

# THE PROFILE OF THE PALESTINIAN SUICIDE MARTYRS (ISTISHHADIYIN)

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## Abstract

The Profile explores all the characteristics of the Palestinian suicide martyrs (Istishhadiyin) and the operations of their martyrdom as well. A national representative survey which consists of two-hundred participants of the Palestinian suicide martyrs (Istishhadiyin) families in the West Bank and Gaza Strip was used in this current Profile. The Palestinian suicide martyrs (Istishhadiyin) were able to implement two hundred qualitative martyrdom operations that rocked Israel, and raised a large wave of reactions both locally and internationally. The Profile has all their demographic characteristics; all the characteristics of their martyrdom operations; their personality characteristics mostly: social, religious, national and psychological features which qualified them to embark on this strategic action; also, the Profile has the main motivations which drove the Palestinian youth to carry out such operations, and the relationship between the emergence of these operations and Israeli crimes committed against the rights of the unarmed Palestinian people. Additionally, the Profile includes the main behavioral changes which appeared on the Palestinian suicide martyrs (Istishhadiyin) prior to the execution of the martyrdom operation, in addition to their families' opinion about martyrdom operations. The Profile showed that the Palestinian suicide martyrs (Istishhadiyin) were ordinary people who enjoyed life; they were sociable, religious, national, and had a high degree of psychological stability. However, their motivations behind the carrying out of martyrdom operations are nationalistic, and are closely associated with the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories, and the daily suppressive practices against the helpless and unarmed Palestinian people. They had to sacrifice their lives for Palestinians, to shake off the occupation and preserve their holies, homeland, and people.

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**Keywords:** Profile, Istishhady, Palestine, Motivations, Martyrdom operations, Conflict

## **Introduction**

Self sacrifice is not a new term in the history of humanity. However, it has received a large scale attention from thinkers and scholars in the field of human, social, and psychological sciences. This self sacrifice was expressed by causes and motives which were connected with intellectuals and interpretations of scientists who attempted to present explanations to this perplexing phenomenon. Thus, it was connected with certain elements linked with limited aspects which are mainly: biological, environmental, psychological, and religious.

Durkheim is considered to be the first sociologist who addressed the phenomenon from a social objective perspective. In 1897, Durkheim was the first to propose that spiritual commitment may contribute to emotional well-being, as it provides a source of meaning and order in the world (Durkheim, 1951; Taylor, 1982).

Durkheim suggested that the wide differences in suicide rates across countries are probably explained at least in part by cultural and religious differences (Grimland et al., 2006). He identified three types of suicide, characterized by the integration of an individual into the society. The most germane is the “altruistic suicide” which martyrdom in Islam is classified, and its definition is, “sacrifice of life to serve non individual sublime objectives”. According to Durkheim (1951) classification, altruistic suicide may occur when a person becomes deeply integrated into a social group, and as such, it becomes a duty for the members of that group. In this regard, the father of the Palestinian female suicide martyr (Istishhadiya) Ayat Al-Akhras, at Jerusalem operation on 29th March 2002 said, “It has become a duty to resist the occupation, and each person resists the occupation in his own way. You may resist with bullets, with words, by art, or martyrdom operations”.

“Istishhad” Martyrdom is a Palestinian term introduced into the political dictionary to describe the case of self sacrifice for the sake of others in their struggle with the occupier. In spite of the religious significances for this term which are taken from the Islamic religion, the factions of the Palestinian society worked on nationalizing this term to include both religious and non religious Muslims and Christians. This martyrdom constituted a social value that brought forth appreciation and respect to the martyr and his family. Self-sacrificing for the sake of the group is a term expressed by Palestinians through the “Istishhady” (Suicide Martyr) which has religious and popular significances given to the person, who with premeditation and full consciousness, makes a decisive decision to sacrifice himself and blow himself up to inflict losses in the ranks of the Israeli occupation (Banat, 2010).

It is important to separate the western concept of suicide from the Islamic concept martyrdom. The focus is on martyrdom, which involves using ones death as a defense of ones homeland by inflicting losses on an enemy, rather than on suicide which is a self-inflicted intentional act designed to end ones own life (Mustafa, 2003B; Sawahil, 2003; Abdel-Khalek, 2004; Gearing & Lizardi, 2008).

