

Suicide Bombers in Israel—What Do They Really Want?

Are those who kill innocent civilians seeking freedom and peace . . . or do they have other motivations?

What are the facts?

It's easy to sympathize with Arabs in the disputed Israeli territories and Gaza who live in squalid conditions and economic hopelessness. Indeed, many Westerners believe it's this desperate poverty, plus strict Israeli security measures, that drive suicide bombers to blow themselves up in pizza parlors, buses and college cafeterias.

Unfortunately, this romanticized image of the suicide bomber doesn't square with the facts.

Who are these suicide bombers?

Study after study shows that the primary motivation of suicide bombers is neither desperation nor depression nor hopelessness. Indeed most suicide bombers are middle-class, educated and emotionally stable. Noted psychologist Dr. Irwin Mansdorf has observed, "While [suicide bombers] may feel oppressed, the stimulus for the act is nationalistic and political, not psychopathological and clinical. In the case of Islamic terror, [there is] the additional variable of becoming a shahid (martyr), with all its attendant religious rewards."

In fact, it is terrorist groups known for their outspoken religious and political agendas—like Hamas, Islamic Jihad, Hizbollah and Al Qaeda—that claim credit for nearly every suicide bombing in Israel and around the world.

What do they say they want? Hamas and Islamic Jihad—as well as the young men and women they recruit as human bombs—make no secret of their goals. Indeed, Hamas' charter states that "Israel will exist . . . until Islam will obliterate it." Make no mistake: When well-meaning Westerners speak of Israeli "occupation," they generally refer to disputed territories in the West Bank. When Hamas and Islamic Jihad speak of occupation, they refer to all the land between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River—including all of present-day Israel. Even the official symbol of the Palestinian Authority depicts a map of the region in which there is no Israel.

It is telling that Palestinian suicide bombers *never* claim they are killing to achieve peace with Israel. Rather, they

murder as a matter of honor, as a religious and political imperative—to rid the region of a people they see as infidels. Ultimately, of course, all jihadists—whether in Israel, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, or Iran—seek to make the world, including the U.S., a fundamentalist Islamic dictatorship.

Can killing innocent civilians lead to peace? What is the

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military objective of randomly killing unarmed men, women and children as they dine, dance or celebrate religious events? It can only be to strike terror in the hearts of its victims, their families and their communities. We must ask:

When has this barbaric tactic ever worked—when has it led to peace and freedom for its perpetrators? The answer is never—never in human history has terrorism succeeded as a military strategy. Yet the suicide bombings continue, even as Israel withdraws from Gaza and places more territory in the hands of Palestinians.

Why do Palestinian poverty and security restrictions

continue? Suicide bombers never claim they kill innocents to solve the Palestinians' economic plight, but there's no doubt that Arabs in Gaza and the disputed territories suffer from heart-rending poverty, corruption, and political oppression. Billions of dollars have poured into the Palestinian Authority from the U.S., the U.N and European nations, but virtually none of this money has found its way to economic development—in fact, most of it has landed in the bank accounts of corrupt Palestinian politicians or to support terror operations. Indeed, to this day, the Palestinian Authority still makes reward payments to the families of suicide bombers. Now that the avowedly terrorist group Hamas has taken control of the Palestinian Authority, the world community must cut off this funding and limit aid strictly to humanitarian purposes.

Don't believe, either, that suicide bombers kill civilians to rid Israel of its security fence or to end its many security checkpoints, which cause great inconvenience and frustration for many Palestinians. Indeed, it is precisely to prevent murder by suicide bombers that Israel has instituted these stringent security measures. The good news is, they work.

What's the next step toward Arab-Israeli peace? Above all, Muslims must, as *New York Times* writer Anne Applebaum asserts, "change the culture that celebrates self-immolation and that sick form of honor and pride." Instead of glorifying suicide bombers, the Muslim world, on whose behalf these terrorists claim they are acting, must scorn their barbaric acts. Only then can we hope for peace . . . in Israel, in Iraq, and in the rest of the world.

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