is difficult to study the phenomenon of suicide bombing. Locating and interviewing those engaged in it is an intricate process. Suicide bombers who succeeded in their mission obviously cannot be interviewed. Some claim that terrorists in general, and those engaged in suicide bombing in particular, for security reasons would not grant interviews to researchers.[ix] Many do not expect state officials to approve interviewing imprisoned suicide bombers candidates, who are kept in the highest-security prisons. Others would question the veracity of imprisoned suicide bombers, suspecting that their responses may be colored by underlying political agendas, or reluctance to disclose information for fear of further penalties (Sageman, 2004).

For these reasons, there is not much knowledge about the inner world of suicide bombers and the circumstances that have led them to commit suicide; so far, little research has been published on the experiences of male and female suicide bombers who embarked on a mission.[x] Also, extant studies have not applied

criminological/victimological concepts and theories to explain the phenomenon and highlight the nexus of criminality and victimization in suicide bombers' lives.[xi] The arrest and imprisonment of Palestinian male and female suicide bombers who failed,[xii] changed their mind, or whose missions were thwarted, and who agreed to be interviewed, provided a rare opportunity to gain insights into the suicide bombers' experiences. In this article, we employ criminological/victimological concepts and theories to explain pathways to suicide bombing and demonstrate that theories that explain criminal behavior in general are also fruitful in accounting for suicide bombing.

We analyze in-depth interviews of seven male and female Palestinian suicide bombers to explore and identify themes that emerge in the data. Although the sample is not representative of the population of suicide bombers, nor do the pathways identified exhaust the possibilities of becoming a suicide bomber, their stories provide valuable insights into their world. The participants' own words and detailed life histories shed light on suicide bombing "careers" from the perpetrators' own perspectives, providing answers to some of the questions that occupied academic and practitioners alike.

The narratives of the interviewees demonstrate how suicide bombing, like any other social behavior, reflects and reproduces underlying social structures, institutions and prevailing value systems. The data underline the mundane reasons for which individuals come to engage in suicide bombing, at times employing it as a response to a personal problem that could have been addressed in a less lethal fashion, had such an option been available or encouraged. The narratives portray suicide bombers as "ordinary men" (and women) (Browning, 1992),[xiii] whose actions would not have ignited the public fascination had their own planned demise not been the expected outcome.

This study sheds light on the social context of suicide bombing and its production, and how men and women get involved and reach a point of "no return" (Merari, 2004). The findings also challenge prevailing beliefs about becoming suicide bombers, including views of perpetrators as invariably willing participants. The narratives show that, as with other agencies engaged in "death work" (Johnson, 1990), there is a need for a reinforcement of the idea that suicide should be executed with "honor," if not actual cajoling and coaxing of candidates.

The article begins with a brief background on the use of suicide in Islamic societies, to which the study population belonged. It then describes the social background of the men and women who were convicted for attempting to commit suicide bombing, and the way they became involved in suicide terrorism. We analyze their narratives, the subjective meaning of suicide bombing and its social functions, placing them in their political, social and cultural/religious context. Lastly, we offer suggestions for theory and conclude with public policy recommendations.

BACKGROUND AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Islam provides that involvement in Jihad (striving), or "holy war" grants the reward of heaven to Muslims willing to sacrifice themselves in the course of defending

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religion.[xiv] Orthodox Muslims endorse the idea that the devout believer, who has a task of serving God, can accomplish the service during one's life or through death (see for instance Ajami, 2001; Israeli, 1997, on 'Islamikaza'). Death in the service of God is considered holy or martyrdom ('*istishhad*') rather than suicidal ('*intihar*')[xv]; it is a product of unwavering faith that leads the individual towards self-mortification (Forman, 1988; Strenski, 2003).[xvi] Although there is a dispute about whether Islam condones or calls for suicide in the service of God (e.g. Hafez, 2004), in the Palestinian-Israeli context, both secular and religious militant organizations have invoked Islamic texts and symbols on martyrdom and *jihad* to motivate individuals, and to justify their recruiting and dispatching suicide bombers (Hafez, 2004; Hassan; 2003; Israeli, 2002).

Becoming a suicide bomber is a social process; it involves socialization, and it is subject to rules and exhibits patterns. The opportunity to engage in it is likewise socially determined. Research has shown that suicide bombing requires three major elements: motivated individuals, access to organizations whose objective is to produce suicide bombing, and a community that extols perpetrators as heroes and embraces their acts as a noble form of resistance (Hafez, 2004; Merari, 2004; Oliver & Steinberg, 2005).

Studies addressing motivation to commit suicide have focused on the psychology of perpetrators, inquiring whether suicide bombers exhibit measures of psychopathology or are abnormal (e.g., Hassan; 2003; Merari, 2004; Silke, 2003). A recent review of the genesis of suicide terrorism demonstrates, however, that "...contemporary suicide terrorists from the Middle East...have no appreciable psychopathology and are as educated and well-off as surrounding populations." (Atran, 2003). Most observers agree that suicide bombers are rational individuals or "rational fanatics" (Sprintzak, 2000), whose resort to suicide is based on reason or a result of specific cost benefit-analysis (Hafez, 2004; Shiqaqi, 2002; Stern, 2003). Motivations to engage in suicide bombing include national and/or religious ideologies, and collective/altruistic and individual/fatalistic reasons (Pedhazur, 2003; Perliger, & Weinberg, 2003; Weinberg, Pedahuzur, & Cannetti-Nisim, 2003), although motivation is not always accompanied by ability to perpetrate violence, on individual or organizational levels (Ganor, 2005). Some observers have identified three major types of suicide bombers: those who act out of religious convictions, those who have the need to retaliate or avenge the death of a family member or loved ones by the enemy (in this case Israel), and those who are exploited by organization, being led to agree to perpetrate an attack for minor economic rewards or promises for the afterlife (Kimhi & Even, 2004).

 Research has also addressed the role of religious convictions or culturally based motivation to propel suicide bombing (Argo, 2004; Hafez, 2004; Oliver & Steinberg, 2005). Frustrations from political conditions have also been listed as motives, referring to suicide as oppositional terrorism (Crenshaw, 2002), a measure employed to exact revenge, retaliate for group humiliation, or restore national honor (El Sarraj, 2002a, 2002b; Rosenberger, 2003).

The role of social groups -- family, peer, ethnic, religious or national -- in shaping perpetrators' social identities, and in internalizing collective memory of injustice, defeat or dishonor has been noted. (Argo, 2004; Bloom, 2004, 2005; Oliver & Steinberg, 2005). Some have suggested that resultant feelings of hopelessness, despair, shame, or humiliation "makes living no better than dying". (El Sarraj, 2002a,

2002b; Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2003; Stern, 2003), particularly in the Arab culture, which places much weight on "honor." Others have argued that suicide bombing is not an act of desperation but of struggle (Merari, 2004), as content analysis of the farewell messages recruits videotape prior to the mission suggests (Hafez, 2004). Suicide bombing has been explained as a means to achieve self-empowerment, redemption and honor for individuals who experience powerlessness, downfall and humiliation (Hassan R., 2003; Juergensmeyer, 2000). Others have called attention to the suicide as a guaranteed access to worldly pleasures forbidden in this life, and a hope for an attractive afterlife (Berko, 2002, 2004; Stern, 2003; Victor, 2003).