### **Background and Literature Review**

When we are introduced to the phenomenon of martyrdom in the Palestinian society, we should remember that it is not new. The human society knew this phenomenon since the dawn of history whenever there was tyranny and despotic ruling. Consequently, it is not limited to one religion or nation. Beginning from the fifteenth century B.C., and passing through Christianity and Islam and ending with modern history, we find models of this in the Spanish French War (1785), during the years of civil war in Spain (1936-1939), in the Japanese Kamikaze pilots operations of World War II, in addition to Vietnamese peasants' confrontations with the French occupiers. Furthermore, these models were also discovered during the Hezbollah experience in Lebanon, with the qualitative development it witnessed in the national confrontation and mass suicidal operations at the railways, to stop ammunition and weapons to reach the English troops in India. Also, it was also observed in Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK) in Turkey, and in Tamil Tigers (LTTE) in Sri Lanka. However, they conclude that what is at work is a strategic calculation by rational organizations that deem suicidal violence to be an effective tactic in the fight against powerful enemies (Kushner, 1996; Gunaratna, 2000; Schweitzer, 2001; Margalit, 2003; Mustafa, 2003B; Rosenberger, 2003; Reuter, 2004; Bloom, 2005; O'Neal, 2005; Grimlan et al., 2006; Ferrero, 2006; Hafez, 2006; Kaplan et al., 2006).

Since the beginning of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the Palestinian people have always been fighting and resisting. This resistance has developed over sixty years of struggle, and has ended up with different techniques and methods until a new model of Palestinian resistance emerged in the first half of the nineties called "Martyrdom Operations". At the beginning, these operations used to be individualistic, but soon, they increased with the start of the Al-Aqsa Uprising in September 2000 in a very noticeable manner. It became a general phenomenon spread among the different sectors, groups, youth, and social classes of the Palestinian people. However, this caught the attention of officials and interested parties since it became a phenomenon that cannot be ignored, but should be studied through a scientific approach (Banat, 2010).

The Palestinian experience under occupation was and is still a most tragic one. This is due to the victims and violence it has left behind as a

result of acts of killing, injury, handicap, physical and psychological torture as a result of house demolition, confiscation of lands and water, arrests, raids, pursuits and other forms of violence. Palestinians have always faced the most brutal occupier that history had ever known. It is certain that Palestinians did not chose this battle; they wished that they were like the rest of the people of the world, paying attention to the development of their independent state and fulfilling their political, economic, and social aspirations. However, they were forced to live with the Israeli occupier who brought destruction and hatred to this region of the world more than a century ago (Banat, 2010).

The memory of the crimes of the Zionist terror and the official terror of the consecutive Israeli governments which reached unprecedented degrees of brutality and viciousness, has settled in the collective memory of Palestinians. The Palestinian resistance to the Israeli occupation in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip took a very important turn since the early 1990, when young Palestinian men, and more lately women, started to strap themselves with explosives making their way to Israeli Jewish areas whether crowded with soldiers or civilians, and blew themselves up killing and injuring dozens of people around them. At first, there were outstanding Heroes, Mujahideen, Freedom Fighters, Fedayeen and later Istishhadiyin (Suicide Martyrs) who contributed to the formulation of the phenomenon of martyrdom in the Al-Aqsa Second Uprising (Kiyali, 2002; Rimawi, 2005).

Historically, various Palestinian factions had sent fighters on one-way missions involving extraordinary risk. They have tried through different means to shake off the occupation, but to no avail. Before 1993, Palestinians were resisting the occupation of their country through the traditional methods available to them. All they wanted was an end to the occupation, and the establishment of their own state alongside the state of Israel (Ateek, 2002).

It is possible to indicate that the first attempt at the level of martyrdom operations was in the year 1986 through what used to be called “Saraya Jihad Islami”, which belongs to the Palestinian Islamic Jihad Movement (PIJ). It was decided that Itaf Ilayan would drive a bobby trapped car from Bethlehem District; however, the operation was discovered on 17th December 1992 (Schweitzer, 2001; Fighel, 2003; Qasim, 2003; Sawahil, 2003).

The first Palestinian suicide martyr (Istishhady) Saher Tamam from Nablus city dedicated his martyrdom operation which he implemented in Beit Shean (Bisan) on 16th April 1993 to Marj Az-Zuhur Deportees in Lebanon; they included 416 political Palestinian resistance leaders which the occupation authorities deported from Palestine, and refused their return back home. When the Palestinian suicide martyr (Istishhady) Tamam executed his martyrdom operation, it coincided with “(Akfan) Casks March” that the

deportees started towards the Israeli checkpoint at Zamriya crossing, two kilometers away from their camp in Marj Az-Zuhur. Thus, this was a way to pressurize the Israeli entity as a form of protest to their unjust deportation (Banat, 2010).

During Al-Aqsa Uprising, the Palestinian resistance against the Israeli occupation developed quickly. The roots of the Uprising grew in spite of the repeated Israeli military campaigns, assassinations of Palestinian activists, and the bombardment of security centers and civil institutions by Israeli fighters and Apache warplanes. In an official statement, the Palestinian leadership called on the popular and official forces to implement a popular mobilization in preparation for a long term resistance of the Israel offensive, which reoccupied all the Palestinian cities in March 2002 (Odeh & Jum'ah, 2002).

The Palestinian suicide martyr (Istishhady) Ezzedeem Al-Masri was greatly influenced by the bloody incidents during the Al-Aqsa Intifada and the brutal massacres which took place. Day after day, the Intifada gains momentum and becomes fiercer. Many of the people whom he knew fell as a martyr, were wounded or became a detainee. Every incident that took place during the Intifada, made Ezzedeem more determined to show loyalty to the bloods of the martyrs and agonies of the afflicted and the wounded. His heart grew more revengeful of the occupier who killed, arrested, and displaced the people. The retaliation hours have drawn closer. For the martyrs, it is the time of revenge on the enemy who did not differentiate between an elderly person, a child, and an infant. He executed the martyrdom operation in Sbaro Restaurant in Jerusalem on 9th August 2001 (Banat, 2010).

Likewise, the Palestinian suicide martyr (Istishhady) Mohammed Hbaishe Nahariyya operation on 9th September 2001, expressed his motive for martyrdom in his will by saying, “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, Abraham 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 latest dual martyrdom operation implemented by the two Palestinian suicide martyrs (Istishhadiyin) Shadi Izughayyar and Mohammed Al-Herbawi from Hamas Movement on 4 February 2008 in Dimona, were in

response to the unjust siege of Gaza Strip and in solidarity with the besieged Palestinians there. It also came to confirm the ability of the resistance led by Ezzedeem Al-Qassam Brigades to penetrate the fortifications of the enemy and hit sensitive sites in the time and place it decides. The two suicide martyrs appeared in a video tape and stressed that the operation is a continuation of the path of Jihad, resistance, and revenge for the blood of Gaza martyrs. They also stressed that more siege, blockade and massacres will bring more martyrdom operations.

Between April 1993 and February 2008, two hundred martyrdom operations (Explosive belt, bag and car) attributed to Palestinian executors were transpired against Israeli targets, and raised a large scale wave of reactions locally and internationally. They marked a turning point in the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; thus, it is rare to find a similar phenomenon to this one with this huge number of Palestinian suicide martyrs (Istishhadiyin) in any other place in the world. These tallies do not include unsuccessful martyrdom operations. However, the number of attempted operations is thus higher. Moreover, the legendary leader Yahya Ayyash is considered the engineer of Palestinian martyrdom operations (Banat, 2010).