Exposure to and contact with facilitating organizations is critical in becoming suicide bombers (Argo, 2004; Bloom, 2004, 2005; Merari, 2004). The organizations that produce suicide bombing provide a complete framework: wherewithal, finances, equipment, contacts and support personnel throughout the journey. These resources comprise the infrastructure without which successful missions cannot be executed. Familiarity with prospective targets, area residents' routines, and security personnel schedules are also important, as is access to and information about desirable targets[xvii] including the propitious time to execute a mission. Selecting candidates that can blend in the surrounding environment, that have language skills to communicate with local people, exhibit confidence, wear appropriate cloths and other amenities that provide them a Western look so as not to attract suspicion, is also the organization's responsibility (Hassan, 2004). Without the support network, organization and infrastructure, an individual cannot become a suicide bomber (Merari, 2004; Moghadam, 2003).[xviii]

Interviews of recruiters/dispatchers (Berko, 2002, 2004) confirm that the production of suicide bombing entails multiple tasks and requires a variety of skills. The recruiter identifies potential candidates, and prepares them for the mission. In some cases he[xix] needs to encourage candidates to become martyrs or persuade them that the mission is important and rewards in this and next worlds are forthcoming. Recruiters often help suicide bombers overcome fear, and address any barriers that prevent them from carrying out their mission. The dispatcher ascertains that recruits conform to the plan, and that they do not have second thoughts or change of mind. Providing candidates with the equipment, contacts, facilitating rituals associated with the mission (for instance, producing a video of the "last famous words" recited by the individual about to become *shahid*[xx]) and driving the prospective suicide bomber to a target, are also necessary tasks.

Recruiting and launching suicide bombers is thus a process that requires multitasking, flexibility and adaptability. Understanding human nature, in particular spotting weaknesses, identifying vulnerabilities, and maneuvering social failings, emotional difficulties or personal dilemmas are all indispensable skills in producing suicide bombing.[xxi]

The symbolic value of suicide in the service of religion or nation, and the honor bestowed on the suicide bomber and his family is also critical in the production of suicide bombing (Post, Sprinzak, & Denny, 2003). Both secular and religiously based terrorist organizations have invoked religion when launching suicide bombing (Hafez, 2004; Hassan, 2003; Israeli, 2002). Perpetrators who were dispatched through both types of organizations referred to one's religiously based obligation to be involved in

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the struggle and listed the Garden of Eden as a reward for the suicide mission (Berko, 2004).

Executing suicide bombing is generally a military decision. A political leader has to authorize it, the organization implements it, and a sympathetic public embraces and rejoices the outcome. Attacks are considered military operations, often presented as defensive actions (Juergenmeyer, 2000). Suicide bombing, employing humans as missiles or "smart bombs" is arguably a desirable war tactic. It overcomes asymmetrical power, helping weaker groups to equalize power differentials with strong enemies that possess sophisticated weapons and cannot be harmed through conventional warfare (Crenshaw, 2002). Suicide attacks are useful in this regard as they result in high level of physical and psychological damage (Pape, 2005). Furthermore, they are successful in reaching targets and are hard to deter. They are also affordable or inexpensive, and do not require escape routes or expose perpetrators to investigation. Lastly, they attract media attention, providing the organization behind it status and acclaim (Ganor, 2002; Hoffman & McCormick, 2004).

The review suggests that individual motivation (internally or externally induced) to self sacrifice combined with access to or support of an organization are necessary conditions in suicide bombing. These two elements and the ways in which they join in the lives of the suicide bombers we interviewed is the subject matter of this article.

METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTION

Seven Palestinian security prisoners who served time for attempting suicide bombing and who agreed to participate were interviewed for the study.[xxii] Between June 2003 and February 2005 individual in-depth interviews were conducted with two men and five women suicide bombers who served their sentences in Israeli prisons. In-depth interviewing is a preferred approach in qualitative research because it enables investigators to document, in interviewees' own terms, their experiences, and issues or problems that concern them (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). The interviews took place in the prisons in which the participants were housed.[xxiii] The sample consisted of suicide bombers who were caught (N=5), failed[xxiv] (1) or changed their mind (1) prior to completing their mission. Dependent on the interviewee's preference, the interviews were conducted either in Arabic, Hebrew, English, or a mixture of these languages. Each subject was interviewed in at least two sessions[xxv] separated by a period of a few days to 2 weeks, and each session lasted between 4 to 5 hours. The interview consisted of open-ended questions addressing the interviewee's childhood and growing up, landmark events and significant others in their lives, relationships with family and community members, and their wishes and aspirations during various stages in their lives. In all cases, in the second or third interviewing session the participants volunteered to describe in detail the circumstances that led them to become suicide bombers or their reasons for participating in suicide bombing, how they were recruited and deployed, how they felt about the suicide plan, and their views, beliefs and expectations regarding their mission.

Some of the participants were initially suspicious about being interviewed, wanting to ascertain that it was not an attempt by the Israeli authorities to interrogate them or acquire additional information on them, their mission or contacts. Once they felt confident that the interview involved academic research, and as they realized that the

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questions focused on their private lives, social experiences and personal views, their hesitation to talk dissipated and they opened up. [xxvi] Their stories provided insights into their world—their life experiences, beliefs and dreams, and the circumstances that landed them in prison.

The data resulting from the interviews were analyzed through coding techniques described by Glaser (1992). As we read each transcript, we searched for and identified patterns and variations in participants' responses and we reached a set of conceptual categories or propositions. The analysis proceeded by applying the logic of analytic induction, which entails the search for "negative cases" that challenge the analyst to progressively refine empirically based conditional statements (Katz, 1983). We revised our propositions in encountering each negative case until we saturated the data, making the patterns identified and the propositions offered consistent throughout the data. Once no new conceptual categories could be added, or propositions had to be reformulated, it was assumed that saturation has been reached.

FINDINGS

Sample Description

The participants were Muslim Palestinians who resided in cities, villages or refugee camps in the Palestinian territories of the West Bank or Gaza. Their age ranged between 16 and 28 years old, and all came from large families (the average number of children in the family was ten). During most of the interviewing sessions, all the participants except for one were dressed in traditional Muslim dark garments. [xxvii]

The educational level of the sample extended from third grade to second year of university studies. The women had higher educational level than the men. At the time of their arrest, two of the interviewees were in high school, two were university students, and the rest worked in skilled or unskilled labor or in providing services. None of the participants were married at the time of their arrest. One man was married (and had one child) but got divorced prior to his involvement in suicide bombing; his wife's family pressured him to divorce her due to marital problems.

Social Background of the Suicide Bombers

The interviewees grew up in families where the mother was a homemaker and the father was the breadwinner. The economic situation of the interviewees mirrored that of the rest of the Palestinian society, and in some cases was comparatively better than the norm. The families owned a home, and there was a steady income from a shop, from the father's employment in some Palestinian agency or from unskilled labor.

Most of the interviewees described relatively normative family life, with a dedicated loving mother and strict disciplinary regimen exercised by the father. In two cases the father married a second wife, and both wives bore children. The individuals whose father married a second wife younger than their mother discussed some of the problems related to the second marriage. It created tension between the two families, and generated conflict and competition between the wives and their respective offspring for the father's attention and family resources. The two interviewees whose father married a second wife empathized with their mother and shared her feelings of

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rejection and humiliation. They consequently felt distant from the father experiencing ambivalence toward him.

Two of the women lost their fathers in early childhood, one died in a traffic accident and the other from serious illness. In one case the mother, who lived with her child in a neighboring Arab country, decided to remarry and the daughter had to move to the Palestinian territories where the father's family lived.[xxviii] This woman, as the child of another man, could not live with the mother and her new husband, whom the interviewee referred to as "a strange man that my mother favored over me." She moved to her paternal grandmother and her unmarried aunts who raised her from the age of 10.

The interviewees described the father as the only authority in the household, whom they treated with respect and fear. The father was often perceived as distant, one who could not be approached easily. Sometime to reach him, the children had to go through the mother. All participants described their mothers as "a warm and simple woman" who dedicated her life to the family. The interviewees expressed deep love and affection for their mother, whom they always wanted to please. One of the women who decided to become a martyr (*shahida*) noted that hurting her mother by committing suicide was the most difficult thing for her to bear. One man commented that it was extremely difficult for him to go to the court, see his mother there and not be able to communicate with her. Another man responded to a question about what would have made him stop from perpetrating his suicide mission, "only my mother."

The participants' social identity as Palestinians who are dispossessed, oppressed and humiliated was a recurrent theme in discussing their lives. Whether they resided in cities, villages or refugee camps in the West Bank or Gaza strip, they were raised in Palestinian homes, which continuously exposed them to their version of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and its history. Growing up they heard their parents' stories about houses that were left behind, or about land that was lost when Israel was established and the Independence War (1948) erupted.[xxix] The anger was exacerbated and the hatred deepened during the Israeli military control of the Palestinian territories following the Six Days War in 1967.[xxx] As one of the men said:

> For me, a Jew is not a problem. But he sits in my country, doing things that
> are not acceptable. I grew up with it.

These issues were also topics of discussion in school, social activities, cultural events and religious gatherings. The private stories, coupled with indoctrination in mosques or over the media, and reinforced through condemnations by Palestinian public figures, led to the interviewees' forming hostility and resentment toward Israeli Jews from an early age.

The one participant who had personal experiences with Israeli Jews through working in Israel explained that he did not have anything personal against Jews[xxxi] but the determination to engage in the struggle revolved around the feelings of loss of land and/or the occupation.[xxxii] The rest of the participants talked about the fact that they never had any contact with Israeli Jews prior to their imprisonment. One woman commented,

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> Before I came to this prison I thought that all Israelis are soldiers shouting and yelling at Palestinians in checkpoints. Meeting here other (Israeli) prisoners and staff, I see we have a lot in common; we have the same life problems.

Those who had had direct or indirect contact with Israelis (or the West) prior to imprisonment talked about cultural, social and behavioral differences between Arabs and Jews or Westerners in general. The participants took much pride in the closeness, warmth and loyalty of the Arab nuclear and extended family, the friendly relationship with neighbors and the collective efforts of their community in helping its members. They particularly elaborated on gender differences between Arabs and Israelis, and the barriers that Arab culture poses for interactions between Arab men and women. Quite often the interviewees restated the fact that they live in Arab society or are part of a culture that dictates various restrictions, and monitors gender-appropriate behavior. They mentioned that they cannot date or socialize unless the contact is for engagement or marriage purposes, is approved by the family and under its supervision.[xxxiii] As the next section suggests, the social background of the interviewees and the cultural gender scripts that Arab society provides for men and women were reflected in the paths the participants took in becoming suicide bombers.

Decision to Become a Martyr (Shahid)

Of the seven interviewees, four initiated contact with an organization that produces suicide bombing; the other three were approached by activists looking to recruit candidates. The motivation that led the ones who initiated the contact to volunteer varied. One of the male interviewees was a veteran of terrorism who has engaged in the past in a range of activities ranging from stone throwing to shooting and other subversive acts. Following problems he had with his wife's family, whom he was forced to divorce, he decided to volunteer to become a martyr. He was well connected with a fundamentalist Muslim organization known to produce suicide bombing and he offered himself as a martyr *(shahid)*. He suggested blowing himself up in a bus of Israelis in Jerusalem, where he used to work. His offer was accepted and he went on this mission but the explosives failed to detonate.

One woman explained that she decided to become a *shahida* in order to get back at her father, who did not allow her to marry the man of her choice. She described how one day on the street she saw a man, whose body was deformed, getting off a taxi. She stated: "we looked at each other's eyes and we fell in love with each other. I was 25 years old and it was my last chance to get married."[xxxiv] Because the man's family was unable to meet her father's dowry demands, they could not get married. The woman was very angry with her father that he would not compromise about the amount of money he wanted and she decided to volunteer, "to take revenge of my father." She then went to a town near her village, where she happened to meet a military activist.[xxxv] She told this activist that she wanted to be a suicide bomber, and he started to roll the operation. She went on to explain,

> My life was useless, my life had no use to anyone… there are many people who want to do that, to be *shahid*s and no one could prevent them from doing it.

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She described what she thought was awaiting her if she was to become a martyr (*shahida*):

> The *shahida* is one of the 72 virgins.[xxxvi] Life in the Garden of Eden is more than life in this reality. We do not live real life. We are just by-passers. The real life is in the Garden of Eden. Everything is there. Everything! All what we think about is in the Garden of Eden. There is food, excellent cooked food…This is what was said in the (Quran's) chapter of The Cow (Surah Al-Baqarah) 'do not refer to those who are killed for Allah as dead because they are alive.'

A young woman from a refugee camp, a high school student at the time of her arrest relayed how she and her girlfriend who was a classmate were preparing homework assignments at her home. They both were bored and felt that "there was nothing to do" and looked for some excitement. Living in a militant town that produced dozens of suicide bombers, they felt they "wanted to do something" and decided that they would volunteer to become *shahidas*. This young woman contacted a man in the camp who was involved in military endeavors. She described the interactions that followed:

> At first, he (the military activist) refused my request to become a *shahida*, and he said 'you are a minor and you should go to school'. Later he offered me another type of military work, not suicide bombing. But I did not give up. I told him I want to be a *shahida*.