Following the martyrdom of Ayyash, his students continued his path of martyrdom operations like Hasan Salameh, Salah Shihada, Mohyee Din Sharif, and Mahmoud Abu Hnud who carried out qualitative martyrdom operations that rocked the Israeli depth. The Palestinian resistance had crossed beyond the technique of fire shooting or random bombing as it was the case in past operations which targeted restaurants and malls to the technique of qualitative martyrdom operations in which targets with high psychological effect on Israelis were selected. In addition, they intended to damage the trepidation of the Israeli occupation army. The involvement of women in carrying out martyrdom operations constituted a new stage of development. Furthermore, five girls staged martyrdom operations by the beginning of the year 2002, and the total number as attained as far as ten operations. Regarding the importance of the martyrdom operations weapon, and in very touching words, the Palestinian suicide martyr (Istishhady) Fouad Al-Hourani, at Jerusalem Operation on 9th March 2002 wrote in his will, “The nation that masters the death industry is unbeatable”. In the same context, the female suicide martyr (Istishhadiya) Darene Abu Aisha, at the Maccabim settlement checkpoint operation near Ramallah on 27th February 2002 addressed the importance of the body weapon in her will saying, “As the body and spirit are all what we have, I offer them for the sake of God the Almighty to be bombs that will burn the Zionists, and destroy the myth of God's chosen people in retaliation for the remains of our martyred brothers”. Accordingly, there has been a flood of debate for several years over the

Palestinian martyrdom, and they have been charged both locally and globally.

From the Islamic Sharia, religious authorities inside and outside the Palestinian territories spoke favorably on martyrdom operations against Israelis; thus, they all affirmed the rights of Palestinians to carry out such operations against Israelis to preserve their homeland and people. They indicated that those who blow up themselves facing the enemies in order to preserve their holies, homeland, money, and children are martyrs (Shuman, 2001; Mustafa, 2003A). Besides, God Almighty said, “Fight in the cause of Allah those who fight you ...” (Al-Baqara: 190).

Legally, International Law considered the military occupation of the others lands as illegitimate; it also acknowledged that the occupied peoples have the right to use all forms of struggle including armed struggle in order to achieve their independence. This was clear in the UN Assembly program issued titled "Action Program for the Full Implementation of the Declaration of Independence to Colonized Countries and Peoples" on the 12<sup>th</sup> of October 1970 (Dweik, 2001; Abrash, 2002; Hussien, 2003).

As for Palestinians, some considered it harmful to the interests of the Palestinians and it does not contribute to the benefit of Palestinian national interest. In contrast, others considered it to be the peak of Palestinian national struggle against the tyrant Israeli occupation perching on the chests of the Palestinians. In addition, there are some calls for the rationalization of this phenomenon by measuring their pros and cons. Meanwhile, the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) has position double standards regarding the martyrdom operations. On one side, the PNA stresses the legitimacy of the Palestinian resistance until the occupation is lifted from the Palestinian land, while on the other hand, the PNA condemns some martyrdom operations especially those that happened inside the green line (Israel, 1948) and considers its executors as outlawed (Amir, 2003). Additionally, polls indicate that the majority of Palestinians support martyrdom operations (Banat, 2010).

Furthermore, the Israelis' perceptions about Palestinian martyrdom operations are different from those of the Palestinians. In spite of the fact that Palestinian martyrdom operations are legitimate means of resistance of occupation, they are characterized in most cases as terrorists operations. In fact, martyrdom operations caused a large scale controversy in the Israeli security and civil milieus, making ministers and high ranking officials in the army wonder about the extent of Israeli ability to last, and they considered that the Independence war was not over yet, since it influenced all aspects of life in Israel, and they described them as a strategic weapon with no solution (Schiff, 2002).

## **Purpose and Scope**

Until recently, there is a distinct lack of empirical studies in understanding the question of the Palestinian suicide martyrs (Istishhadiyin), which is a new social phenomenon that is spreading in the Palestinian society groups and social classes. The Palestinian suicide martyrs (Istishhadiyin) were able to implement two hundred qualitative martyrdom operations that rocked Israel and raised a large scale wave of reactions both locally and internationally. They marked a turning point in the history of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. In addition, it is rare to find a similar phenomenon to this one with this huge number of Palestinian suicide martyrs (Istishhadiyin) in any other place in the world. Therefore, they have their own psychological, social, religious, and national features which qualified them to carry out this strategic action. This is the first Profile of the author's knowledge, which specifically explored the whole characteristics of the Palestinian suicide martyrs (Istishhadiyin) and their martyrdom operations as well, and which has filled an important gap in the knowledge of social sciences. The researcher is honored by this national duty to be the first to conduct a study on the topic of Palestinian suicide martyrs (Istishhadiyin) especially in developing a unique Profile reference point to understand the reality of the phenomenon of Palestinian martyrdom operations which has created several questions in the minds of several scholars and people worldwide.