She described how she went to a girls' school, and enjoyed studying there. But the idea of volunteering to be a *shahida* was something that she and her girlfriend got excited about and it became their shared secret. After few more appeals to the military activist, the man agreed to send her on a suicide mission, and they started to plan the attack. She was caught in her home just a few days before the mission was scheduled to take place.

One of the participants was a university student at the time of her arrest. When she was a young child, she stated, one of her brothers, whom she referred to as a *shahid*, was killed by the IDF (Israel Defense Forces) as a result of his involvement in terrorism, and three of her brothers were in Israeli jails for similar activities. She described how during her university years she was exposed to religious material and was engaged in bringing women back to religious lifestyle. As part of the experience of becoming a reborn Muslim, she visited families of *shahids* and eventually decided to become a *shahida* to avenge the death of Palestinians. She explained her reasons and the way she had to conceal the decision from her mother:

> I wanted to become a *shahida* for revenge of the Jews, my religion and the love of the Garden of Eden. It was my own decision…If I were to tell someone that I was going to be a *shahida* they would prevent me (from doing it). Thus I preferred to keep it to myself.

This woman contacted a military activist whom she knew was involved in dispatching suicide bombers and her preparation for the mission began shortly thereafter.

The interviewees who did not initiate the contact with the recruiting organization relayed the circumstances that led to their involvement in suicide bombing. One woman explained that she wanted "to get out the house" so she decided to pursue military training. A girlfriend, who knew activists through her own experience with training, made the contact with the organization. The interviewee went on to explain:

> There are women who come and offer themselves. I did not volunteer. I did not want to die. I just wanted to get trained with weapon. ... I had a friend who introduced me to the guys (*shabab*). They told me to sign a document that I have willingly chosen to train, so that no one says that they (the guys) forced me to do it. I do not know if they also make men sign such a document…

Before allowing her to get trained, the organization wanted to verify her social background and motivation to be involved:

> The guys would ask what made me work with them…they wanted to know if there was something in the home or whether I was forced to get married…they did not want someone who has something social but someone who is regular…[xxxvii]

Once she passed the initial screening her training began:

> Three months before the mission I started to get trained…when I asked them to get trained they offered me an explosive belt and things like that…I said I only came for training, I do not want to die.

To include women in operations, which require contact with men, and for women to be able to avoid the watching eyes of the family as they venture out, cover up is always necessary. One woman explained:

> We do not live in the West. When I went to training, I told my father that I was going to a girlfriend. My father did not prevent me from going to girlfriends. I had freedom, even though our family is religious. It is natural to go and see girlfriends. They did not ask too many questions.

The woman explained how she managed to avoid suspicion, overcoming the community restrictions of social interaction between men and women:

> …Thus for three months I went to training. I would go in a car that collected me in the refugee camp…There was always a woman in the car so that I will not be with a guy alone…

In addition to having a woman accompany another woman to the training sites, the organization also took measures to protect its own operations:

> There were times when they will cover my eyes until we came to the training place of the Al Aksa Brigades (a militant Palestinian organization). I was not alone; there were other women who got trained…

The woman, who merely wanted the excitement and adventures of secret contact with men, soon realized that she got herself in a difficult situation. She explained:

> ....I did not think it was going to be like that. I did not think I will die and I did not want to die. They (the recruiters and dispatchers) planned that I will be a suicide bomber. I did not ask for that. They offered me the explosive belt and other things. But I did not agree. At first they did not force me. But things developed and the situation got to where it got. I was a spoiled child and did not plan to die. ...The dispatcher told me that I would be going on a suicide mission *'istishhad'* (self-sacrifice) on Monday. He said to me, 'Get yourself ready, and be prepared'... I was very surprised that he was ordering me to be a *'shahida'* (a female martyr). I hadn't planned to die in this way. At first I thought he was joking, but now, he wasn't joking. He said – 'you prepared, you practiced, you know us, you're active in the organization and you have to do this.

In a panic, she tried to get out of this situation, explaining why she is not suitable for the task:

> I told him that I had only come for the training, not to go on a suicide mission like this... then we argued. I told him that I don't practice all the religious rules like traditional dress and covered hair, nor do I observe prayer times; sometimes I do pray and sometimes I don't... then I told him that someone who wants to be a *'shahida'* has to observe the rules of dress and prayer... I added that I watch television and listen to songs, things that observant Muslims don't do, and that I hadn't planned to undertake such an operation and become a *'shahida'*. If I had, I would have been more religious.

Her demands and requests to get out of this entanglement, however, fell on deaf ears:

> I reached the point where, without realizing it, I found myself yelling at him. 'I thought this was a prank', I said, but my girlfriend said it was for real. I asked the man to call the whole thing off, to forget the association between us, that I would forget them and they would forget me. They refused and told me – 'You know everything about us, and we're not sure what will happen when you leave this room, perhaps you will make a mistake and tell on us...' I swore on the Quran that I would not reveal anything. They said – 'We're an 'organization', not regular people, and that (oath) doesn't work with us.' They feared for me and for themselves, that I might reveal their identity and training site.

In explaining his decision to become a suicide bomber, one of the male interviewees, a high school student, described being at a friend's home with some friends. In the presence of other youth, a classmate named Hassan approached him, offering him 100 shekels (about $22) and asking, in the presence of his friends, whether he wanted to become a *shahid*. The interviewee replied, "Why not?" He noted that the classmate who recruited him, and according to the interviewee received much more money for it than he did, admitted that he himself was scared to do it. The interviewee then added "I'm more of a man than Hassan, so I will do it." He then explained some of the other reasons for agreeing:

> Shahids' are for God, I wanted to kill many Jews and take revenge... I would have sold my parents and the whole world for the Garden of Eden.

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In responding to why he needed the 100 shekels he received for agreeing to be a suicide bomber, the interviewee stated that if he were to feel hunger on his way to the suicidal mission, he could go to a restaurant and eat. He also said that he used the money to buy a cooking pot for his mother. He then went on to explain:

> All that is forbidden in this world is permitted in the Garden of Eden. The Garden of Eden has everything – God, freedom, the Prophet Mohammed and my friends, the 'shahids'… There are 72 virgins. There are lots of things I can't even describe… I'll find everything in the Garden of Eden, a river of honey, a river of beer and alcohol…

A young woman described a combination of reasons and life events that led her to agree to become a suicide bomber. She was fond of a young man who was killed by the IDF (Israel Defense Forces) while being involved in terrorist activities. In a social gathering she was approached by an activist who knew about her affection for the young deceased man. This activist asked her whether she wanted to avenge his death. She thought about the idea and eventually decided to accept the offer, as she believed she would meet the deceased man in heaven. At the time she started wearing traditional Muslim clothes. Her uncle, who was concerned about some of the changes he noticed in her behavior and appearance, inquired about what had transpired. She responded, allaying his worries:

> Do not worry about me. People who commit suicide do not think about their own families, only about themselves and their lives. I am not going to do it as I care about you.

Her family believed her and did not approach her any more about this issue. Two days after the activist approached her, she began to prepare for the mission.

Most of the interviewees reported feeling spiritually uplifted when they decided to become *shahids*. One man expressed it as "I felt like a groom." Another interviewee described it as "the happiest day of my life." One of the women described how she felt once she arrived at her decision to be a martyr:

> It took me a long time to make this decision… It was wonderful to say good-bye to life, I felt I was in the clouds from the moment I knew I was going to be a *shahida*.

Preparing for the Suicide Bombing and on the Way to the Target

The interviewees described the last days before their scheduled departure for the mission as days of reflection and self-imposed isolation. They were withdrawn, avoided any conversation with household members, and would not divulge to concerned parents, siblings or relatives what was on their mind. They did not share their plan with anyone, and made up various excuses for their withdrawal or unusual behavior. They also avoided questions about their well-being or provided elusive answers to such inquiries.

The interviewees explained that they did not want to hurt their loved ones by revealing to them their imminent suicide. One woman who was supposed to

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participate in a double suicide mission described her feelings about the young person who was to be her partner in the mission:

> They prepared us separately. We met just two hours before the mission. I did not know the youngster before. When I saw him, he looked much younger than his age, just like a child. I could not stop thinking about his young age, that he had no time as yet to live, and that he may not understand what he is doing to himself and his family…

The female interviewees had also to conceal the suicide plan for additional reasons. As one of the women explained:

> I was scared to go and tell my father, to ask for help, because then he would know that I had been to military training with the guys, without permission…

This woman went on to describe what transpired in the days before the mission:

> I began counting the days till my death, because they forced me to. I hate death. I love life. I was very spoiled…When they told me that I was to go on the 'mission,' I cried so much, I almost fainted, everything looked black. I begged the 'adult' who was in charge of the military trainees, to release me from it. He told me 'Halas ya-binti' (enough, my daughter). I repeated my claim that I am not religious, that I don't pray, and he replied, 'when you die, you will be closer to God. God will forgive you and allow you into the Garden of Eden, in spite of not praying.' That was that. He refused to release me…

Most of the interviewees went to the mission from their homes. On the day of the mission or at some point near the scheduled day[xxxviii] a representative of the organization picked them up. They were taken to an apartment, which contained a decorated room, where they were videotaped reciting what they described as their farewell, their commitment to follow through with their mission and their final will.[xxxix] The will often was a letter to the family containing requests such as pay a debt the person making the will owes or rejoice his or her becoming a *shahid*.

One of the interviewees described how on the morning scheduled for the mission he got up and kissed his sleeping mother's hand, recited prayers and went on his way. In an apartment in his Palestinian town, the interviewee was videotaped with the Quran, two rifles, hand grenades and a green bandanna marked with Quranic quotations. During the interview, this man relayed this experience with enthusiasm and demonstrated with much pride the courageous posture he assumed for the videotaping.

After the videotaping the interviewees received the equipment necessary for the suicide mission. In some cases the explosive belt was placed on their body while they traveled to the target. An organization member, who was familiar with the area and knew how to reach the target, escorted the interviewees to the designated site, bypassing checkpoints and other security measures.[xl]

The interviewees described their feelings and conduct on the way to the target. They spoke of "robotic behavior" and of being emotionally detached. They focused on the

mission, tried not to be distracted by any thoughts or concerns related to their family or friends. One participant explained during the interview how he felt during the ride to the target:

> When I sit with you and want to drink water, I think of how I will get the water and get it and drink. But if I want to blow myself up, I don't think about anything.

During the travel to the target, some of the interviewees reported being told by those who escorted them how the community cherishes their actions, and how they will bring honor to themselves and their families. Several interviewees noted that they were asked to think only about the operation and were continuously encouraged to execute the mission, being reminded of the rewards that await them and their families following their death. In other cases, the interviewees reported carrying mundane conversations with the people in the car to get their mind off their imminent suicide; in other cases they discussed various details related to the mission.

The interviewees who failed or were caught prior to executing the mission reported that they were deeply disappointed. They described their feelings after the mission was thwarted as being down, disillusioned or depressed. They regretted missing the opportunity to perpetrate the act and receive the attractive afterlife rewards they anticipated. Many lamented that they have to be in prison instead. As one of the women said "I never thought that I would end up in prison."

The woman who reached the target with the explosive belt on her body but changed her mind before detonating it explained her reasons for changing her mind:

> I thought about many things that time. I saw a woman with a little boy in the carriage, I thought, why do I have to do it to this woman and her boy. The boy was cute and I thought about my nephews. I looked up to heaven and I thought about God. Something from inside told me—No, you should not do that…I thought about the people that love me and the innocent people in the street who did not do any crime. It was a difficult moment, and I had to make a decision. I did not want to die…I did not think in a deep way... I even thought I may go to hell… I decided to change my mind as I thought I would not get out of this hell as I may kill innocent (Israeli) people, and cause the death of regular people who just happen to walk in the street. I know that God prohibits this kind of action.

Following her change of heart, she wanted to return home. Her decision to withdraw at the last minute and not to follow through with the mission was not favorably received by the organization:

> I called those who sent me to come and take me back. In the meantime, there was a suicide bombing (perpetrated by the young man who was driven with her to the target for the planned double suicide mission). There was a lot of mess. They (the dispatchers) hung up the phone on me. They told me that a lot of people are waiting for me to blow myself up, so I better do it. I cried and begged them to come and take me back to my village. I was in the middle of an Israeli city, and the youngster that came with me already blew himself up. I did not know what to do. So I called them three times, until they finally picked me up. The one who dispatched me said, 'perhaps God

chose this for you, to live, and perhaps it is better than death.' I went back home and experienced depression. After one week I was arrested…

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Suicide bombing is a discrete act executed by pushing a button. Yet, the data presented, although based on a small sample and thus should be interpreted with caution, portray suicide bombing as a social process amenable to criminological/victimlogical analyses. The recruit's background and social context, including associations (e.g. Sutherland & Cressy, 1960), motivation (e.g. Agnew, 1992), membership in subcultures that endorse violent responses to perceived social problems or indignation (e.g. Wolfgang & Ferracuti, 1982) and available opportunity structures (e.g., Cloward & Ohlin, 1960; Merton, 1938) -- all play a role in individuals embarking on a suicide bombing "career."[xli]

In many cases the process begins with a motivated individual approaching an organization's representative about his or her interest in becoming a *shahid*. In others, a person identified as a potential candidate -- someone who can be persuaded to commit an attack -- comes to the attention of an organization that produces suicide bombing. Recruitment commonly occurs through one's social network; it often involves friends, classmates, or neighborhood acquaintances.