## **Definition of Terms**

**Al-Amaliyat Al-Istishhadiya (*Martyrdom Operations*):** It is an individual operation and not military in a conventional sense, whereby both the enemy and the executor of the operation are destroyed (Odeh & Jum'ah, 2002).

**Istishhady (*Suicide Martyr*):** It is a Palestinian term with religious and popular significances given to the person who with premeditation and full consciousness, fitted an explosive belt on his body, carried an explosive satchel bag, or drove a suicide car bomb in order to cause a blast and blow up the enemy without even having the chance of coming out alive (Mustafa, 2003A).

## **Limitations**

The population of this study was limited to the Palestinian suicide martyrs (Istishhadiyin) who sacrificed themselves for different motives with premeditation and full knowledge. They carried out the martyrdom operation in which they knew that they would not come out of it alive. However, they used either one of the following methods: an explosive belt, an explosive bag, or an explosive car in the West Bank and Gaza Strip during the period of 1993-2008 (Banat, 2010).



## **Methodology and Design**

A retrospective transversal approach was conducted over a period of five months in 2012 to carry out the Profile objectives. The study population was made up of the Palestinian suicide martyrs (Istishhadiyin) at Banat (2010) dissertations which consist of all the Palestinian suicide martyrs (Istishhadiyin) in the West Bank and Gaza Strip during the period of 1993-2008. The population constitutes two-hundred martyrdom operations (151 in the West Bank and 49 in Gaza Strip).

## **Instrumentation**

This study is quantitative and qualitative in nature using both questionnaire and interview. The sample survey involved studying the records and findings of the Palestinian suicide martyrs (Istishhadiyin) at Banat (2010) dissertations for the Profile design process. The collection of data took place from July–November 2012. The Profile has measured seven main sub-scales in terms of the martyrdom operations in the Palestinian society. Consequently, the first has the demographic characteristics of the Palestinian suicide martyrs (Istishhadiyin) as: gender, age, social status, educational qualification, region, place of residence, district, refugee status, work status, profession, income, the exposure to Israeli violence...etc, while the second includes the demographic characteristics related to the Palestinian martyrdom operations: faction, way of martyrdom, place, time, day, month, year of martyrdom...etc. The third has the personality characteristics of the Palestinian suicide martyrs (Istishhadiyin) which is divided into four dimensions: social, religious, national, and psychological. Meanwhile, the fourth includes the Palestinian suicide martyrs motivations behind carrying out their martyrdom operations, while the fifth addresses the behavioral changes which appeared on the Palestinian suicide martyrs prior to the execution of the martyrdom operation. Moreover, the sixth includes the opinions of the families of Palestinian suicide martyrs about such operations, while the seven has the wills of the Palestinian suicide martyrs (Istishhadiyin).

Concerning validity and reliability, validation of the instrument proceeded in two distinct phases. The initial phase involved a group of referees and expert arbitrators, who provided some comments on the tool. The second phase involved the implementation of a pilot study (N=20) to validate the survey using exploratory factor analysis. Factor loading for all items exceeded 0.50 (0.51 to 0.90), which means that those items are suitable in measuring every item of the characteristics of the Palestinian suicide martyrs (Istishhadiyin), in light of the theoretical framework that the scale of study is based upon (Banat, 2010). In terms of the reliability, it was tested using Cronbach's Alpha Formula to ascertain reliability and consistency of

the survey. Furthermore, Cronbach's Alpha for the survey instrument subscales exceeded 0.80 (0.81 to 0.91), indicating an excellent reliability and consistency.

### **Data Analysis and Findings**

Data analyses were undertaken using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20. The questionnaire items were ranked and codified in order to carry out the required statistical techniques for the data. Descriptive statistics were generated to gauge the characteristics of the Palestinian suicide martyrs (Istishhadiyin) among the sampled population through measuring: numbers, percentages, means, standard deviations, and graphics.