Individual motivation to become suicide bombers varies; it ranges from ideological persuasion, through desire to avenge the death of a loved one or fellow Palestinians, to enhancement of one's social status or augmenting one's prospects of a gratifying afterlife. But whether the decision to commit suicide bombing emanates from an ideology of struggle, despair or hope for better life of afterlife, it is often triggered by mundane reasons, such as proving one's manhood, retaliation at an uncompromising father, search for excitement or ways to relieve boredom.

In some cases, individuals who are identified as vulnerable, or disenchanted with their personal lives or family situation, are swayed to become *shahids,* thereby ending their difficulties. Cajoling and persuading hesitant candidates with what awaits them if they comply, or enumeration of the rewards they and their families will receive, ascertain that recruits do not change their mind, or deviate from the plan.

Once a decision to volunteer is made, finding an organization that will implement one's wish to become a *shahid* is straightforward (see also Berko, Wolf & Addad, 2005). In most areas where candidates reside, information on who is involved in military operations is common knowledge. Easy access to suicide-facilitating organizations, beliefs in impending rewards for martyrs, together with ever-present communal exaltation of *shahids*, create an environment which produces a steady supply of candidates, emboldens hesitant recruits and persuades initially reluctant individuals to join the suicide industry.

The contact with the organization embarks the recruit on a journey, which in the normal course of events cannot be aborted. The contact itself becomes a "non-sharable problem" (Cressey, 1973), which leads to the recruit's isolation and withdrawal from family and relatives, whom the candidate does not want to upset.[xlii] This isolation, in turn, makes the recruit more susceptible to the organization's

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pressures to follow through, as he or she is further distanced from the only persons who can stop this journey – father, siblings, other significant others, and above all the mother.

Preparation for suicide bombing can extend over several weeks or even months but may also be as short as a few days or several hours.[xliii] In making a suicide bomber, the organization that recruits and trains candidates employs various strategies to maintain the recruit's interest: its strengthens his or her resolve to go forward with the mission, as it alleviates any fear or anxiety that may arise. The candidate receives constant reminders of the reasons for which one has volunteered or has been recruited. The contact and interaction with the organization leads recruits to a point of "no return." For men, it is often associated with the wish not to lose face and "to be a man." For the female recruit, the association with male organizations tarnishes her reputation, blocking her return to her family. In a culture that restricts social interaction between the sexes, it seals her fate as "a loose woman,"[xliv] making the alternative -- death as a *shahida* -- more appealing, if not worthwhile (see also Victor, 2003).

The findings demonstrate that for Palestinian men and women recruits, the path to martyrdom through suicide is, by and large, a one-way street. Social structures, value systems, and the collective memory of a group combine to produce a steady supply of motivated candidates, exert pressures on hesitant candidates and persuade reluctant recruits to go forward with the act. In designing ways to curb suicide bombing, policy makers should consider the social, cultural and religious contexts that create "push and pull" forces and attempt to address or ameliorate them in order to bring about change.[xlv]

Special attention should be paid to identifying and supporting those who have the capability and power to inhibit motivation to commit suicide, or dissuade recruits from following through with their mission. The data indicate that family members, particularly mothers, can detect in their offspring or relatives behavioral precursors to suicide, such as changes in routines, unusual or out of character conduct, sudden absences, withdrawal, or increased religiosity. Although it has been argued that mothers of *shahids* are powerless in Palestinian society (Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2003), in suicide bombing cases, mothers or other close relatives may hold the key to detecting suicide plans as well as the power to dissuade their loved ones from carrying them out. Concerned parents or relatives need to report behavioral changes to authorities.[xlvi] Officials, in turn, should take such reports seriously and investigate them promptly and thoroughly. Authorities should also facilitate open communication with parents or other concerned family members, making them willing to report suspicions or appeal for help.

The Palestinians pathways to suicide bombing, as discerned in the data, highlight a well-established criminological/victimological fact -- the overlap between crime and victimization, between being a criminal and being a victim.[xlvii] Since the onset of the second *intifada* (uprising) in September 2000, suicide bombers have been responsible for the killing of the largest numbers of Israelis. Israelis have defined suicide bombers as heinous criminals and barbaric murderers; Palestinians view them as heroes and martyrs. Examination of the narratives presented in this article, however, reveals that Palestinian suicide bombers are as much victims as they are victimizers.

Recognition of this overlap may help in bringing both sides of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict closer together, constituting a step forward in reviving the peace process.

NOTES

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[i] For analysis of the metaphor of war as it is applied to terrorism and crime see Steinhert, 2003).

[ii] This incident resulted in the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Lebanon.

[iii] Suicide bombing in Israel occurred since the early 1990s. The first wave occurred between 1993 and 1996. The number of suicide bombing increased dramatically with the onset of the second *Intifada* (uprising) that started in September 2000. From September 2000 to September 2005 there were 144 completed suicide bombings. Altogether during this time period there were 35,927 terrorist attacks, including suicide bombings, knife attacks, shootings, bombings, being run over with cars, lynchings, car bombs, mortar bombs, rocket attacks, stone throwing, and home intrusions. Although suicide bombings comprise only 0.5% of all terrorist attacks, they have caused about 50% of the fatalities and injuries in Israel (as of February 2005 there have been over1100 people who were killed in terrorist attacks).

[iv] Suicide bombing has been a topic of heated discussion following two recent representations of suicide bombers -- the photograph found in Gaza of a baby wearing an explosive belt, and the object displayed in an museum in Stockholm, showing a picture of a female suicide bomber who killed dozens of Israelis, including whole families and numerous children, in a pool of blood.

[v] The exaltation of suicide bombers as freedom fighter is expressed by the Palestinian national poet, Mahamud Darwish, who states in one of his famous poems "The *shahid* (martyr) teaches me: there is no beauty except for freedom" On the general claim that suicide bombers are freedom fighters see also Sageman, 2004.

[vi] Palestinians and their supporters claim that the occupation and political oppression of the Palestinian people by the Israelis has been the reason behind young Palestinians volunteering to commit suicide, embracing it as a noble form of resistance or martyrdom (i*stishahad).* Israelis and their supporters emphasize the barbarian nature of suicide bombing, perpetrated for the sole purpose of killing and maiming as many Jews (or Westerns) as possible (Erez, 2005). They highlight the distorted and morally corrupt society that encourages its youngsters to become martyrs (*shahids*). Palestinian mothers that were shown on TV to rejoice their children's death as martyrs were criticized for being uncaring or "unnatural" mothers, although research has challenged the notion that Palestinian mothers want their children to become martyrs. Recent studies have documented how Palestinian male leadership and authorities compel mothers to deny their grief in the media. Women have been prevented from seeing the bodies of their children or were drugged before the funeral, and generally were prevented and prohibited from demonstrating in public their loss and trauma resulting from the death of a child (Berko, 2004; Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2003; Victor, 2003).