Cotextual variables distribution of the families of the Palestinian suicide martyrs (Istishhadiyin) includes age, gender, relation to the martyr, marital status, and level of education. There were a total of two-hundred completed interviews. Respondents were between 18 and 82 years of age, with an average age of 45.19 years. Males represented 57% of the participants, while the remaining 43% were females; and the majority (65.5%) was the parents of the Palestinian suicide martyrs (Istishhadiyin). In terms of marital status, the majority (78%) was married, while the vast majority (80%) was less-educated, as they have not completed their Junior Secondary School education.

In terms of the demographic characteristics of the Palestinian suicide martyrs (Istishhadiyin), the vast majority (90%) of the Palestinian suicide martyrs (Istishhadiyin) were singles (89.5%) and young (less than 25 years old), well educated (47.5%), and deeply religious (59%). Moreover, the majority came from middle birth rank (61%), middle households members (44%), and nuclear families (59%). They had a good physical structure in terms of weight, height, skin color, and external appearance in which the majority of them did not look like Israelis (70%). Furthermore, the Palestinian suicide martyrs (Istishhadiyin) enjoyed life; this was reflected through their enormous number of friends (57.5%), their preference of different colors, and their preference for Friday Muslim holiday (68.5%). The majority of them came from the West Bank, then Gaza Strip; from all regions: cities, villages especially camps (53.5%); and Nablus (27.5%) which is the city of suicide martyrs (Istishhadiyin). As for the economic situation of the Palestinian suicide martyrs (Istishhadiyin), findings showed that most of them came from middle-class; 60.5% were working as employees in different professions with a moderate average monthly income, while majority were not the family bread winners (53.5%). The majority of their families were exposed to various forms of Israeli violence (73.5%), mostly, land confiscation, uprooting of trees, land bulldozing, insults and swearing,

detention, home raids, and not obtaining a work permit; and nearly half (46%) of the Palestinian suicide martyrs (Istishhadiyin) themselves were also exposed to various forms of Israeli violence mostly, insults and swearing, bad treatment at checkpoints and surrounding environment, beating, the martyrdom of a dear person, and detention.

As for the demographic characteristics of the Palestinian martyrdom operations, the majority (41.5%) belonged to Hamas Movement and its military wing Ezzedeem Al-Qassam Brigades, and to the Islamic Jihad Movement (29.5%) and its military wing Saraya Al-Quds. Therefore, Hamas Movement is the spiritual father of the Palestinian martyrdom operations. Moreover, the majority of the martyrdom operations are carried out by explosive belt (65.5%) in all Israeli cities and regions, especially, Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, and in other Israeli targets. These include the West Bank and Gaza Strip settlements during the daylight hours, particularly in the morning (45.5%) and especially on Sundays (23.5%). In the entire months of the year, especially March-May, the Palestinian suicide martyrs (Istishhadiyin) had carried out their martyrdom operations in the years before and after the signing of Oslo Accords between Israel and the Palestinian National Authority (September 13, 1993), while the majority was during the Al-Aqsa Uprising, especially in the year 2002 (33.5%).

In terms of the martyrdom operations preparation process, the majority (78%) of the Palestinian suicide martyrs (Istishhadiyin) had left a will which varied between written and visual. The wills were directed mostly to their families, Palestinians, and Israeli leadership. Also, majority (67.3%) of the suicide martyrs were dressed in military uniform during the reading of the wills.

The will of the suicide martyr can be regarded as a document which a researcher can refer to, read its content, analyze its meanings, and comprehend its lofty goals. The will contains the message that a suicide martyr leaves for his family, society, and nation, calling upon them to follow his footsteps. The will can be in a written, audio or video form; it explains the purpose behind the operation and contains important intellectual dimensions at all levels, especially the religious, national, ethical, and educational ones (Banat, 2010). One cannot find anything better than the wills of the Palestinian suicide martyrs (Istishhadiyin) which were written with words from blood and light: the blood is meant to vanquish the occupier, while the light is meant to illuminate the path of the Mujahideen on the road of resistance and martyrdom. The suicide martyr (Istishhady) Mohammed Al-Ghoul, at Jerusalem operation, on 18th June 2002 wrote in his will: “How beautiful for the splinters of my bones to be the response that blows the enemy up, not for the love of killing, but so that we can live as others. We do not sing the songs of death, but recite the hymns of

life. We die so that future generations may live”. Furthermore, the suicide martyr (Istishhady) Mahmoud Salem, at Ashdod operation, on 14th March 2004 wrote: “We have to defend our blessed land against the occupiers with the last drop of blood in our veins. We will fight them until Jaffa, Haifa, and Ashkelon return”.