[vii] Palestinian women have been involved in acts of protest for a long time. They were active in the first *intifada (uprising),* which took place around 1987, and they were also involved in the second *intifiada* that began in September 2000. The first case of female suicide bomber operating against Israeli military forces in Lebanon was Loula Abboud, a 19-year-old secular Christian Lebanese girl, who commanded a small leftist resistance cell in southern Lebanon against the Israeli invaders. The first case of a female suicide bomber in Israel occurred in 2002.

[viii] Yassar Arafat, for instance, have often referred to the womb of the Palestinian woman as "the best weapon of the Palestinian people," praising the role of women in preserving the family, producing children who become soldiers that fight Israel, and changing the demographic structure of Israel. Sheik Ahmad Yasin, the former leader of Hamas (a fundamentalist Moslem organization operating worldwide), who was assassinated by the IDF in March 2004 commented, with regard to female suicide bombers, that there were enough

men for the job of exploding; women, he stated, should realize their special potential to bear children. According to Yassin, women should have babies and not deal with military matters (see also personal interview with Yassin in Berko, 2004). However, in January 2002, Arafat had a mass meeting with Palestinian women and promised full equality between men and women in Palestine. He called for women to take part in the armed struggle. Arafat proclaimed that women are not just the "womb of the Nation." Rather, he stated, women are "my army of roses that will crush Israeli tanks." (see Kimmerling, 2003; Victor, 2003). In January 2004, Hamas has joined the Fatah stream of Palestinian resistance in condoning women suicide bombing.

[ix] Hassan N. (2004) provides details about the difficulties she encountered in getting access to those involved in terrorism in Gaza, and the secrecy she has to follow in order to meet with her interviewees. See also Sageman, 2004, Hafez, 2004.

[x] Several researchers have addressed suicide bombing as a social phenomenon, including Hassan's (2003, 2004) research on Palestinians in the Palestinian territories who aspired to become suicide bombers; Bloom's (2005) study on suicide bombers in Sri Lanka, Turkey and the Middle East; Victor's (2003) study of Palestinian female suicide bombers and Stern's (2003) study, which examined suicide bombing as part of terrorists' strategy in a wide range of contexts, from the Middle East and South Asia to the United States. However, these studies by and large did not analyze in-depth interviews of suicide bombers who were actually engaged in a suicide operation, but for various reasons their mission could not be implemented or failed.

[xi] For an application of criminological/victimological theories to analyze victimization related to suicide bombing in Israel see Erez, 2005. For a call to study terrorism from a criminological perspective, see Rosenfeld, 2002.

[xii] In most cases failure is due to equipment malfunction.

[xiii] Sari Nusseibeh, the President of Al Quds University in East Jerusalem, a peace activist and advocate of nonviolence, when asked about the use of terrorism by Palestinians has often responded by referred to the Palestinians as "ordinary people seeking our freedom." (See for instance, the *Radcliffe Quarterly*, Winter 2005, Harvard University; retrieved September 7, 2005 from www.radcliffe.edu/print/?pid=755&print_parameters=; see also *The Oberlin Review*, April 2005).

[xiv] Other options include an offensive jihad or the world jihad associated with Bin Laden.

[xv] In a recent suicide bombing in Israel (February 25, 2005), for the first time, the newly elected leader of the Palestinian people, Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Maazen), who is a political rather than religious figure, has referred to the suicide bombing as *Istihar* (suicide) rather than *istishhad* (martyrdom), sending a signal that the act is no longer condoned by the Palestinian Authority. It has been argued that such a message from a religious figure (*fatwa*) may be critical for sending a message that, according to Islam, suicide bombing is not martyrdom, thereby preventing future acts of suicide terrorism.

[xvi] The belief in an attractive afterlife, in the Garden of Eden, has been listed as a motive by the overwhelming majority of the recruits. The interviewees stated that the message about the unique type of death experienced by a martyr was conveyed to them during their recruitment, and most discussed death as a martyr as a factor in their decision to commit suicide terrorism.

[xvii] Most often a target consists of a crowded bus or a place where people, preferably young persons or better yet, soldiers, congregate, including discothèques, cafes, restaurants, and particularly during special events or holidays in Israel.

[xviii] This does not mean that suicide bombers belong to a specific organization, or that a suicide bomber's identity is tied to a particular organization. Some individuals exhibit mobility between organizations, and their organizational affiliation or identification changes over time.

[xix] We use the masculine form as no woman has been known to serve as a dispatcher. As will be discussed later in the article, some women may recruit other women or facilitate their involvement in terrorism, but they do not serve as dispatchers.

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[xx] *Shahid* (male martyr) or *shahida* (female martyr) is generally a person who is killed by, or dies in a struggle against the enemy, attempting to defend or preserve religious or national values.

[xxi] Berko (2004) reports that one dispatcher she interviewed described how in recruiting candidates he was particularly looking for "sad young men," approaching them with promises about the Garden of Eden that awaits those who commit suicide bombing. Another described how he approached individuals who were suspected for collaborating with Israel, suggesting that a suicide mission would erase the blemish that they have caused themselves and their families. In yet other cases, suicide bombing was offered as a way to erase the shame and "dishonor" that a rumor about suspected female sexual misbehavior caused the woman's family. Offering to become a *shahid* and commit suicide to restore the tarnished family reputation was a strategy that recruiters used to recruit candidates. In January 2004 the first Hamas female suicide bomber, a mother of two small children from Gaza who was suspected for an extra marital affair, was driven by her husband to the checkpoint where she blew herself up.

[xxii] Men carried out the overwhelming majority of the suicide bombing that took place in Israel. Women only began to be involved in suicide bombing in 2002. As of May 1, 2005 there were only eight (out of a total of 144) completed suicide bombing carried out by women; an additional 20 attempts by female suicide bombers were thwarted. There are currently (March 1, 2005) about 250 individuals in prison for different degrees of involvement in suicide bombing. Examination of the narratives of the participants to whom access was available suggest that the circumstances in which they got involved in suicide bombing are not unique; they reflect respectively other male and female suicide bombers' experiences, although they do not exhaust the universe of such circumstances. Circumstances known to be present among suicide bombers, for instance, men and women who were required "to volunteer" because they were suspected of collaboration with the Israelis, or women who were pressured to perpetrate suicide bombing because they were suspected for adultery, or there was a rumor to the effect that they had a premarital relationship with a man, are not present in the current sample. We thus submit that the stories of the interviewees are representative of some men's and women's suicide bombing related experiences. We suggest that, according to their proportion in the population of suicide bombers, the current study has over-sampled women and under sampled men; thus the data presented do not exhaust the type of situations that lead individuals to engage in suicide.

[xxiii] The participants served sentences that ranged from 7 years to life sentence.

[xxiv] The suicide bomber who failed actually pressed the detonation button but it malfunctioned.

[xxv] The female interviewees felt a greater need to talk and therefore more interviewing sessions were conducted with them.

[xxvi] The first author conducted individual interviews with the participants in a locked room in the prisons that housed the participants. Huamn Subjects Protection protocols of the Israeli Prison Authorities and the institution of higher education with which the first author was affiliated were followed throughout the data collection. The identity of the interviewer as a daughter of Iraqi Jewish refugees -- one who is familiar with Arab customs and the Arabic language -- has helped in relieving the initial anxiety of the participants (see also Hassan, 2004 for the value of being female with Muslim/Arab background for increasing the willingness of individuals who have been involved in terrorism to grant interviews and talk to strangers). At the end of each interview session, the participants told the interviewer that they looked forward to further interviewing time with her. They noted that they felt she was a caring person, and that they sensed her genuine concern for their well-being. In some cases, the participants were crying during the interviews, falling on the interviewer's shoulder or tightly holding her hands. The interviewer comforted the participants, and handed tissues to those who wept during the session. In some cases she held them until they regained composure and could continue with the interview. Prison staff was available in case the interviewees required professional assistance, but such services were not needed. Some of the

participants requested to maintain contact with the interviewer outside prison, when they be released. The factual portions of the data collected through the interviews were validated by information in the interviewee's court case materials and prison files.

[xxvii] The women except for one wore a veil (hijab) and a long dress (jilbab). Because the interviewing session extended over a period of several months, three women who at first wore Western clothes changed their attire and in later interviews wore traditional Muslim garments.

[xxviii] A woman is generally not permitted to bring children from a previous marriage to the new husband. The children belong to their father's family. One male interviewee told how he had to run away from the home of this father's parents to see his mother, whom the father divorced. Also, female children cannot live in a house with a man who is not their father (or male sibling).

[xxix] The establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 led to a declaration of war against it by the surrounding Arab countries. This war resulted in concentration of Palestinian refugees in Gaza and the West Bank areas. The study participants came from these areas, although not all were residents of refugee camps.

[xxx] The Six Day War of 1967 was the result of the collective decision of neighboring Arab countries to annihilate the state of Israel. Israel, in a preemptive strike, then took over parts of Jordan (the West Bank) and of Egypt (the Gaza strip). These areas, which include Palestinian cities, villages as well as refugee camps established in 1948, are referred to as the Palestinian territories.

[xxxi] Throughout the interviews the participants referred to Israelis as Jews.

[xxxii] Generally, the contact that Palestinian men had with Israelis was mostly through work. Before the September 2000 uprising (intifada) and the resultant closure of the borders Palestinians had permission to enter Israel for work purposes. Women from the territories generally were not allowed by their families to travel for work into Israel. For Palestinians and female Palestinians in particular, there are hardly any opportunities for social interactions with Israeli Jews.

[xxxiii] Some of the interviewees commented that in a modern society there are ways to circumscribe these restrictions and communicating through unconventional means, particularly the Internet, thus managing to escape their parents' control. Some of the women talked about corresponding with men from various Arab countries, thereby bypassing the supervising eyes of the family.

[xxxiv] In Arab society (as in other cultures), where women get married at a relatively young age, being 25 is considered old.

[xxxv] Most of the interviewees stated that it is common knowledge who are the people involved in military operations, and who are the ones to be approached if one wants to engage in terrorism.

[xxxvi] As will be discussed later, the description of the rewards that awaits the men who reach the Garden of Eden is that they will have all the pleasures that are prohibited in this world, including 74 virgins that will serve their pleasure.

[xxxvii] In light of rumors that Palestinian terrorist organizations have used women who are marginal and possess social blemishes to serve as shahidas, organizations involved in suicide bombing want to appear legitimate and respectful in the eyes of the community as well as over the media. This seems the reason for their attempt to verify whether the woman is motivated to join because of some problematic situation. In some cases organizations want to avoid conflict and confrontation with woman's family, thus inquiring about any problematic background, making the women sign a document that they volunteered rather than were forced to engage in the suicide. This document may also protect organization members against retaliation for taking the woman out of her family, thereby tarnishing her reputation as a "pure woman," which in turns reflects negatively on her family's honor.

[xxxviii] The organizations generally tried to complete all the necessary steps on the day of the mission so that the candidates do not have time to reflect on their actions or have a change of heart. In some cases, the final arrangements, such as the videotaping of the will, were conducted a few days or hours before the scheduled mission.

[xxxix] The parties consider the video recording of the will a quasi-contract that ascertains that the recruit will follow up with the mission and will not renege.

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xl In most cases, suicide bombers are driven by collaborators who have cars that carry Israeli license plates, or in such cars that were stolen for that purpose. Having Israeli license plates avoids suspicion and questioning.

xli For a detailed discussion of the application of these theories to terrorism in Israel see Erez (2005).

xlii Parents, however, often sense some changes in their children's routines or behavioral patterns, or notice that their children exhibit unusual conduct or withdrawal. The implications of this awareness are discussed in the conclusion section.

xliii The organization often would try to shorten the time between the recruit's decision to perpetrate suicide bombing and the time of the execution of the mission to prevent detection by parents, or change of mind by the recruit. Also, the number of suicide bombing planned may affect the time dedicated to preparing a suicide bomber as efficiency is important.

xliv A woman in such circumstances will most likely be killed by a male blood relative to preserve "family honor." Having unsupervised contact with men results in rumors, gossip and imputes looseness that will not be tolerated the males of the family, as it tarnishes the family reputation.

xlv One issue that is not addressed in this article is the pivotal role of political leadership in cultivating an atmosphere that exalts suicide bombing and praises its perpetrators. The interviews reported here were aimed at eliciting personal experiences, views and thinking modes of the participants. Unless an interviewee brought up these issues, the interviewer did not explore topics of political considerations or influences. In their interviews, however, a few participants made references to the honor that awaits them and their families once they perish, and the role of prevailing political structures and figures in the becoming suicide bombers.

xlvi In the London suicide bombing of July 7, 2005, the parents of one of the suicide bombers reported to the police the disappearance of their child. This information eventually helped authorities to resolve the case and identify it perpetrators.

xlvii In the case of suicide bombers, victimization arises due to both external (or between-group) and internal (within-group) factors, the latter include cases such as those documented in this study, where organizations exploit candidates' personal problems, or pressure vulnerable individuals to commit suicide and become martyrs. For a discussion of the use of victim status in the contest of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict see Erez (2005).

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