As for the suicide martyr (Istishhady) Maher Habisheh, at Haifa operation, on 2nd December 2001: “I wish I had so many lives to avenge time and time again and respond to the many massacres and many insults perpetrated against the Palestinian people”. Moreover, the suicide martyr (Istishhady) Fouad Al-Hourani, at Jerusalem operation, on 9th March 2002 wrote: “The nation that masters the death industry is unbeatable”, while the suicide martyr (Istishhady) Samer Shawahna, at Hadera operation, on 29th November 2001 stated: “We, the martyrs, may talk less, since we have realized that blood talks louder”. Also, the female suicide martyr (Istishhadiya) Ayat Al-Akhras, at Jerusalem operation, on 29th March 2002 wrote in her will: “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 our selves before we die”.

Furthermore, vast majority (88%) of the Palestinian suicide martyrs (Istishhadiyin) did not leave any signals prior to the operations indicating their intention to carry out the martyrdom operation; they did not disappear from their homes; the vast majority (92.5%) of their families did not have any prior knowledge of their intention to implement the martyrdom operation; and the mass media was their main resource to know about the implementation of the operation (67.5%). Additionally, Israelis had taken different measures against the martyr’s family, following the implementation of the martyrdom operation, mostly, not getting a work permit, home raids, job loss, ban from traveling, house demolition, abuse and insults, and detentions. Also, majority (73%) of the Palestinian suicide martyrs bodies have not yet been delivered, and they are still in the hands of the Israelis.

As for the personality characteristics of the Palestinian suicide martyrs (Istishhadiyin), the Profile showed that they were ordinary people who enjoyed life. They were sociable, religious, national, and had a high degree of psychological stability. Their motivations behind the carrying out of martyrdom operations are nationalistic, and are closely associated with the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories and the daily suppressive practices against the helpless and unarmed Palestinian people; they had sacrifice with their lives for Palestinians, to shake off the occupation. In return, we should not ignore the religious motives which are the supporting elements of the Palestinians martyrdom operations. It is worth mentioning that the majority of Palestinians are Muslims, and are committed to the teachings of Islam. This encouraged the resistance of the invaders occupiers

and transgressors in every ways or forms. As for talking about psychological, social, and economic factors and others as motives for martyrdom, it is wrong to associate martyrs with these factors since this underestimates the real value of a martyr, and makes him/her a kind of social suicide bomber.

The Profile showed that the Palestinian suicide martyrs (Istishhadiyin) had some behavioral changes that had taken place on the martyr, two weeks before the execution of their martyrdom operation as follows: listened to patriotic songs, looked happy, talked about martyrdom, pretended that they do not intend to be a martyr, had more visits to family and friends, had more intimacy towards the family, sought forgiveness of others for any wrong done to them, had frequent visits to mosques, and tended to remain silent.

Furthermore, findings show that majority (71.5%) of the families of Palestinian suicide martyrs (Istishhadiyin) support martyrdom operations against the Israeli occupation. In spite of this, the majority say that they would have stopped them if they previously knew of his/her intention to implement a martyrdom operation (54.8%); some (22%) say that they would have encouraged them for such action; while others say that they would have gone with them instead of them going.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Martyrdom operations have been developed within the framework of the Palestinian resistance to defeat occupation. This resulted in the huge number of Palestinian suicide martyrs (Istishhadiyin) from all Palestinian territories, who decided with determination and strong will to sacrifice their lives for the common good of the liberation of Palestine. Thus, martyrdom has become a social public phenomenon exceeding the limits of individual work in order to melt into the entire society, after the Palestinian suicide martyr (Istishhady) offers his soul and body for the sake of God, homeland, and people. The strangling Israeli siege, starvation policy, assassinations and military assassination, and inhuman scenes which Palestinians are subjected to at the checkpoints and others, are all reasons that had neutralized life and death, and transformed all Palestinians into a martyr producing cell which was no longer confined to one faction, trend, gender, population cluster or other, but belongs to the entire Palestinian people. All segments of the Palestinian people including Islamic, national, left-wings, men, women, youth and old people have practiced this form of resistance. It is an expression of a Palestinian popular awareness of the depth and nature of the conflict with the Jewish existence in Palestine. It is also a logical extension of the Palestinian struggle which has been ongoing for more than a hundred years.

The Palestinian people who were exposed since 1948 and are still being exposed to all sorts of elimination, persecution and occupation, have resorted to resistance and martyrdom operations for the liberation of their country from occupation and to defend itself, its human rights and dignity. It chose the approach of resistance, to practice its right to return self determination, sovereignty, and independence based on the UN charter and the rest of international charters and conventions, principles of international law and international legitimacy decisions. Accordingly, the resistance strategy holds fast to a fixed title which indicates that as long as there is occupation, there is resistance. This simply means its continuation on the long run besides other forms of resistance until the expulsion of occupation. To sum up, the Israeli aggressions on the Palestinian people like continued assassinations, closure and siege, have led the Palestinian sectors and forces in the society to carry out martyrdom operations.

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 in defending it. They acquired education at schools and universities, went to mosques and lived its cause. They believed that God and homeland deserve this martyrdom act. In this regards, the Palestinian suicide martyr (Istishhady) Suliman Tahayna executor of Jerusalem operation on 5th November 1998 expressed himself as he was telling his wife one day prior to his martyrdom, “My children are not dearer to me than God and homeland”.

The Palestinian people were forced to adopt martyrdom operations in order to create deterrence equivalence. The battle in facing the Israeli aggression which depends on the supremacy in military equipment and gear is uneven. If the Palestinian people had a counter weapon to that of the Israeli or close to it, they would fight with it through the traditional conventional way. However, they are defending themselves with the available means; I do believe that if the world community was fair with the Palestinians and stopped the occupation, we would not be in need for martyrdom operations. It is irrational to ask the Palestinian people to stop resistance and martyrdom operations while it is still under the yoke of the Israeli occupation. Within this context, the Palestinian suicide martyr (Istishhady) Hisham Hamad executor of Netzarim settlement in Gaza Strip on 11th November 1994 wrote in his will, “The battle is imposed on everybody, do not wait at the doors of tomorrow which you do not have of it anything, but humiliation”. In the same context, the suicide martyr (Istishhady) Mahmoud Marmash, of Netanya operation on 18th May 2001 wrote in his will, “The Palestinian people are passing through the most

difficult days; they are constantly suffering from killing, bombardment, immigration and the harshest kinds of violence. Everyday, the suffering of the people increases; then, there should be a group who is willing to sacrifice themselves and fight for the sake of God and for the sake of the defense of this peoples' dignity and honor to raise its banner high; the only solution to this vicious campaign is Jihad and Istishhad which are (*Fardh 'ayn* – an individual obligation) on every Muslim”.

Accordingly, the Palestinian people resistance of occupation is considered a natural response. Martyrdom operations are one of the legitimate resistance means; the Palestinian suicide martyrs (Istishhadiyin) did not come in an arbitrary manner; in fact, the occupation conditions are the reason behind having such operations. Hence, it is illogical to blame the Palestinian people who are the victims for what they are doing. They are defending themselves. The aggressor is the one who is to be blamed. It is the right of the occupied people in all laws and jurisdictions whether heavenly or earthly, to defend themselves. In light of the current Profile and its findings, I recommend the following:

1. To translate the current Profile into different Languages worldwide due to the importance of the topic of suicide martyrs (Istishhadiyin) at this stage of the Palestinian national struggle.
2. To have an analytical study of the wills of the Palestinian suicide martyrs (Istishhadiyin).
3. Further research is essential to expand understanding of Palestinian suicide martyrs (Istishhadiyin) and the measurable impact it has on their families' personal aspects through PTSD tests.

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